

British Socialism and the Emotions of Revolution, 1884-1926.

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Abstract

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Spurred by recent developments in the history of emotions, this thesis looks at the place of emotion and irrationality in socialist political philosophy. I give particular attention to the shifting ways that socialists depicted the emotions of revolution. I argue that socialists had a complicated understanding of human nature, drawing on various philosophical discourses and scientific theories to grasp the ‘irrational’ and to relate it to the socialist project.

Building on philosophies of ‘the passions’ developed by G.W.F. Hegel and Charles Fourier, Karl Marx sought to grasp the multi-faceted emotional forces of human nature and critique the primacy of acquisitiveness in liberal thought. During the British ‘socialist revival’ of the 1880s and 1890s, theorists like William Morris and E. Belfort Bax sought to follow Marx’s critique of self-interest. They pushed the passion known as ‘sympathy’, ‘solidarity’ or ‘fellowship’ to the fore as an integral and universal source of socialist feeling, which drove the struggle against inhuman conditions of late-Victorian capitalism. Darwinian thinking about the instincts and emotions challenged this ethical conception of ‘the passions’, and socialists sought to reframe the critique of capitalism around biological categories. They emphasised such concepts as the ‘social instinct’ of Karl Pearson and William Trotter’s ‘herd instinct’ to account for the natural need for sociability and the damaging artificiality of economic egoism.

The industrial ‘Great Unrest’ of 1910-14, the First World War, and the Russian Revolution of 1917 spurred socialists to an examination of the emotions driving struggle between classes and nations. In the years after the Russian Revolution, the theories of Leninism, instinct theory, and Freudian psychoanalysis shared a moment of intense interest among British socialists. Both opponents of the Bolshevik regime like Bertrand Russell, and defenders of the Soviet state in the new Communist Party of Great Britain like Cedar and Eden Paul, drew on the so-called New Psychology to understand the meaning of 1917, to predict the direction of the revolution, and to inform their own approaches to socialism.

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List of Abbreviations

BSP.	British Socialist Party.
BSSSP.	British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology.
Comintern.	Communist International / Third International.
CCP.	Chinese Communist Party.
CPGB.	Communist Party of Great Britain.
ILP.	Independent Labour Party.
LRC.	Labour Representation Committee.
NCF.	No-Conscription Fellowship.
NEP.	New Economic Policy.
PLP.	Parliamentary Labour Party.
SDF.	Social Democratic Federation.
SLP.	Socialist Labour Party.
SPD.	Social Democratic Party of Germany.
SPGB.	Socialist Party of Great Britain.
TUC.	Trades Union Congress.
UDC.	Union of Democratic Control.
USSR.	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

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Introduction: British Socialism, the Russian Revolution, and the History of Emotions

Inside the hearts, or souls, of men in Europe there has happened at times some strange surging, some welling-up of unknown powers. These powers that well up inside the hearts of men, these are the fountains and origins of human history. And the welling-up has no ascribable cause. It is naked cause itself.

- D.H. Lawrence, 1921.¹

... from the fire and passion of an age of illimitable vistas to the monotonous beat of the factory engine, from Turgot and Condorcet to the melancholy and mathematical creed of Bentham and Ricardo and James Mill. Mankind has, at least, this superiority over its philosophers, that great movements spring from the heart and embody a faith, not the nice adjustments of the hedonistic calculus.

- R.H. Tawney, 1921.²

This thesis is concerned with the ways that British socialists depicted emotion in their works of political theory and commentary. Its chief focus is on socialist writing of the years between 1884 and 1926, especially regarding socialists' interpretations of the Russian Revolution of 1917. The history of the impact of the Russian Revolution on Britain and the world has been often told, producing a fascinating and varied historiography. This thesis hopes to contribute to this historiography by engaging with questions raised by the 'emotional turn' in the humanities.

Re-examining the ways in which the British Left understood the Russian Revolution in light of the 'emotional turn' is worthwhile, not necessarily because of the truth of any particular theory adopted by recent philosophers and historians of emotion, but because British socialists of this period were themselves intensely interested in the political dimension of emotion. Socialists were rarely content to follow D.H. Lawrence in giving the emotions of revolution 'no ascribable cause'. To try to understand these emotions, they drew on prevailing philosophical ideas about the passions, as well as biological and

¹ D.H. Lawrence, *Movements in European History* (Cambridge, 1921), pp. 8-9.

² R.H. Tawney, *The Acquisitive Society* (London, 1921), p. 17.

psychological theories, and sought to draw out the implications for their own socialist projects. British socialists wrote of capitalism deforming the emotional lives of its citizens by enthroning acquisitiveness as the single ‘rational’ passion; they analysed the emotional basis for the formation of collective groups, including nations, classes, ‘crowds’ and ‘masses’; they theorised the emotions which mobilised groups for revolutionary action, seeking to devise a fitting form of leadership to either direct or prevent revolution; and they imagined the sentimental qualities which would underpin the socialist society beyond the great transformation. From highly abstract philosophy to questions of immediate tactics, ideas about the ‘powers that well up inside the hearts of men’ were rarely absent in socialist writing.

In this introduction, I will first place my research in relation to the historiography of British socialism and the impact of the Russian Revolution. I will then seek to justify my focus on ‘the emotions of revolution’ as a specific theme, referring briefly to the current place of ‘emotion’ in political discourse. Next, I will give a summary of the history of emotions and show how my research approach fits into the field. Finally, I will outline the major arguments and the chapter structure of this thesis.

British Socialism and the Reasoning Animal

Political creeds are commonly derided for misunderstanding ‘human nature’, socialism possibly more than any other. In the century and a half since Frederick von Schlegel’s sarcastic definition of man as a ‘liberal ape’,³ political philosophers have criticised one another incessantly for placing too much emphasis on one or the other half of Schlegel’s formula – for defining humanity too strongly either by its ‘liberal’ rationality or its bestial irrationality. Socialism has often been criticised by its opponents as over-optimistic about human rationality and the strength of the ‘higher sentiments’. Critics have seen socialism as insensible to the complexity of the human heart, its natural egoism and dangerous lusts which confound the creation of utopia. The liberal historian

³ Frederick von Schlegel, *The Philosophy of History* translated by James Burton Robertson (London, 1846), p. 85.

T.L. Jarman concluded his history of the British socialist movement, for example:

... This is the most plausible explanation: socialism – an illusion. It had been a dream, a dream without reality. Socialism might indeed, at any point in history, have brought about an improvement in the human condition, if men were entirely reasonable, entirely well-meaning, entirely unselfish and co-operative – but men are not like that.⁴

This neglects the important and fruitful element in socialist thinking that sought to understand human nature in all its complexity, including its passions, its sentiments, its potential for irrationality, and to integrate that understanding into the foundations of the socialist project itself.

In *Psychological Socialism* (2006), Jeremy Nuttall drew out a strand of psychologically-inspired thinking in the Labour Party's socialism from the 1930s to the New Labour era. He showed that many important Labour theorists emphasised mental progress and moral improvement as a long-term project. Labour's thinkers were concerned with how to use parliamentary power to gradually cultivate citizens psychologically fit for socialism. These citizens would, eventually, be more caring, less driven by selfishness, more sensitive to morality, and above all they would be more reasonable. Without such a broad improvement in character, Labour thinkers like Evan Durbin argued, any socialistic reform in economics or politics would remain shallow.⁵ In this, Nuttall argued that socialism had an affinity with certain ideas prevalent in nineteenth-century liberalism, sharing its concern for moral progress.

The aim of this thesis is to complicate Nuttall's image by showing the ideological milieu out of which this 'psychological socialism' emerged. I will show that there was no necessary and direct passage from a liberal pursuit of rationality in the nineteenth century to its socialist variant from 1931 onwards, but that each was the product of intensive debates specific to their time around the nature and role of the emotions,⁶ the relationship of feeling with reason, and

⁴ T.L. Jarman, *Socialism in Britain: From the Industrial Revolution to the Present Day* (London, 1972), pp. 179-80.

⁵ Jeremy Nuttall, *Psychological Socialism: The Labour Party and Qualities of Mind and Character, 1931 to the Present* (Manchester, 2006), p. 7.

⁶ Alongside related concepts like the passions, sentiments, intuition, instincts, drives, and impulses. As Goethe wrote of the demoniac, which is closely related with the emotional: 'there are innumerable names; for all philosophies and religions have tried in prose and poetry to solve this enigma'. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 'The Demoniac', *The Modern Tradition*:

the political methods for achieving a citizenry worthy of theorists' social, political and economic visions. In each case, ideas about the emotions took shape by drawing on prevailing philosophical and scientific theories and relating them to specific world-historical events.⁷ For nineteenth-century liberalism and twentieth-century socialism, the great social, political and economic revolutions of the modern era were the most important of these events. Between Britain's 'socialist revival' of the 1880s and 1890s and the period which is the focus of Nuttall's study, these debates helped to shape British socialism and provided the basis for the strand of thinking Nuttall has identified in the Labour Party. The Russian Revolution was crucial in testing, tempering, and in great part overturning, the ways in which British socialists understood the emotional and irrational, pushing socialists towards the New Psychology.

The Historiography of British Socialism and the Russian Revolution

... the forces that produce communism can be viewed from two aspects. From the quantitative aspect, productive forces, which have outgrown bourgeois social relations, burst those fetters. But the fight is fought to an issue in man's consciousness. Man, the individual, feels the outmoding of these relations, their sloughing by reality, as the death of all that is valuable to him. The demand to bring back to consciousness these vanished values appears as hate for the present and love for the new, the dynamic power of revolution. Emotion bursts from the ground in which it has been repressed with all the force of an explosion. The whole structure of society is shattered. This is a revolution.

- Christopher Caudwell, 1938
(posthumously).⁸

In March 1917 on the Gregorian calendar,⁹ a popular revolution forced the abdication of Nicholas II, Emperor and Autocrat of All the Russias. A Provisional Government was formed with the aim of creating a constitutional

Backgrounds of Modern Literature edited by Richard Ellmann & Charles Feidelson, Jr. (Oxford, 1965), p. 543.

⁷ 'World-historical' in the terms used by Immanuel Wallerstein to discuss the French Revolution, signifying the 'very specific sense of its significance and importance in the history of the modern world system as a world system'. Immanuel Wallerstein, 'The French Revolution as a World-Historical Event' in *The French Revolution and the Birth of Modernity* edited by Ferenc Fehér (Oxford, 1990), p. 117.

⁸ Christopher Caudwell, *Studies and Further Studies in a Dying Culture* (London, 1971), p. 157.

⁹ February of the Julian calendar, then in use within the Russian Empire.

republic, but quickly found itself unable to maintain state power. In November 1917,¹⁰ against the backdrop of a disintegrating empire, the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (bolsheviks), led by the Marxist revolutionary V.I. Lenin, proclaimed that power had passed into the hands of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. For the first time, there existed a state avowedly determined to make the transition to a socialist society, engaging in wars and civil wars, building a vigorous internal dictatorship, and supporting the spread of revolution across the world to achieve that goal.

In the century since the Bolsheviks attained state power, the international impact of the events of 1917 has been the subject of a vast historiography.¹¹ Historians have assessed the influence of Bolshevism on the labour unrest of the post-war period,¹² as well as the efforts of the Moscow-based Communist International (Comintern) to coordinate the revolutionary challenge across the world.¹³ Numerous studies have been produced on facets of Anglo-Soviet relations in the years after the revolution.¹⁴ Within the sphere of Anglo-Soviet relations, the impact of the revolution on the socialist movement has become the largest topic by far, for the effect on the British Left was profound, multifaceted, and ambiguous.¹⁵ It is therefore perfect fuel for passionate historical

¹⁰ October of the Julian calendar.

¹¹ Classic general works on the international impact of the Russian Revolution include: E.M. Carroll, *Soviet Communism and Western Opinion, 1919-1921* (North Carolina, 1965); Royal Institute of International Affairs, *The Impact of the Russian Revolution, 1917-1967: The Influence of Bolshevism on the World Outside Russia* (London, 1967); E.H. Carr, *1917: Before and After* (London, 1969); E.H. Carr, 'The Russian Revolution and the West', *New Left Review* 111 (1978), 25-36; Paul Dukes, *October and the World: Perspectives on the Russian Revolution* (London, 1979).

¹² For example, see: A.S. Lindemann, *The 'Red Years': European Socialism versus Bolshevism, 1919-1921* (Berkeley, 1974); Chris Wrigley (ed.), *Challenges of Labour: Central and Western Europe, 1917-1920* (London, 1992).

¹³ For example: Tim Rees & Andrew Thorpe (eds), *International Communism and the Communist International, 1919-45* (Manchester, 1998).

¹⁴ For example: Richard H. Ullman, *Britain and the Russian Civil War: Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917-1921* (London, 1968); Michael Glenny, 'The Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement, March 1921', *Journal of Contemporary History* 5, 2 (1970), 63-82; Stephen White, *Britain and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Study in the Politics of Diplomacy, 1920-1924* (London, 1979); F.S. Northedge & Audrey Wells, *Britain and Soviet Communism: The Impact of a Revolution* (London, 1982).

¹⁵ For general introductions to this topic, see: Stephen Richards Graubard, *British Labour and the Russian Revolution, 1917-1924* (Cambridge, MA, 1956); G.D.H. Cole, *A History of Socialist Thought: Communism and Social Democracy, 1914-1931* (London, 1958); Robert Page Arnot, *The Impact of the Russian Revolution in Britain* (London, 1967); Daniel F. Calhoun, *The United Front: The TUC and the Russians, 1923-1928* (Cambridge, 1976); Bill Jones, *The Russia Complex: The British Labour Party and the Soviet Union* (Manchester, 1977); Maurice Cowden, *Russian Bolshevism and British Labour, 1917-1921* (Boulder, 1984);

controversies, especially when different interpretations of the Russian Revolution continue to underpin strongly held political identities even a century later.

Specific episodes like the Leeds Convention of June 1917, Arthur Henderson's mission to Russia, the Councils of Action against intervention in the Russo-Polish war of summer 1920, and the British Labour delegation to Soviet Russia have been well treated by focused studies.¹⁶ Kevin Morgan's recent series *Bolshevism and the British Left* (2006-13) has done much to convey the atmosphere of British socialism as it responded to the Russian Revolution, by his in-depth contextualisation of three distinct 'moments' in the history of this relationship.¹⁷

The events leading up to the foundation of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) in 1920, and the history of the Communist movement in the interwar period, enjoy an especially lively historiography. Historians have debated whether or not the CPGB was an 'alien' imposition, forced upon the small British revolutionary movement by the example and largesse of the Comintern.¹⁸ Related to this, historians have been concerned with the

Andrew Williams, 'The Labour Party's Attitude to the Soviet Union, 1927-35: An Overview with Specific Reference to Unemployment Policies and Peace', *Journal of Contemporary History* 22, 1 (January, 1987), 71-90; Andrew Williams, *Labour and Russia: The attitude of the Labour Party to the USSR, 1924-34* (Manchester, 1989).

¹⁶ See: L.J. Macfarlane, 'Hands Off Russia: British Labour and the Russo-Polish War, 1920', *Past & Present* 38 (December, 1967), 126-52; J.M. Winter, 'Arthur Henderson, the Russian Revolution, and the Reconstruction of the Labour Party', *The Historical Journal* 15, 4 (December, 1972), 753-73; Stephen White, 'Labour's Council of Action, 1920', *Journal of Contemporary History* 9, 4 (1974), 99-122; Stephen White, 'Soviets in Britain: The Leeds Convention of 1917', *International Review of Social History* 19, 2 (1974), 165-93; Stephen White, 'British Labour in Soviet Russia, 1920', *The English Historical Review* 109, 432 (June, 1994), 621-40; Jonathan Davis, 'Left Out in the Cold: British Labour Witnesses the Russian Revolution', *Revolutionary Russia* 18, 1 (2005), 71-87; Laura Sumner, 'Fellow Travellers? How the British Labour Delegation to Russia 1920 Perceived Soviet Workers' (2012). M.A. Dissertation: University of Nottingham.

¹⁷ Kevin Morgan, *Bolshevism and the British Left vol. I: Labour Legends and Russian Gold* (London, 2006); *vol. II: The Webbs and Soviet Communism* (London, 2006); *vol. III: Bolshevism, Syndicalism and the General Strike: The Lost Internationalist World of A.A. Purcell* (London, 2013).

¹⁸ For the CPGB's 'official' history of its own foundation, see: James Klugmann, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain, vol. I: Formation and Early Years, 1919-1924* (London, 1968). For a broadly sympathetic account which nevertheless argued that the attempt to build a revolutionary party was out of step with the non-revolutionary times, see: L.J. Macfarlane, *The British Communist Party: Its Origin and Development until 1929* (London, 1966). For the argument that it was an 'alien' imposition, albeit for greatly differing reasons, see: Henry Pelling, *The British Communist Party: A Historical Profile* (London, 1958); Walter Kendall, *The Revolutionary Movement in Britain, 1900-1921: The Origins of British Communism*

relationship between the CPGB and the Comintern, and especially the shifting power dynamics between the two bodies.¹⁹ This has led also to fruitful debates around the nature of the ‘Bolshevisation’ and ‘Stalinisation’ of the CPGB in the 1920s and 1930s,²⁰ and to comparative studies across the parties of the Comintern.²¹ As well as engaging with the ‘high politics’ of the CPGB’s history, scholars have sought to reconstruct the Communist experience, its culture and everyday life.²² Rather fewer studies have focused on the small ‘ultra-left’, who opposed the CPGB as revolutionary socialists.²³

Compared with the huge historiography looking at the political history of the CPGB, fewer studies have focused on the impact the Russian Revolution made on British socialism as an ideology and philosophy, or on how the ideas of British socialists influenced their interpretations of the Russian Revolution. Even so, there have been several landmark studies of British Marxism. Stuart Macintyre and Jonathan Rée investigated the engagement of working-class

(London, 1969); Raymond Challinor, *The Origins of British Bolshevism* (London, 1977). For a broad overview of the history of British Communism, see: Keith Laybourn & Dylan Murphy, *Under the Red Flag: A History of Communism in Britain, c. 1849-1991* (Stroud, 1999).

¹⁹ For the argument that the Comintern’s power over the CPGB has been over-emphasised, see: Nina Fishman, *The British Communist Party and the Trade Unions, 1933-45* (Aldershot, 1995); Andrew Thorpe, ‘Comintern “Control” of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1920-43’, *The English Historical Review* 113, 452 (June, 1998), 637-62; Andrew Thorpe, *The British Communist Party and Moscow, 1920-1943* (Manchester, 2000); Matthew Worley, *Class Against Class: The Communist Party in Britain Between the Wars* (London, 2002). For the counter-argument, see for example: James Eaden & David Renton, *The Communist Party of Great Britain since 1920* (Basingstoke, 2002); John McIlroy & Alan Campbell, ‘A Peripheral Vision: Communist Historiography in Britain’, *American Communist History* 4, 2 (2005), 125-57. For an introduction to this debate, see: Jonathan Newsinger, ‘Recent Controversies in the History of British Communism’, *Journal of Contemporary History* 41, 3 (July, 2006), 557-72.

²⁰ John McIlroy, ‘The Establishment of Intellectual Orthodoxy and the Stalinisation of British Communism, 1928-1933’, *Past & Present* 192 (August, 2006), 187-226; Matthew Worley, Kevin Morgan & Norman LaPorte (eds), *Bolshevism, Stalinism and the Comintern: Perspectives on Stalinisation, 1917-53* (Basingstoke, 2008).

²¹ For instance: Norman LaPorte & Matthew Worley, ‘Towards a Comparative History of Communism: The British and German Communist Parties to 1933’, *Contemporary British History* 22, 2 (June, 2008), 227-55.

²² See: Geoff Andrews, Nina Fishman & Kevin Morgan (eds), *Opening the Books: Essays on the Social and Cultural History of the British Communist Party* (London, 1995); John McIlroy, Kevin Morgan & Alan Campbell (eds), *Party People, Communist Lives* (London, 2001); Thomas Linehan, *Communism in Britain, 1920-39: From the Cradle to the Grave* (Manchester, 2007).

²³ See: R.F. Jones, ‘Anti-Parliamentarism and Communism in Britain, 1917-1921’ (1984) [online] available at <http://www.freecomunism.org/anti-parliamentarism-and-communism-in-britain-1917-1921-r-f-jones/> [Accessed 10.8.2017]; Mark Shipway, *Anti-Parliamentary Communism: The Movement for Workers’ Councils in Britain, 1917-45* (London, 1988); Ian Bullock, ‘The Original British “Ultra-Left”, 1917-1924’, *Socialist History* 44 (2014), 1-20.

‘autodidacts’ with Marxism and Leninism in the Labour Colleges and the study groups of revolutionary socialist parties.²⁴ Neal Wood argued that the CPGB inherited the traditionally British empirical mindset which characterised the rest of the labour movement, at odds with the ‘rationalism’ of continental Communism,²⁵ while Edwin Roberts focused his study on academic Marxists in Britain, arguing that a particular ‘Anglo-Marxism’ emerged around the intellectuals of the CPGB between the 1930s and 1950s, prefiguring the ‘analytical Marxism’ of the late 1970s and 1980s.²⁶ For more immediate ideological responses to the Russian Revolution and the construction of the Soviet state, Martin Durham and Ian Bullock have both studied the attitudes of British revolutionaries towards democracy and dictatorship in the years after 1917.²⁷

Studies on the ideological responses of reformist or democratic socialists to the Russian Revolution have been less forthcoming. Historians have stressed the negative influence which the Bolsheviks had on the Labour Party, pushing it further towards reformism.²⁸ The chief positive influence of Soviet ideas on British Labour came in the 1930s, after the Great Depression spurred Labour thinkers to a deeper engagement with problems of nationalisation and economic planning.²⁹ Jonathan Davis argued recently that the Russian Revolution had a far more profound effect on British socialist ideology than has been recognised, and that the events of 1917 provoked debates around ideas of workers’ control, the nature of social ownership, and issues of political democracy.³⁰

²⁴ Stuart Macintyre, *A Proletarian Science: Marxism in Britain, 1917-1933* (London, 1980); Jonathan Rée, *Proletarian Philosophers: Problems in Socialist Culture in Britain, 1900-40* (Oxford, 1984).

²⁵ Neal Wood, ‘The Empirical Proletarians: A Note on British Communism’, *Political Science Quarterly* 74, 2 (June, 1959), 256-72.

²⁶ Edwin A. Roberts, *The Anglo-Marxists: A Study in Ideology and Culture* (Oxford, 1997).

²⁷ Martin Durham, ‘British Revolutionaries and the Suppression of the Left in Lenin’s Russia, 1918-1924’, *Journal of Contemporary History* 20, 2: Working-Class and Left-Wing Politics (April, 1985), 203-19; Ian Bullock, *Romancing the Revolution: The Myth of Soviet Democracy and the British Left* (Alberta, 2011).

²⁸ J.M. Winter, *Socialism and the Challenge of War: Ideas and Politics in Britain, 1912-18* (Boston, 1974).

²⁹ See: Richard Toye, *The Labour Party and the Planned Economy, 1931-1951* (Suffolk, 2003); Jonathan Davis, ‘Labour’s Political Thought: The Soviet Influence in the Interwar Years’ in *The British Labour Party and the Wider World: Domestic Politics, Internationalism and Foreign Policy* edited by Paul Corthorn & Jonathan Davis (London, 2008), pp. 64-85.

³⁰ Jonathan Davis, ‘A New Socialist Influence: British Labour and Revolutionary Russia, 1917-1918’, *Scottish Labour History* 48 (2013), 158-79.

The impact of the Russian Revolution on British socialism has a well-developed historiography, but there remains much to be uncovered. Despite the sheer volume of socialist writing about the emotions of revolution, this topic is rarely touched upon directly in the scholarship. No previous studies have sought to trace the shifting place of emotion in socialist discourse from the ‘socialist revival’ of the 1880s through the period of war and revolution to the 1920s.

This focus on the emotions of revolution, as seen by British socialists, has implications for many more familiar themes. These include socialist attitudes about democracy and dictatorship, the nature of a socialist society, class struggle, national antagonism, the role of a socialist party, and the relationship between socialism and the sciences. With limited exceptions, which shall be introduced when appropriate in the body of the thesis, ‘British socialism and the emotions of revolution’ is virgin soil. Yet, I will argue that understanding socialist attitudes towards the complexity of human nature, including its ‘non-rational’ side, its passions, instincts, and emotions, is crucial for a fuller understanding of socialist ideology.

Why Emotion? Why Now?

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
 The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
 Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
 Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
 The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
 The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
 The best lack all conviction, while the worst
 Are full of passionate intensity.

- W.B. Yeats, 1919.³¹

Written in part as a response to the Russian Revolution, W.B. Yeats’ poem ‘The Second Coming’ has become ‘possibly the most thoroughly pillaged piece of literature in English’.³² Over the last few years it has been quoted and referenced

³¹ W.B. Yeats, ‘The Second Coming’, *The Dial* (November, 1920), 466.

³² Nick Taylor, ‘No Slouch’, *Paris Review* 7.4.2015 [online] available at <https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2015/04/07/no-slouch/> [Accessed 31.7.2017].

in news articles at a historically high rate.³³ Strong emotion, the ‘passionate intensity’ of Yeats, is commonly invoked to describe and explain the political movements and events of today, particularly those seen to be outside the normal boundaries of liberal-democratic politics.

This discourse highlighting the role of emotion in politics is often impoverished. In everyday political journalism, emotion is often simply invoked to contrast the irrational and the rational, rather than in support of any more meaningful idea.³⁴ Political commentators often explain the behaviour of their opponents as emotionally motivated to highlight their own cool-headedness, rather than seriously trying to understand the role of emotion in politics and society. An especially prominent reading of contemporary events sees liberal reason as under siege from all sides by intensely passionate forces. *The Guardian* despaired that Britain’s vote to leave the European Union showed ‘voters being increasingly motivated by emotion, rather than economic choices’.³⁵ According to *The Economist*, the vote for Brexit was part of the general development of a ‘politics of anger’: ‘Across Western democracies, from the America of Donald Trump to the France of Marine Le Pen, large numbers of people are enraged’.³⁶ Numerous opinion pieces have explained recent American politics by arguing that ‘emotion Trumps logic’,³⁷ while one

³³ Ed Ballard, ‘Terror, Brexit and U.S. Election Have Made 2016 the Year of Yeats’, *Wall Street Journal* 23.8.2016 [online] available at <https://www.wsj.com/articles/terror-brexit-and-u-s-election-have-made-2016-the-year-of-yeats-1471970174> [Accessed 31.7.2017].

³⁴ Passion is often distrusted in the public realm, but prized in the private sphere when it can be achieved: within the family, within personal relationships, in job applications, and in our habits of consumption. Alfa Romeo recently launched a campaign ‘called #FindYourPassion – designed to reflect its own passionate heritage and to help the British public put passion back into their lives’; unfortunately, in their survey 46% of respondents claimed work commitments prevented them from doing so. See: ‘Sir David Attenborough Named as the UK’s Most Passionate Person’ 16.2.2016 [online] available at <http://www.alfaromeo.co.uk/alfa-romeo-world/passion/alfa-news/2016/david-attengorough-2016> [Accessed 28.7.2017].

³⁵ Peter Walker, ‘Poorer voters’ worries on immigration fuelled Brexit vote, study finds’, *Guardian* 15.12.2016 [online] available at <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/dec/15/poorer-voters-worries-immigration-fuelled-brexit-vote-study-finds> [Accessed 28.7.2017].

³⁶ ‘The Politics of Anger’, *Economist* 2.7.2016 [online] available at <http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21701478-triumph-brexit-campaign-warning-liberal-international-order-politics> [Accessed 28.7.2017].

³⁷ See, for instance: Richard Ashby Wilson, ‘Demagogues in history: Why Trump emphasizes emotion over facts’, *Conversation* 28.1.2016 [online] available at <https://theconversation.com/demagogues-in-history-why-trump-emphasizes-emotion-over-facts-53082> [Accessed 28.7.2017]; Alfred Hermida, ‘Trump and why emotion triumphs over fact when everyone is the media’, *Conversation* 16.11.2016 [online] available at

piece invited the reader to ‘meet the emotional Sanders supporters booing the DNC’.³⁸ It is not only liberal centrism that feels itself under threat from emotional extremists, however. One American conservative website lists hundreds of articles demonstrating how ‘liberal crybabies’ are more apt to ‘formulate their beliefs based upon other people’s emotional outbursts and bumper stickers rather than rational thought and objective examination of facts’.³⁹

As well as this politically partisan journalism, a growing body of psychological research has sought to settle the question: ‘are leftists more emotion-driven than rightists?’⁴⁰ One recent study of left-wing and right-wing Israelis found that ‘Liberals are more emotion-driven than Conservatives’, results which the authors expected to find replicated across other cultures.⁴¹ Others found, however, that ‘greater liberalism was associated with increased grey matter volume in the anterior cingulate cortex, whereas greater conservatism was associated with increased volume of the right amygdala’, the

<https://theconversation.com/trump-and-why-emotion-triumphs-over-fact-when-everyone-is-the-media-68924> [Accessed 28.7.2017].

³⁸ Tessa Stuart, ‘Bernie or Bust: Meet the Emotional Sanders Supporters Booing the DNC’, *Rolling Stone* 26.7.2016 [online] available at <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/features/bernie-or-bust-meet-the-emotional-sanders-supporters-booing-the-dnc-w430921> [Accessed 28.7.2017].

³⁹ ‘Liberals use emotion instead of reason when making important decisions’ (2017) [online] available at <http://akdart.com/lib72.html> [Accessed 28.7.2017]. As the sociologist Wilfred Trotter wrote in 1908:

... beliefs are invariably regarded by the holder as rational, and defended as such, while the position of one who holds contrary views is held to be obviously unreasonable. The religious man accuses the atheist of being shallow and irrational, and is met by a similar reply; to the Conservative, the amazing thing about the Liberal is his incapacity to see reason and accept the only possible solution of public problems.

Wilfred Trotter, ‘Herd Instinct and Its Bearing on the Psychology of Civilised Man’, *Sociological Review* 1, 3 (1908), 245.

⁴⁰ Ruthie Pliskin et al., ‘Are Leftists More Emotion-Driven Than Rightists? The Interactive Influence of Ideology and Emotions on Support for Policies’, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 40, 12 (December, 2014), 1681-97.

⁴¹ See: ‘Liberals Are More Emotion-Driven Than Conservatives’, *Society for Personality and Social Psychology* 13.11.2014 [online] available at <http://www.spsp.org/news-center/press-releases/liberals-are-more-emotion-driven-conservatives> [Accessed 28.7.2017].

latter associated with emotional processing.⁴² Conservatives, therefore, are more driven by emotions like fear and disgust than liberals.⁴³

To commentators of all political backgrounds at the present time, the world appears saturated with destabilising emotion. This is especially the case regarding the revolutions of the twenty-first century. It is well known how the public self-immolation of a vegetable seller called Mohamed Bouazizi sparked the Jasmine Revolution of 2010-11, which overthrew the Tunisian President Ben Ali and led to the revolutionary wave known as the Arab Spring. For Ainius Lašas, without understanding such emotional elements as ‘collective humiliation, frustration and anger’ overcoming ‘fears of retribution and death’ there was no way to understand the dynamics of this revolutionary wave. Yet, he argued, ‘relatively few political scientists have taken the role of emotions seriously’.⁴⁴

The History of Emotions: Methods and Sources

Sensibility in history, a good subject for eminent amateurs ... Quickly, let us get back to *real history* – is not that the feeling? To the circumstances surrounding the Pritchard affair. To the question of the Holy Places. To the listing of salt stores in 1563. That is history. The history which we should teach our children in the classroom and our students in the universities. But the history of hate, the history of fear, the history of cruelty, the history of love, for goodness’ sake stop bothering us with that empty talk! But the subject of such empty talk, which has so little to do with humanity, will tomorrow have finally made our universe into a stinking pit of corpses.

- Lucien Febvre, 1941.⁴⁵

The chosen subject of this thesis is, in large part, inspired by recent developments in the so-called ‘history of emotions’. This is part of a broader trend within the humanities, often dubbed the ‘emotional turn’ or the ‘affective

⁴² Ryota Kanai et al., ‘Political Orientations Are Correlated with Brain Structure in Young Adults’, *Current Biology* 21 (2011), 677-80.

⁴³ It would be interesting to revive the study of Lenin’s brain, to see where he would have fitted on their five-point scale from liberal to conservative.

⁴⁴ Ainius Lašas, ‘Bringing Emotions into Understanding Revolutions’, *United Nations University* 12.4.2011 [online] available at <https://unu.edu/publications/articles/the-role-of-emotions-in-politics.html> [Accessed 22.8.2017].

See also: Wendy Pearlman, ‘Emotions and the Microfoundations of the Arab Uprisings’, *Perspectives on Politics* 11, 2 (June, 2013), 387-409.

⁴⁵ Lucien Febvre, ‘Sensibility and History: How to Reconstitute the Emotional Life of the Past’, *New Kind of History: From the Writings of Febvre* (London, 1973), p. 26.

turn' by its supporters, many of whom consider it to be of the same importance for historical writing as the 'linguistic' or 'cultural turn'.⁴⁶ Scholars working in a variety of different fields have argued for giving more attention to the emotions, including archaeology,⁴⁷ international relations,⁴⁸ pedagogy,⁴⁹ and sociology.⁵⁰ Meanwhile, critical introductions to the history of emotions continue to proliferate in journals devoted to various aspects of history.⁵¹ In order to show how my research relates to this sub-field, I will briefly describe the history of emotions, its prominent theorists and central themes.

'Emotions' are commonly thought to be biologically universal, and therefore without history. Would not an Elizabethan playwright have shared the emotions of a twentieth-century psychoanalyst, each sharing the same bodily frame? Historians of emotion have sought to undermine this assumption, arguing that 'emotions' do change historically, through interaction with changing social and cultural institutions, discourses, and moral codes. Nevertheless, most historians eschew any strong 'social constructionism' and do not see emotions as entirely learned behaviour. As Susan Matt wrote:

Historians of the emotions share the conviction that feelings are never strictly biological or chemical occurrences; neither are they wholly created by language and

⁴⁶ See: Jan Plamper, *The History of Emotions: An Introduction* (Oxford, 2015).

⁴⁷ Sarah Tarlow, 'The Archaeology of Emotion and Affect', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41 (2012), 169-85.

⁴⁸ Neta C. Crawford, 'The Passion of World Politics: Propositions on Emotion and Emotional Relationships', *International Security* 24, 4 (Spring, 2000), 116-56.

⁴⁹ Michalinos Zembylas, 'Emotional Capital and Education: Theoretical Insights from Bourdieu', *British Journal of Educational Studies* 55, 4 (December, 2007), 443-63.

⁵⁰ Jonathan H. Turner, 'The Sociology of Emotions: Basic Theoretical Arguments', *Emotion Review* 1, 4 (October, 2009), 340-54.

⁵¹ See, for some recent examples: William M. Reddy, 'Emotional Turn? Feelings in Russian History and Culture', *Slavic Review* 68, 2 (Summer, 2009), 329-34; Willemijn Ruberg, 'Interdisciplinarity and the History of Emotions', *Cultural and Social History* 6, 4 (2009), 507-16; 'Forum: History of Emotions', *German History* 28, 1 (2010), 67-80; Michael Freeden, 'Emotions, ideology and politics', *Journal of Political Ideologies* 18, 1 (2013), 1-10; Petri Rolf, 'The Idea of Culture and the History of Emotions', *Historein* 12 (2012), 21-37; Erin Sullivan, 'The History of Emotions: Past, Present, Future', *Cultural History* 2, 1 (2013), 93-102; Marco Menin, "'Who Will Write the History of Tears?'" History of Ideas and History of Emotions from Eighteenth-Century France to the Present', *History of European Ideas* 40, 4 (2014), 516-32; Stephanie Trigg, 'Introduction: Emotional Histories – Beyond the Personalization of the Past and the Abstraction of Affect Theory', *Exemplaria* 26, 1 (Spring, 2014), 3-15; Christian Bailey, 'The History of Emotions', *Contemporary European History* 25, 1 (2016), 163-75; Otniel E. Dror, Bettina Hitzer, Anja Laukötter & Pilar León-Sanz, 'An Introduction to History of Science and the Emotions', *Osiris* 31 (2016), 1-18; 'An Interview with Jan Plamper: On the History of Emotions', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 18, 3 (Summer, 2017), 453-60.

society. Instead, feelings are something in between. They have a neurological basis but are shaped, repressed, expressed differently from place to place and era to era.⁵²

An Elizabethan playwright might enjoy or endure the same underlying ‘emotional experience’ as the twentieth-century psychoanalyst, but as soon as he came to reflect on his experience, to express it and act upon it, he would do so in a historically-conditioned way. His language, for instance, might be informed by the theory of the four humours, saturated with particular moral and medical meanings which would be alien to the modern man. Moreover, many historians of emotion have drawn on contemporary psychological theories to argue that the relationship between what is felt and how it is interpreted cognitively is reflexive rather than unidirectional. For them, it is impossible to entirely separate out a universal ‘experience’ and culturally-specific ‘expression’ or ‘interpretation’ because of the mutual interaction between these factors.⁵³

The history of emotions is not entirely new, many scholars grappled with similar themes long before this ‘turn’. In the first half of the twentieth century, eminent historians of ‘sensibilities’ like Johan Huizinga,⁵⁴ Lucien Febvre,⁵⁵ and Norbert Elias engaged with the emotions.⁵⁶ More recently, scholars like Theodore Zeldin,⁵⁷ Raymond Williams,⁵⁸ and Peter Gay spurred interest in the historicity of feeling and of how feeling has been understood.⁵⁹

The current wave of interest owes its strength primarily to three key scholars or partnerships, each with their own set of basic concepts: Peter and

⁵² Susan Matt, ‘Current Emotion Research in History: Or, Doing History from the Inside Out’, *Emotion Review* 3, 1 (January, 2011), 118.

⁵³ This problem is contentious. For some, ‘affect’ is always prior to ideology and articulation, as distinct from ‘emotion’ which is a ‘socio-linguistic fixing’ of this prior affect. For an influential statement of this idea, see: Brian Massumi, ‘The Autonomy of Affect’, *Cultural Critique* 31 (Autumn, 1995), 83-109. For a critique of Affect Theory, see: Ruth Leys, ‘The Turn to Affect: A Critique’, *Critical Inquiry* 37, 3 (Spring, 2011), 434-72.

⁵⁴ Johan Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (London, 1922). For an overview of work on ‘sensibilities’, see: Daniel Wickberg, ‘What is the History of Sensibilities? On Cultural Histories, Old and New’, *American Historical Review* 112, 3 (June, 2007), 661-84.

⁵⁵ Febvre, ‘Sensibility and History’, pp. 12-26.

⁵⁶ Norbert Elias, *The Civilising Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations* edited by Eric Dunning, Johan Goudsblom & Stephen Mennell (Oxford, 2000). See: Robert van Krieken, ‘Norbert Elias and Emotions in History’ in *Emotions and Social Change: Historical and Sociological Perspectives* (London, 2014), pp. 19-42.

⁵⁷ Theodore Zeldin, *A History of French Passions, 1848-1945* (1973-7).

⁵⁸ Raymond Williams, ‘Structures of Feeling’ in *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford, 1977), pp. 128-35.

⁵⁹ Peter Gay, *The Bourgeois Experience* (1984-1998).

Carol Stearns, William M. Reddy, and Barbara Rosenwein. Peter and Carol Stearns have based their research around the idea of ‘emotionology’, which they define as:

The attitudes or standards that a society, or a definable group within a society, maintains towards basic emotions and their appropriate expression [and] ways that institutions reflect and encourage these attitudes in human conduct...⁶⁰

For the Stearns, emotional ‘experience’ is inaccessible to historians, at least directly. Their focus is instead on the norms governing the expression of emotions, which are more readily accessible to historians working with textual sources.⁶¹

William Reddy drew on work in cultural anthropology, cognitive psychology, and speech act theory to build an extensive conceptual framework around the central idea of ‘emotives’, which can only be briefly introduced here.⁶² ‘Emotives’ are utterances or expressions which seek to communicate an emotional state.⁶³ Reddy emphasised the ‘self-exploratory’ quality of such utterances, playing on the reflexivity inherent to expressions of emotion. Within limits, emotives shape and modify the underlying, incommunicable quality of feeling even as they attempt to ‘translate’ it into speech. The scripts available to historical agents in different situations, in attempting to translate their feeling and thereby shaping its quality, are historically and culturally contingent. They are also deeply political; for Reddy, ‘emotional control is the real site of the exercise of power’.⁶⁴ He defined an ‘emotional regime’ in similar terms to the ‘emotionology’ of the Stearns, though more obviously concerned with relations of power, as:

⁶⁰ Peter N. Stearns & Carol Z. Stearns, ‘Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards’, *American Historical Review* 90, 4 (October, 1985), 813.

⁶¹ The Stearns’ work on ‘emotionologies’ includes *Anger: The Struggle for Emotional Control in America’s History* (Chicago, 1989) and *American Cool: Constructing a Twentieth-Century Emotional Style* (New York, 1994).

⁶² See, especially: William M. Reddy, ‘The Logic of Action: Indeterminacy, Emotion, and Historical Narrative’, *History and Theory* 40, 4 (December, 2001), 10-33; William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge, 2001).

⁶³ In Reddy’s terms, an ‘emotive’ is ‘a type of speech act different from both performative and constative utterances, which both describes (like constative utterances) and changes (like performatives) the world, because emotional expression has an exploratory and a self-altering effect on the activated thought material of emotion’. Reddy, *Navigation of Feeling*, p. 128.

⁶⁴ William M. Reddy, ‘Against Constructionism: The Historical Ethnography of Emotions’, *Current Anthropology* 38 (June, 1997), 335.

The set of normative emotions and the official rituals, practices, and emotives that express and inculcate them; a necessary underpinning of any stable political regime.⁶⁵

For Reddy, the task for historians of emotion is to investigate changes in these regimes governing ‘normative’ expressions of emotion. These changes would chiefly be driven by the conflicts between prevailing emotive scripts and incommunicable feeling in different situations, leading to the creation of ‘emotional refuges’ in which new normative emotions can be developed – whether these be in new cultural forms, new political spaces, new personal relations, or myriad other potential outlets.

The medieval historian Barbara Rosenwein sought to modify Reddy’s theory, which she saw as too obviously constructed around the modern political state to provide an over-arching framework for the history of emotions.⁶⁶ Rosenwein preferred to think of myriad social groups as ‘emotional communities’, as she wrote:

These are precisely the same as social communities – families, neighbourhoods, parliaments, guilds, monasteries, parish church memberships – but the researcher looking at them seeks above all to uncover systems of feeling: what these communities (and the individuals within them) define and assess as valuable or harmful to them; the evaluations that they make about others’ emotions; the nature of the affective bonds between people that they recognise; and the modes of emotional expression that they expect, encourage, tolerate, and deplore.⁶⁷

These ‘emotional communities’ were expected to overlap, interact, and change, becoming entwined with ‘power and politics’ without being reducible to them. Rosenwein’s chief concern appears to have been to rescue medieval history from becoming a ‘pre-history’ of emotions, imagined as a period of natural and childish emotion unmediated by culture before the development of the modern state. Her framework allows for the absence of a hegemonic ‘emotionology’ of a nation, or an ‘emotional regime’ associated with a centralised state, but also for the emergence of these.

⁶⁵ Reddy, *Navigation of Feeling*, p. 129.

⁶⁶ Barbara H. Rosenwein, ‘Problems and Methods in the History of Emotions’, *Passions in Context* 1, 1 (2010), 22-3.

⁶⁷ Barbara H. Rosenwein, ‘Worrying about Emotions in History’, *American Historical Review* 107, 3 (June, 2002), 842. Rosenwein has pursued this research project in a number of works, including: Barbara H. Rosenwein (ed.), *Anger’s Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages* (London, 1998); *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (London, 2006); *Generations of Feeling: A History of Emotions, 600-1700* (Cambridge, 2016).

These three approaches primarily use textual sources to trace the changing ways emotions have been expressed and discussed, including etiquette books, literature, scripture, scientific texts, speeches, and political works. Such ‘public’ sources, hinting at communal norms rather than personal experience, have often been supplemented with diaries, private letters, and autobiographical writing, to discover how individuals have sought to negotiate these broader emotional rules and rituals in practice.

Since the Stearns, Reddy, and Rosenwein wrote their programmatic texts, other scholars have developed their own terminology and theoretical approaches for the history of emotions. They are often critical of the way that the Stearns, Reddy, and Rosenwein are restricted to researching shifting discourses about emotions, rather than ‘emotion itself’. Inspired by Pierre Bourdieu and ‘practice theory’, Monique Scheer writes of ‘emotional practices’,⁶⁸ and Andreas Reckwitz of ‘affective spaces’.⁶⁹ Benno Gammerl prefers to focus on what he calls ‘emotional styles’, encompassing the ways in which historical actors experience, manage, and display emotions as embodied agents.⁷⁰ In practice, the differences between these frameworks are often subtle, attempting to refine the metaphors used to capture historical emotions beyond the text.

For this research, I will remain with discourses about the emotions rather than attempting to reach beyond the text. My sources are primarily published texts of socialist theory and commentary on current affairs. Any comment on the emotional experience of British socialists will be incidental to the primary goal of establishing the theories of emotion informing British socialist ideology. By empirically examining the political discourses which defined a ‘British socialist emotional community’, in Rosenwein’s terms, this research lays necessary foundations for a more ambitious and theoretical project. New conceptual frameworks and theories influenced by current psychological theories of emotion may only be tested once the complex web of meanings attached to

⁶⁸ Monique Scheer, ‘Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (And is That What Makes Them Have a History)? A Bourdieuan Approach to Understanding Emotion’, *History and Theory* 51 (May, 2012), 193-220.

⁶⁹ Andreas Reckwitz, ‘Affective Spaces: A Praxeological Outlook’, *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice* 16, 2 (2012), 241-58.

⁷⁰ Benno Gammerl, ‘Emotional Styles – Concepts and Challenges’, *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice* 16, 2 (2012), 161-75.

emotion in a given historical context has been discovered. This project has implications for the intellectual and political history of the socialist movement in this period, and is testable against the available primary sources.

The Structure of the Thesis

In the first chapter, to provide historical foundations for the remaining chapters, I will take a broad view, describing what numerous scholars have called the ‘discourse of the passions’ in Western political philosophy from around the seventeenth century onwards. I will engage particularly with Albert Hirschman and those influenced by his work, who have argued that the idea of ‘economic self-interest’ developed as Western political philosophers sought to find a force which might check transgressive, revolutionary passions. I will place Karl Marx within this context of this ‘discourse of the passions’, arguing that his attempt to grasp the multifaceted emotional forces of human nature was crucial for his socialism, and for the critique of the bourgeois-liberal reification of avarice.

In chapter two I turn to the British ‘socialist revival’ of the 1880s and 1890s, showing how theorists like William Morris and E. Belfort Bax responded to Marx’s critique. British socialists placed the passion known as ‘sympathy’, ‘solidarity’, or ‘fellowship’ to the fore, as an integral and universal source of socialist feeling, driving the struggle against inhuman conditions of late Victorian capitalism. They sought to negotiate the Darwinian revolution, and the rise of a biological discourse of ‘instinct’ and ‘emotion’ which challenged their ethical and meaningful conception of ‘the passions’. In attempting to meet this challenge, socialists sought to reframe the critique of capitalism around biological categories. They emphasised such concepts as the ‘social instinct’ of Karl Pearson and William Trotter’s ‘herd instinct’ to account for ‘natural socialism’ and to attack the damaging artificiality of economic egoism.

From this basis, I turn to the period of European upheaval, of unrest, war, and revolution. In chapter three I show how the industrial ‘Great Unrest’ of 1910-14 and the Great War of 1914-1918 spurred socialists to a searching confrontation with the emotions driving struggle between classes and nations. This context of catastrophe deeply influenced the way that British socialists

responded to the Russian Revolution, and they welcomed the successful overthrow of the Tsar as a vindication of all the values which the unrest and the war had threatened. Throughout 1917 socialists stressed the power of the ‘higher sentiments’, the unification of reason and social sympathy, as driving forces of the revolutionary movement.

This optimism was short-lived, however, as the Russian Revolution failed to live up to the promise socialists had seen in it. New interpretations of the emotions of revolution, no longer resting on the power of the ‘higher sentiments’, became necessary to explain the course of the revolution. In the fourth and fifth chapters, I show how the theories of Leninism and of Freudian psychoanalysis shared a moment of intense interest among British socialists in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution. Both opponents of the Bolshevik regime like Bertrand Russell, and defenders of the Soviet state in the CPGB, drew on psychoanalytical themes to understand the meaning of 1917, to predict the direction of the revolution, and to inform their own approaches to socialism. The fourth chapter follows democratic socialists and psychological writers as they responded to the Bolshevik Revolution and the formation of the Soviet state, as they re-interpreted the emotions driving the Russian Revolution in light of the New Psychology. The fifth chapter takes a close look at Cedar and Eden Paul, two early supporters of the Bolshevik dictatorship who also championed the New Psychology. I argue that the ideas of the New Psychology about instinct and emotion were important for British Communists’ early interpretations of Bolshevism.

In the sixth chapter, I advance into the 1920s, showing how socialists in the Labour Party articulated their project in terms of rational restraint and institutional reform, desiring to make use of scientific knowledge about the emotions to guide the reconstruction of society without descending into revolution. The conclusion draws together the major arguments of the thesis, indicating its key contributions for the historiography of British socialism, the international impact of the Russian Revolution, and the history of emotions. I will evaluate the limitations of the study, and make suggestions for further research.

Chapter One. Passion, Restraint, and Revolution: The ‘Discourse of the Passions’ in Western Political Philosophy

The revolution of a gifted people which we have seen unfolding in our day may succeed or miscarry; it may be filled with misery and atrocities to the point that a sensible man, were he boldly to hope to execute it successfully the second time, would never resolve to make the experiment at such cost – this revolution, I say, nonetheless finds in the hearts of all spectators (who are not engaged in this game themselves) a wishful participation that borders closely on enthusiasm, the very expression of which is fraught with danger; this sympathy, therefore, can have no other cause than a moral predisposition in the human race.

- Immanuel Kant, 1798.¹

Very frightful it is when a Nation, rending asunder its Constitutions and Regulations which were grown dead cerements for it, becomes transcendental; and must now seek its wild way through the New, Chaotic,—where Force is not yet distinguished into Bidden and Forbidden, but Crime and Virtue welter unseparated,—in that domain of what is called the Passions; of what we call the Miracles and the Portents!

- Thomas Carlyle, 1837.²

British socialists understood the Russian Revolution by placing it within the context of a long historical series of European upheavals, and their thinking about the emotions of revolution drew on ideas developed by observers of these previous moments. This chapter looks at the place of the ‘passions’ in Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment thought from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth century, building on recent works in the history of political philosophy which have sought to draw attention to the central place of passion in the conceptual frameworks of modern thinkers. For all the philosophers analysed in this chapter, the ‘discourse of the passions’ was entwined with their thinking about revolution, mass politics, the role of the state, and the perfection of society.

Writing about the passions crossed disciplinary boundaries. Passions were implicated in everything from politics, ethics, and theology, to medicine and physiology. As I will discuss, political philosophers developed large and complicated metaphysical edifices to explain various terms associated with the non-rational side of human nature, and disagreed over their definitions and

¹ Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties* translated by Mary J. Gregor, Lewis Beck, Robert Anchor & Emil Fackenheim (New York, 1979), p. 153.

² Thomas Carlyle, *The French Revolution: A History* (New York, 1923), p. 473.

catalogues of individual passions with as much gusto as present-day psychologists of emotion. The varied frameworks developed by Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment philosophers displayed common themes, however, allowing us to speak of a shared ‘discourse of the passions’ across their many differences. The passions were associated with the body and with immersion in the world, belonging to beings who were a mixture of the spiritual and corporeal.³ For Spinoza, passions were ‘inadequate ideas’ – only in the consciousness of the ‘unmoved mover’ could perfected ‘adequate ideas’ be found, entirely free of passion.⁴ Passion registered the impact of external forces on the individual subject, reflected and refracted through the body as an idea of the mind. As such, it was through the passions that individual autonomy appeared to be vulnerable to external influences beyond rational control. As Susan James wrote:

... philosophers [of the seventeenth century] worked within an intellectual milieu in which the passions were regarded as an overbearing and inescapable element of human nature, liable to disrupt any civilised order, philosophy included, unless they were tamed, outwitted, overruled, or seduced.⁵

Historians of the ‘discourse of the passions’ from the seventeenth century until the nineteenth century commonly describe a central inherited tension between Aristotelian or Stoic attitudes towards the passions, and Augustinian attitudes, though few important thinkers could be described as unequivocally aligned with one or the other.⁶ The ideal Stoic contrasted passion with reason, prizing the ideal of *apatheia*, self-control and curtailment of the passions. The ideal Augustinian emphasised the virtuous passions, seeing them as an integral part of what it was to be human. In this chapter I examine a key tension within Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment thought following this division, between the impulse towards the liberation of passions understood as positive forces, and

³ This was not always true, as David Dwan noted: ‘Locke had called the movement of a billiard ball its “passion”’. David Dwan, ‘Edmund Burke and the Emotions’, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 72, 4 (October, 2011), 578.

⁴ Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics* translated by Andrew Boyle (London, 1910) ‘Third Part: Concerning the Origin and Nature of the Emotions’.

⁵ Susan James, *Passion and Action: The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy* (Oxford, 1999), p. 1.

⁶ See, for instance: Johannes Brachtendorf, ‘Cicero and Augustine on the Passions’, *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 43 (1997), 289-308; Stephen Gaukroger, ‘Introduction’ in *The Soft Underbelly of Reason: The Passions in the Seventeenth Century* edited by Stephen Gaukroger (London, 1998), pp. 1-14.

the impulse towards the restraint of passions understood as destructive of social order.

It was not for nothing that René Descartes entitled the first part of his work *The Passions of the Soul* (1649): ‘Of the Passions in General, and Incidentally the Whole Nature of Man’.⁷ For thinkers as diverse as Thomas Hobbes, Edmund Burke, Jeremy Bentham, Charles Fourier and, as I shall argue, Karl Marx, the key to the development of a scientific politics on the Galilean or Newtonian model lay in understanding particularly human ‘laws of motion’, and therefore in understanding the passions which drove human behaviour. As I will discuss, scholars have shown how nineteenth-century liberal thought engaged with the ‘discourse of the passions’, arguing that social upheavals could be prevented by disciplining the passions and championing economic self-interest as a countervailing force. The key aim of this chapter is to place the thought of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the context of this ‘discourse of the passions’, showing how their ‘scientific socialism’ was in part a response to the ideas and strategies of their precursors in this tradition of Western political philosophy. This will provide the basis for further chapters, which examine how British socialists engaged with the ‘discourse of the passions’ in the decades after Marx’s death in 1883 and, especially, how they understood the emotions of the Russian Revolution.

The Enlightenment ‘Discourse of the Passions’

The place of ‘the passions’ in the revolutionary ideology developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels cannot be understood without the context of the French Revolution and the struggle over its legacy by intellectuals in the nineteenth century. Such intellectual responses to the French Revolution in turn cannot be understood without addressing the place of ‘the passions’ in the movement for Enlightenment, the ‘revolution of the mind’ taking place over the century and a half which preceded 1789.⁸ This loose intellectual movement has

⁷ René Descartes, ‘The Passions of the Soul’ in *Descartes’ Philosophical Writings* selected and translated by Norman Kemp Smith (London, 1952), pp. 285-312.

⁸ Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* (Oxford, 2001), p. 714.

been characterised by scholars for its basic insistence on the importance of reason, including a belief in the existence of regular laws governing the natural world which could be discovered and harnessed by science, a belief in secular social progress and in the rights of the individual, and opposition to the irrationalism of religious mysticism and feudal hierarchy. As Isaac Kramnick wrote, the key defining ideal of Enlightenment thinkers was that ‘unassisted human reason, not faith or tradition, was the principal guide to human conduct’.⁹

While it is difficult to overstate the importance of the concept of reason in Enlightenment thought, in many accounts of its philosophies emotionality is almost entirely absent. Without disagreeing with the idea that what Thomas Paine called ‘the choicest gift of God to man, the GIFT OF REASON’¹⁰ was the primary talismanic concept of the Enlightenment, scholars over the last few decades have undermined the adjective ‘unassisted’ in Kramnick’s summary. Scholars have revised inherited views about key Enlightenment figures to insist on the importance of the passions, the sentiments, affects, emotions, and other related terms in their thinking, as potentially aiding the operation of reason, providing motivations for action, and forming bonds of sympathy which made civilised society possible.¹¹

Rather than simply rejecting the non-rational, Enlightenment thinkers enthusiastically turned their inclination for order and coherency to the study of emotion. They sought to distinguish the positive from the negative, hoping to cultivate the former while moderating the latter. In *The Age of the Passions* (1998),¹² John Dwyer sought to show how the sentimentalist movement in literature and the philosophical project of the Enlightenment were mutually conditioning phenomena. They were each united, he argued, by a shared

⁹ Isaac Kramnick, ‘Introduction’ in *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* edited by Isaac Kramnick (London, 1995), p. xi.

¹⁰ Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason: Being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology* edited by Moncure Daniel Conway (New York, 1896), p. 44.

¹¹ For example, see, as well as other works cited: Gaukroger (ed.), *The Soft Underbelly of Reason*; James, *Passion and Action*; Victoria Kahn, Neil Saccamano & Daniela Coli (eds), *Politics and the Passions, 1500-1850* (New Jersey, 2006); Rebecca Kingston, ‘The Political Relevance of the Emotions from Descartes to Smith’ in *Bringing the Passions Back In: The Emotions in Political Philosophy* edited by Rebecca Kingston & Leonard Ferry (Vancouver, 2008), pp. 108-25; Michael L. Frazer, *The Enlightenment of Sympathy: Justice and Moral Sentiments in the Eighteenth Century and Today* (Oxford, 2010).

¹² John Dwyer, *The Age of the Passions: An Interpretation of Adam Smith and Scottish Enlightenment Culture* (East Lothian, 1998).

‘discourse of the passions’ and a shared problematic – how to balance the natural, but conflicting, passions that created group attachments alongside the self-regarding passions, creating social harmony and political stability.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was one who dwelt on this theme. According to Cheryl Hall, Rousseau saw the virtuous passions and sentiments as necessary to perfect human reason itself.¹³ In a recent work, Robin Douglass analysed Rousseau’s critique of the view of that human passions were necessarily destructive of social order, making their suppression by force a necessary role of the monarchical state and religious ideology.¹⁴ For Rousseau, the natural goodness of humanity was reflected in naturally-arising passions, which would motivate healthy actions if given an appropriate social environment. In the kind of lawful, orderly, and free republican state for which these passions were naturally suited, they would develop into a healthy patriotic love of the fatherland, whereas evil and inegalitarian political institutions necessarily corrupted the passions and turned them against reason.¹⁵ It was not the passions themselves which were at fault for driving irrational and destructive behaviour, but human institutions unfitted for the passions.

Adam Smith, as John W. Danford shows, based his political and economic ideas on a revolutionary theory of human sentiments in a similar way to Rousseau. Smith saw all morality as originating in an inborn and universal sentiment making for human sociability, which he called ‘sympathy’ or ‘fellow-feeling’.¹⁶ People were generally moved to sympathise with the passions they witnessed, and to display sentiments that would align them with other people. As Smith wrote, the man in the grip of violent and disorderly passions...

... longs for that relief which nothing can afford him but the entire concord of the affections of the spectators with his own. To see the emotions of their hearts in every respect beat time to his own, in the violent and disagreeable passions, constitutes his sole consolation.¹⁷

¹³ Cheryl Hall, ‘Reason, Passion, and Politics in Rousseau’, *Polity* 34, 1 (Autumn, 2001), 69-88.

¹⁴ Norbert Elias traced the development of cultures of emotional restraint and their association with state-formation in Elias, *Civilising Process*.

¹⁵ Robin Douglass, *Rousseau and Hobbes: Nature, Free Will, and the Passions* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 9-10.

¹⁶ John W. Danford, ‘Adam Smith, Equality, and the Wealth of Sympathy’, *American Journal of Political Science* 24, 4 (November, 1980), 684.

¹⁷ Adam Smith quoted in *ibid.*, 685.

To achieve this sympathy, Smith continued, people naturally try to moderate their own passions to the level at which others would be able to sympathise. In periods of general poverty and hardship, this would encourage a restrained style of expressing the passions, as little sympathy can be expected from one's fellows. In conditions of security and material abundance, however, as could be achieved when the nation's economic life was governed wisely according to the principles of his *Wealth of Nations* (1776), people can afford to be more effusive and meaningful emotional bonds between people would be more easily developed.¹⁸ Danford argues therefore that the conventional view of Smith as a prophet of solipsistic economic self-interest is a mistake. Rather, Smith thought that in the 'system of natural liberty', material abundance would lead to a strengthening of the moral sentiments and a stronger social bond. Restraints on the passions made necessary by the near universal poverty and brutishness of life would be made unnecessary in a developed commercial society, and the importance of economic self-interest would wither away having created the conditions of its own disappearance.

Nicole Eustace has argued that thinking about the universality of emotional experience and its importance as the basis of sociality formed part of the ideology of the American Revolution, writing that Thomas Paine 'cast passions and feelings alike as the common trait of all people, the basis of natural equality'.¹⁹ According to Reddy, similarly, the French Revolution of 1789 was prepared and informed by what he calls a 'sentimentalist emotional style' developed in the salons and other oppositional spaces under the *ancien régime*.²⁰ Reacting against the restrictive courtly style associated with the aristocratic code of honour and disseminated as the official ruling ideology, 'sentimentalism' championed emotionality and saw 'natural sentiments' as the basis for an inborn moral sense. Radicals argued that natural morality had been stifled and perverted

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 686-7.

¹⁹ Nicole Eustace, *Passion is the Gale: Emotion, Power, and the Coming of the American Revolution* (North Carolina, 2008), p. 440.

²⁰ Reddy, *Navigation of Feeling*, p. 325.

by the strictly ordered, martially-oriented, and hierarchical structures of the absolute monarchy.²¹

Revolutionary understandings of human emotionality and political projects which sought to liberate the passions, then, as well as a belief in the ultimate primacy of human reason which would be aided by the passions, were crucial to the anti-feudal ideologies associated with the birth of the modern world. However, there was also a counter-tradition running alongside this project seeking the free expression of human passions, which insisted on the continued need to discipline and restrain passion.

Bourgeois Liberalism: Bridling the Passions with Self-Interest

Two principles in human nature reign;
Self-love to urge, and reason to restrain.

- Alexander Pope, 1733.²²

The ‘discourse of the passions’, then, was securely placed within the context of the revolutionary Enlightenment project of liberty, equality and fraternity. Given the right social and political institutions, the freedom of natural passions, intrinsic to moral beings and equally present in all citizens, would secure the social bond holding civilisations together in order and peace. However, passion was also implicated in the excesses of the revolution made in the name of those ideals, and in those of previous revolutionary upheavals – prompting a reaction by many other Enlightenment thinkers. Scholars like Reddy, Albert Hirschman and others have argued that the course of the revolution in France prompted a crisis in the project of liberating the passions, and a revival in the influence of more pessimistic attitudes about the continuing necessity of discipline and restraint.

Historians of the French Revolution continue to debate the extent to which the Parisian crowds were driven by rational goals,²³ but for commentators

²¹ Ibid., pp. 147-54.

²² Alexander Pope, *The Poetical Works of Alexander Pope* (Philadelphia, 1839), p. 106. However, see Eustace, *Passion is the Gale* for an analysis of how Pope’s poem was read in a nuanced way in the American Revolution.

²³ For an overview of this historiography, see: Jack Censer & Lynn Hunt, ‘Imaging the French Revolution: Depictions of the French Revolutionary Crowd’, *American Historical Review* 110,

on the revolution like Thomas Carlyle there was no question that they were driven by emotional forces, the ‘wild piping of the whirlwind of human passions’.²⁴ The question was whether these were to be understood as violent and anti-social passions subverting reason, or the natural sentiments of the uncorrupted and virtuous people working in harmony with reason.

Reddy argued that the sentimentalist emotional style itself helped to intensify the violence of the revolution. Jacobin authoritarianism, according to Reddy, grew from the sense that their natural sentiments reflected a universal morality available to all uncorrupted men of virtue. Revolutionaries could commune with the good, simple people by following the call of their own passions.²⁵ Reddy argued that the Terror fed on this understanding of the emotions, intensifying them and encouraging their unrestrained expression. Agents of the Terror sought to expose the emotionally insincere, measured against impossible standards of virtue.²⁶ Reddy depicted the Jacobin revolution degenerating into a self-destructive tyranny driven by the worst aspects of human nature, ideologically misled into seeing their own violent and increasingly paranoid passions as an expression of virtuous moral sentiment shared by all good people.

Reddy argued that there was a broad disillusionment with this sentimentalist emotional style after the fall of Robespierre. Theorists in post-revolutionary France, like Destutt de Tracy, fashioned a new theory of human nature to counter the then discredited ideas about the primacy of the virtuous sentiments. Instead, de Tracy proposed to view human beings as individual organisms seeking to maximise pleasure and minimise pain, their actions having no larger moral meaning.²⁷ There was, Reddy argues, an ‘erasure’ of moral sentiment as a fact of public life in revulsion at the excesses of the revolution. He went too far when he argued that this ‘erasure has remained in effect until

1 (February, 2005), 38-45. For the new centrality of emotion and ‘sentimentality’ in the historiography of the French Revolution see: Sophia Rosenfeld, ‘Thinking about Feeling, 1789-1799’, *French Historical Studies* 32, 4 (Fall, 2009), 697-706; David Andress, ‘Living the Revolutionary Melodrama: Robespierre’s Sensibility and the Construction of Political Commitment in the French Revolution’, *Representations* 114, 1 (Spring, 2011), 103-28.

²⁴ Carlyle, *French Revolution*, p. 528.

²⁵ Reddy, *Navigation of Feeling*, p. 181.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 190-9.

²⁷ Reddy, *Navigation of Feeling*, p. 202.

the last few years'.²⁸ Reddy himself later substantially qualified this sweeping statement, touching on how modified sentimental ideas informed the Romantic movement of the nineteenth century, emphasising the importance of sentiment in the private sphere, particularly in aesthetics and personal relationships,²⁹ and in a brief comment on how early socialism emerged as a critique of the single-minded pursuit of self-interest.³⁰

In this project of 'erasure', post-revolutionary liberalism had a wealth of philosophical thinking to draw on. Far from being a phenomenon unique to the aftermath of the French Revolution as Reddy seemed to imply, social thought has often responded in such a manner after historical events of pronounced violence and passion.

C.B. Macpherson, in his influential account of English political theory from the English Civil War to the nineteenth century, argued that 'possessive individualism' provided a unifying thread, meaning:

The fundamental postulate was that every man is naturally the proprietor of his own person ... Not only has the individual a property in his own person and capacities, a property in the sense of a right to enjoy and use them and to exclude others from them; what is more, it is this property, this exclusion of others, that makes a man human.³¹

The passions, signifying the power of external forces to move the individual, were a crucial problem for such political thought. If English political theory, as described by Macpherson, sought the basis of civilised order in the reasoning, property-owning individual, the passions described those forces which were invasive or destructive of this order.

The role of the state as a counter-revolutionary force was a crucial part of this discourse. Thomas Hobbes gave the state the role of keeping social order by restraining the passions, his thought moulded by the experience of a violent and excessive revolution. He sought a science of politics, founded on the basis of an anthropology 'in which the passions play the leading part'.³² As Colie wrote, the

²⁸ Ibid., p. 142.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 213.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 239.

³¹ C.B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* (Oxford, 1962), pp. 139, 142.

³² Daniela Coli, 'Hobbes's Revolution' in *Politics and the Passions, 1500-1850* edited by Victoria Kahn, Neil Saccamano & Daniela Coli (Princeton, 2006), p. 71.

key lesson Hobbes drew from the anarchy of the English Civil War was that ‘dominated by appetites and aversions, men may either destroy themselves or else find an order in which to compete on the basis of *self-interest*’.³³ This would necessarily be a fragile order, and Hobbes emphasised the need for fear of the state to keep the other passions in check:

The Passions that encline men to Peace, are Feare of Death; Desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living; and a Hope by their Industry to obtain them.³⁴

Hobbes described these alternately as the passionate and the rational basis for peaceful coexistence among men. The state, for Burke as for Hobbes, represented an alienation of man’s power arising from the necessity for some outside body to control his passions and avert revolutionary anarchy.

Edmund Burke, the great English critic of the French Revolution, similarly dwelt on the necessity of a state alienated from the mass of citizens to maintain stability in the face of the multitude of conflicting passions:

Society requires not only that the passions of individuals should be subjected, but that even in the mass and body, as well as in the individuals, the inclinations of men should frequently be thwarted, their will controlled, and their passions brought into subjection. This can only be done *by a power out of themselves*; and not, in the exercise of its function, subject to that will and to those passions which it is its office to bridle and subdue.³⁵

Burke’s thinking about the sentiments and passions was complex, and has gained specific attention from a number of historians. J.G.A. Pocock famously tied Burke’s critique of the French Revolution to a critique of ‘enthusiasm’, which denoted the often self-deceitful ‘infusion of spirit into flesh’.³⁶ Others have emphasised his criticism of pure reason, cut loose by the revolution from its sentimental moorings in tradition and established religion.³⁷

In his study of political philosophy in the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries *The Passions and the Interests* (1977), Hirschman identified three

³³ Ibid., p. 81. Italics in original.

³⁴ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (London, 1985), p. 188.

³⁵ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London, 1872), p. 59. Italics in original.

³⁶ J.G.A. Pocock, ‘Edmund Burke and the Redefinition of Enthusiasm: The Context as Counter-Revolution’ in *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture vol. 3: The Transformation of Political Culture 1789-1848* edited by François Furet & Mona Ozouf (Oxford, 1989), p. 25.

³⁷ See: Dwan, ‘Edmund Burke and the Emotions’; Lauren Hall, ‘Rights and the Heart: Emotions and Rights Claims in the Political Theory of Edmund Burke’, *Review of Politics* 73, 4 (Fall, 2011), 609-31.

main approaches identified by philosophers for how the state might counter the destructive passions. Philosophers might recommend direct repression and coercion of the passionate masses by the authoritarian state, or advocate finding some way of harnessing the destructive passions politically (for example, through war). Following on from this second approach, philosophers argued for finding a way to harness some passions conceived as potentially positive and inflate their power in order to neutralise the others.³⁸ The latter corresponded to Baruch Spinoza's famous proposition that an 'emotion can neither be hindered nor removed save by a contrary emotion and one stronger in checking emotion'.³⁹ Hirschman argued that this latter position became the most important in the birth of bourgeois liberal ideology as an intellectual system of justification for early capitalism. He showed in detail how 'interest' grew as a category to juxtapose against the passions, as a term originally introduced to cover the virtuous passions a statesman must cultivate. 'Interest' was used to assimilate the positive passions, sentiments and affections to rationality itself.

If, as David Hume wrote, 'Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them', it could not become a ruling force if subject to the divergent pull of myriad different and conflicting passions, but must be made the slave of a single passion consistently.⁴⁰ Gradually the term came to be associated exclusively with strictly material, economic 'self-interest' and applied to individuals, nations, and classes.⁴¹ In the name of 'interest', Hirschman wrote,

*... one set of passions, hitherto known variously as greed, avarice, or love of lucre, could be usefully employed to oppose and bridle such other passions as ambition, lust for power, or sexual lust.*⁴²

³⁸ Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph* (New Jersey, 1977), pp. 14-20.

³⁹ Spinoza, *Ethics*, p. 148. For Spinoza, it was possible and virtuous for reason to become a passion in its own right, enlisting behind itself emotional forces with which to counter the destructive passions. As Spinoza's *Ethics* is in large part a theory of emotion, there is a wealth of writing on Spinoza's place in the Enlightenment 'discourse of the passions'. For recent contributions, see: Firmin DeBrabander, *Spinoza and the Stoics: Power, Politics and the Passions* (London, 2007); Matthew J. Kisner, 'Spinoza's Virtuous Passions', *Review of Metaphysics* 61, 4 (June, 2008), pp. 759-83.

⁴⁰ David Hume, *Treatise of Morals and Selections from the Treatise of the Passions* (Boston, 1893), p. 89.

⁴¹ Hirschman, *Passions and the Interests*, p. 41.

⁴² *Ibid.* Italics in original.

Hirschman saw Smith as particularly responsible for substituting the more morally acceptable term ‘interest’ for such distasteful terms, associated with the passions, as ‘acquisitiveness’ and ‘avarice’, in effect smuggling one of the passions into the category of reason.⁴³ With his assumption that natural sympathy would flourish after the end of material scarcity generally forgotten, Smith became known as the philosopher of self-interest, the ‘father of economics’.⁴⁴

Stephen Holmes followed Hirschman in arguing for a more complicated and politicised understanding of the place of self-interest in liberal political theory. Far from the idea of man as naturally ‘homo economicus’, hard-wired to follow his own rational self-interest, Holmes agreed that this was always a ‘normative’ rather than a ‘descriptive’ claim for the pioneers of liberalism.⁴⁵ He argued that the intention behind the lionisation of economic self-interest was to give a fundamentally irrational species, ‘noncalculating, habitual, and emotional’,⁴⁶ a single standard by which to judge rational behaviour. As he wrote,

The principal aim of liberals who wrote favourably of self-interest was to bridle destructive and self-destructive passions, to reduce the social prestige of mindless male violence, to induce people, so far as possible to act rationally...⁴⁷

According to Holmes, liberalism understood that, unlike other dangerous and sectional passions, economic self-interest was inherent in citizens all in equal measure. By balancing these equal interests through competition, the free pursuit of acquisitiveness would lead to the public good. Allison Dube, in his 1991 work on Jeremy Bentham and his key influences, agreed entirely with this assessment of the role of ‘self-interest’ or ‘acquisitiveness’ in liberal political theory. Dube argued that ‘the master spring to pleasure, acquisitiveness’ was, for Bentham,

⁴³ Ibid., p. 19.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 107.

⁴⁵ Stephen Holmes, *Passions & Constraint: On the Theory of Liberal Democracy* (Chicago, 1995), p. 25.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 2.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 4.

the ‘leading concept defining human nature’, and that freeing acquisitiveness from moral and traditional restraints was conducive to the general interest.⁴⁸

For liberalism, liberty, an egalitarian democracy, and universal human dignity lay in disciplining humanity to focus on the one passion all have in common, the one passion upon which an even-handed system of measurement and calculation could be imposed. Where the revolutionary theorists of the Enlightenment like Rousseau had championed universal natural passions and sentiments as providing in themselves the basis for a just social order, Holmes depicted liberalism as seeking to intervene politically in the working of the passions, to bridle and induce, and to replace the rule of myriad conflicting passions with the universal rule of self-interest. Unlike for Hirschman who maintained a critical distance from the liberal doctrines he analysed, for Holmes this was to be celebrated as liberalism’s key insight into the nature of man and not just a moment in the development and consolidation of the capitalist state. Socialists, internationalists, and revolutionaries of various stripes subjected liberal doctrine to critique, attacking its stress on self-interest and the great inequalities justified by their theories of the passions.

Political discourse always intermingled with the philosophical and scientific discourses that defined emotions in the first place, which themselves often sought to provide a natural basis for divisions of caste, estate, class, gender, nationality and other socio-political hierarchies. For instance, widespread assumptions of fundamental racial differences in liberal discourse challenges Holmes’ interpretation of liberal theory. For Thomas Jefferson, colour difference marked an essential contrast in the potential for emotional experience,⁴⁹ which he regarded as both a ‘physical and moral’ difference:

Whether the black of the negro resides in the reticular membrane between the skin and scarf-skin, or in the scarf-skin itself; whether it proceeds from the colour of the blood, the colour of the bile, or from that of some other secretion, the difference is fixed in nature ... Are not the fine mixtures of red and white, the expressions of every passion by greater or less suffusions of colour in the one, preferable to that eternal monotony, which reigns in the countenances, that immovable veil of black which covers all the emotions of the other race?⁵⁰

⁴⁸ See: Allison Dube, *The Theme of Acquisitiveness in Bentham’s Political Thought* (Abingdon, 2016), pp. 120, 123.

⁴⁹ There are striking parallels between this ideology and the hierarchy of feeling appearing in D.H. Lawrence and British proto-fascist circles after the Russian Revolution – see chapter six.

⁵⁰ Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (Boston, 1832), pp. 144-5.

According to the ‘Little Folks’ edition of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1910), ‘some slave owners treated the poor negroes worse than animals, saying, “It doesn’t matter, black people have no feelings”’.⁵¹ The denial of emotions to blacks was necessary in order that they could be seen as purely economic objects or soulless automata, to be divided from their families and communities for commercial reasons without any moral concern. The fugitive slave and abolitionist Henry Box Brown sought to persuade his readers that blacks did feel with the same intensity as whites and were therefore as deserving of moral considerations and full citizenship, after commenting:

... the tyrant slaveholder regards not the social, or domestic feelings of the slave, and makes his division according to the *moneyed* value they possess, without giving the slightest consideration to the domestic or social ties by which the individuals are bound to each other; indeed their common expression is, that ‘niggers have no feelings’.⁵²

No posited universality of human passions could interfere with slavery and colonialism, as one poem, published in a British Quaker journal supporting the cause of abolition, made clear:

‘Then she talked of God and heaven,
Said, a nigger had a soul.
Blacks, like whites, could be forgiven,
Broken hearts could be made whole.

‘No! Miss Eva, never! never!
My old Missus always said
Niggers have no feelings ever,
Lash them, whip them till they dead.’⁵³

Bourgeois liberalism’s problem with women was exactly the opposite. They were depicted having a surfeit of passion and a lack of will or reason with which to control it. Mary Wollstonecraft famously challenged the idea she saw as grounding male supremacy: that ‘man was made to reason, woman to feel’.⁵⁴ Where blacks were too cold and women were too hot, white men of the commercial classes were just right. For blacks, their lack of emotion meant that any attribution of self-interest was meaningless, lacking the passions of the soul

⁵¹ *Uncle Tom’s Cabin: Little Folks’ Edition* (New York, 1910) [online] available at <http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/childrn/cbcbano1t.html> [accessed 21.7.2017].

⁵² Henry Box Brown, *Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown Written by Himself* (Manchester, 1851), p. 17

⁵³ “‘Topsy’”, or the Slave Girl’s Appeal’, *The British Friend* (November, 1852), 283.

⁵⁴ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (London, 2004), p. 70.

which, though potentially dangerous, marked one as a moral being in the full sense of the term. For women, strong emotions, combined with the restricted sphere in which women's self-interest could be expressed, overwhelmed any attempt at a disciplined, 'normative' focus on self-interest.

Most dangerous of all were the masses, the crowd, the mob. They had no direct self-interest in the maintenance of private property, which liberal theorists equated with the maintenance of civilisation, and so their transgressive passions could not be easily brought to heel by appealing to their self-interest.⁵⁵ As Macpherson wrote of John Locke,

It was because Locke had always assumed fully rational behaviour to be accumulative behaviour that he could, at the point where labouring and appropriating became separable, find that full rationality lay in appropriating rather than labouring.⁵⁶

Initially, as Hirschman shows, theorists of the restraint of the passions focused on advising the princes and aristocracy how to organise their own passions, believing the lower orders (especially the peasantry) to be incapable of strong motivating and directed passions.⁵⁷ This clearly could not be sustained in face of the growth of overtly plebeian revolutionary movements. Identified with the *sans culottes* whose passions fed the Jacobin radicalisation of revolution, the lower classes above all were the intended targets of restraint in nineteenth-century liberalism. Normative disciplining of the passions always meant disciplining those people in society imagined to be driven by transgressive passions, who would come into violent conflict with prevailing institutions of civilisation and threaten a return to barbarism. Far from being necessarily universal, democratic, and egalitarian as Holmes asserts, a strong strain in the liberal ideology of self-interest and passionate restraint meant dehumanising the people who served as the objects of the liberal agent's own enlightened self-interest, rather than as self-interested agents in their own right.

⁵⁵ C.B. Macpherson's chapter on the attitude of the Levellers, supporting the enfranchisement of all 'free men' while opposing the franchise for those who must rely on the property of others for their living (namely, servants, wage-earners, and beggars) is especially interesting. See: Macpherson, *Possessive Individualism*.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 236. This question was, for Locke, inseparable from the issue of revolution – for him, the rational propertied individuals were those who had the 'right of revolution', those without property had no such 'right'.

⁵⁷ Hirschman, *Passions and the Interests*, p. 126.

Liberalism, according to Hirschman and Holmes, represented a horrified recoil from the consequences of prematurely liberated passions. It was the development of a theory by which the liberation of passions could be diverted, utilising in combination the political state and an economics of self-interest. With rare exceptions,⁵⁸ these revised scholarly depictions of radical Enlightenment and nineteenth-century liberal thinkers in terms of ‘the discourse of the passions’ have not yet prompted historians to reconsider the ideas of socialists as self-conscious heirs to the former and critics of the latter, taking up for themselves the questions and implications of this discourse. The remainder of this chapter will place Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in this context, alongside the philosophers who most influenced the ways they understood the passions – including Charles Fourier, G.W.F. Hegel, and their contemporaries Ludwig Feuerbach and Max Stirner.

Charles Fourier and the Passions in Utopian Socialism

The clearest expression of this critique among the founding fathers of socialism came from the eccentric early nineteenth-century thinker Charles Fourier, whose work on the passions was admired by Marx and Engels. Commentators on Fourier have invariably found his theory of the passions to be fundamental to his utopian design. ‘Bewilderingly disorganised and often incoherent’, as Fourier was described by Keith Taylor, it is nevertheless certain that ‘if there is a key to Fourier’s thought, and thereby to his complex personality as well, it is undoubtedly to be found in his philosophy of human desires or “passions”, as he preferred to call them’.⁵⁹ Fourier was an eccentric, but in his theory of the passions he was working within the terms of the tradition of political philosophy outlined above, reasserting a Rousseau-esque confidence in the virtue of the passions. Fourier’s eccentricity in presentation, ‘bizarre in style and form as well

⁵⁸ These exceptions include work on the utopian socialist Charles Fourier, as the prominence he gave to the passions in his philosophy is unmistakable, and very few, flawed, works on Marx which shall be discussed.

⁵⁹ Keith Taylor, *The Political Ideas of the Utopian Socialists* (London, 1982), p. 106.

as in content',⁶⁰ has somewhat obscured this fact. As Charles Gide wrote, 'it is the form ... that is more absurd than the substance'.⁶¹

Far from seeing the passions as an irrational element confounding the attempt to construct a durable utopia, Fourier took the idea that 'the nature of the passions has been and will remain invariable among all nations of men' as the positive foundation of his whole system.⁶² Unlike most of his contemporaries Fourier argued that there were no 'bad passions' which must be corrected and disciplined by morality and economic self-interest, but that 'in creating our passions, *God did well all that he did*'.⁶³ Out of his experiences in the French Revolution, he retained a horror of political violence and radicalism to match that of Burke. However, he thought that revolution could not be averted by simply disciplining and repressing the passions, or diverting them into economic self-interest as his liberal contemporaries hoped. He sought instead to use '*the passions now condemned, just as Nature has given them to us and without in any way changing them*'.⁶⁴ Not human nature but the class-divided social structures of civilisation were at fault for creating disharmony and conflict:

There are sixteen classes in civilisation, not including slavery; a corporative hatred is found prevailing between all these classes; the civilised order with all its talk about the charming fraternity of intercourse, and about morality, creates only a labyrinth of discords, which may be distinguished into:

An ascending scale of hatred;

A descending scale of contempt.⁶⁵

Fourier saw the passions as fixed, universal, handed down from heaven fully formed, and yet ill-fitted to the vessels civilised man had created to house them, and deformed in the attempt to fit them to imperfect institutions.

The key to Fourier's fledgling social science, and therefore the key to the design of a society in which social conflict could be eradicated, was in the synthesis of knowledge about the variety of passions, their true functions, and their distribution in varying degrees among the people. Drawing on the language of Newtonian physics to explain his revelation, he expounded the theory of the

⁶⁰ Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *The Teaching of Charles Fourier* (Berkeley, 1969), p. x.

⁶¹ Charles Gide in *Charles Fourier, Selections from the Works of Charles Fourier* translated by Julia Franklin, with an introduction by Charles Gide (London, 1901), p. 16.

⁶² Fourier, *Selections*, p. 55.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 182. Italics in original.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 66. Italics in original.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

laws of ‘passionate Attraction’. Fourier identified twelve basic human passions, classified and arranged in tables according to obscure rules of logic. Along with the five senses,⁶⁶ he counted four ‘affective’ passions and three ‘distributive’ passions, the former fostering broad sociability and the latter tending to develop partial groups within the larger community.⁶⁷

Fourier argued that, in the conditions of civilisation, outdated moral ideas turned man against the ‘distributive’ passions, mislabelling them as vices and deviations. He thus scorned all morality, which he saw as creating the social problems it professed to correct. Morality taught man to hate himself and to distrust God for designing him so imperfectly:

Morality teaches man to be at war with himself, to resist his passions, to repress them, to believe that God was incapable of organising our souls, our passions wisely; that he needed the teachings of Plato and Seneca in order to know how to distribute characteristics and instincts.⁶⁸

The true role of human reason, he argued, was to design a social form in which the free play of all the twelve passions would produce harmony rather than discord. This would lead to the emergence of a ‘thirteenth passion’ known as ‘Harmonism’ or ‘Unityism’ – an ecstatic unification of all the passions just ‘as white is formed by the union of the seven colours of a ray of light’.⁶⁹ In this condition there would be ‘social harmonies or pleasures of the soul [and] sensual refinements to a perfection of which the civilised world is incapable of forming

⁶⁶ Fourier has been criticised for this. As Riasanovsky wrote, it has been argued that ‘the first five in the group were really senses, not passions, and that they could not be logically classified with the others’. However, in terms of the discourse outlined above it made sense to catalogue the senses with the passions, as each recorded external causes impacting upon the individual subject. See: Riasanovsky, *Teaching of Charles Fourier*, p. 222.

⁶⁷ Gide commented:

To reckon in man twelve fundamental passions belongs to an evidently fantastic or rather mystic psychology, - the number 12 having been evidently chosen only because it made a better working number than 11 or 13. Doubtless in certain respects this analysis may be considered superior to that of the classical school which recognises only a single motive in man, that of self-interest, and regards all the other sentiments as simply disturbing elements, or negligible quantities which ought to be left out of account. The passional system of Fourier offers a richer key-board and one probably in closer conformity with reality than the hedonistic principle which serves as a basis for all the deductions of pure political economy, but he takes great care to suppress in this key-board all the keys which might disturb the final harmony.

Gide in Fourier, *Selections*, pp. 32-3.

⁶⁸ Fourier, *Selections*, p. 55.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

any conception'.⁷⁰ With man's relationship to himself organised correctly, society's relationship to nature would become proper and harmonious. The whole of creation would click into its proper place: sea water would taste like lemonade and the lions would become friendly. God's plan for humanity, always implicit in the passions though long misunderstood, would thereby be fulfilled.

It was only through social relations among individuals of all and varied temperaments that this state of passionate harmony might be achieved. Individuals were governed by different passions to different degrees, and it was by judging their effect in isolated individuals that conventional morality had come to misunderstand the passions and to fear them. Outside of the properly organised mechanism of social intercourse he called the 'Series', the passions were 'but unchained tigers, incomprehensible enigmas'.⁷¹ In aggregate, however, among large numbers of people living in close cooperation, individual differences would be smoothed and the laws of attraction for which the passions were created would assert themselves. For Fourier, therefore, people must be gathered into 'Phalansteries' of 1620 people, including male and female representatives of the 810 types of person the passions could combine to form. These broadly autonomous social formations would be organised into a worldwide federation under either a world congress or a single 'omniarch'.

Apart from his utopian flights of fancy, Fourier assumed much in his system that most socialists would dismiss, including the continuation of great inequalities, hierarchies of power, private property, and the division of capital and labour, though he sometimes gave the impression that he expected these all to last only a matter of weeks or months after the organisation of a Phalanstery, before withering away naturally.

Sifted of its worst eccentricities, many of the ideas expressed in his fevered writing had enduring significance in socialist thought about the passions. Firstly, contrary to the myriad hierarchical divisions based on differing experience of the passions noted above, Fourier assumed an unqualified universality of emotional potential across class, nation, and gender, providing

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 89.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 56.

the basis for a single world-wide social system encompassing all of humanity. Fourier made universality the fourth ‘primordial property of God’:

... this order of things must extend and be applicable to all nations, for the providence of God would be imperfect if he had devised a social system which should not satisfy the needs and secure the happiness of every people, age, and sex.⁷²

Secondly, the idea that labour in industrial civilisation stifled and distorted the passions, but that industrial civilisation nevertheless formed the basis for a more perfect harmony by bringing large and diverse groups of people into tighter social intercourse. For Fourier, the discordant passions produced in an imperfect system drove reforming capitalists and statesmen, who wished to avert revolution and anarchy, along a series of ordered stages. These stages would each pass through numerous phases, from infancy to virility to decay, each with its own characteristic economic focus and its own corresponding ‘illusions’ in social thought. Great crises occurred when society ‘lingered’ in stages that have outlasted their usefulness, engendering ‘corruption like stagnant water’, and prompting efforts to transcend them.⁷³ Thirdly, the principle that individual passions could only be satisfied and developed through immersion in the collective, through associative but varied and attractive labour.⁷⁴ Finally, the idea that such a system would have no need for force and compulsion to maintain a regime of material production that was repulsive to human passions, and therefore no necessity for the state as it was conceived in liberal theory to restrain and discipline them.

Karl Marx and the ‘Discourse of the Passions’

Man as an objective, sensuous being is therefore a *suffering* being – and because he feels that he suffers, a *passionate* being. Passion is the essential power of man energetically bent on its object.

- Karl Marx, 1844.⁷⁵

⁷² Ibid., p. 48.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 52.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 60.

⁷⁵ Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* translated by Martin Milligan (New York, 1988), p. 155.

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels both engaged with this ‘discourse of the passions’, but the place of the passions as a concept in their thinking has only rarely been touched upon even by those who have read their theories of human nature closely. Their writing about the passions was often highly abstract and philosophical, but became important for their theories of class struggle and revolution, as I will discuss in what remains of this chapter.

Norman Geras demonstrated with rigour that Marx was not the believer in a radical ‘blank slate’ and infinite human malleability many scholars had supposed, but that Marx did believe that there was a universal ‘human nature’ despite social and cultural differences.⁷⁶ When writing of the emotions to demonstrate this universal human nature, Geras described Paul Ekman’s twentieth-century theory that there is a set of six basic, biologically universal emotions:

With respect to some emotions – namely, anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness and surprise – there is compelling evidence not just of their universality, but for a thesis of Darwin’s that the facial *expressions* of them are similar regardless of culture, being of biological origin.⁷⁷

Later, Geras used this theory of emotion to criticise ‘cultural relativism gone berserk’, disputing the idea that linguistic differences in emotional expression could lead us to say that underlying emotional experiences might differ between cultures.⁷⁸

Whether the evidence for Ekman’s theory is compelling or not, it was nevertheless not Marx’s theory, despite his universalism. Marx outlined an explicit philosophy of ‘the passions’ of his own. In doing so, Marx engaged with the questions raised by the ‘discourse of the passions’ in Enlightenment political philosophy rather than those of late twentieth-century psychology. It was particularly inappropriate to use the ‘six basic emotions’ theory in this way because, unlike many who contributed to this discourse, Marx did not seek to catalogue a set of discrete, universal, supra-historical passions which would

⁷⁶ Peter Singer wrote, setting up his call to ‘swap Marx for Darwin’: ‘it follows ... that if you can totally change the “ensemble of social relations”, you can totally change human nature. This claim goes to the heart of Marxism and of more broadly marxist (with a small “m”) thinking.’ See: Peter Singer, *A Darwinian Left: Politics, Evolution and Cooperation* (London, 1999), p. 5.

⁷⁷ Norman Geras, *Marx and Human Nature: Refutation of a Legend* (London, 1985), p. 99.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

account for human behaviour, despite the compelling example of such philosophers as Spinoza and Fourier. As will be shown, for Marx cultural and social differences, the influence of history and experience on the character of the passions, played a considerable role, despite his insistence on an underlying universality in *how* the passions were thought to function.

As well as missing this theory entirely, other scholars who have taken notice of Marx's writing about the passions have depicted his ideas as a specific philosophical element in the thought of the 'young Marx',⁷⁹ without connecting them to his 'mature' works. I will argue, as did Erich Fromm and Agnes Heller, that Marx's later works, including *Capital*, continued to be informed by a concern with this discourse.⁸⁰

John L. Stanley argued at length for the key place of concepts like passion, desire, appetite, and need in Marx's philosophy.⁸¹ He highlighted especially the influence of Fourier, who Marx wrote had 'the great merit of having shown up the contradictions and unnaturalness of modern life not only in the relationships of particular classes, but in all circles and forms of intercourse'.⁸² Stanley showed that Marx detested the inclination of bourgeois politics, morality, and economics to restrain or regulate the passions, seeking the 'liberation of the passions' from these fetters.⁸³ As he wrote: 'Marx regards education directed at restraining the passions as characteristic of the moralism of his own Victorian bourgeois society in which only the passion of avarice was tolerated'.⁸⁴

According to Stanley's interpretation, in seeking the liberation of the passions Marx 'anticipates the consumerism of modern capitalism'.⁸⁵ The 'certain constancy of human desires which transcend time, place and

⁷⁹ For example, see: L. Frank Weyher, 'Re-reading Sociology via the Emotions: Karl Marx's Theory of Human Nature and Estrangement', *Sociological Perspectives* 55, 2 (Summer, 2012), 341-63. See also: Bertell Ollman, *Alienation: Marx's Concept of Man in a Capitalist Society* (Cambridge, 1976), p. 80. Ollman does link alienation to the later theory of value very strongly, but does not pursue the 'passions' as they appear beyond the 'young Marx'.

⁸⁰ Erich Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man* (New York, 1963); Agnes Heller, *The Theory of Need in Marx* (London, 1976).

⁸¹ See: John L. Stanley, 'The Education of the Passions in Marx's Social Reconstruction of Nature' in *Mainlining Marx* (London, 2002), pp. 151-62.

⁸² Karl Marx quoted in Stanley, 'Education of the Passions', p. 160; appearing originally in an 1845 piece, mostly on Jacques Peuchet's work on suicide.

⁸³ Stanley, 'Education of the Passions', p. 155.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 158-9.

⁸⁵ Stanley, 'Education of the Passions', p. 159.

circumstance' meant that there could be no qualitative difference between capitalist and communist living.⁸⁶ Stanley argued that the same passions driving behaviour in communist society would necessarily be the same as in societies dominated by the capitalist mode of production, with even fewer restraints. Communism would mean abundance and the removal of restrictions on consumption, a world 'in which the proliferation of passions holds increasingly full sway'.⁸⁷ In place of the free market in the production of commodities for profit, Stanley depicted Marx preaching a 'free market of the passions'.⁸⁸ The limitless nature of human needs meant that the indefinite expansion of commodity production was the key to human fulfilment, and Marx's critique of capital was simply that its drive for profit set unnatural limits to the production of commodities for consumption.

Stanley neglected a crucial piece of writing in which Marx outlined his understanding of 'man's *feelings, passions, etc.*', in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* and especially the manuscript headed 'The Power of Money'.⁸⁹ This oversight led Stanley to misunderstand what Marx presumed the 'liberation of the passions' would entail.

A keen classicist, Marx defined human nature in direct opposition to the Stoic ideal of *apatheia*, which entailed the avoidance of suffering and passion and the quest for equanimity in the face of the world. As an 'objective, sensuous' being, a bodily being immersed in the material world, to be human was to be essentially incomplete and afflicted with unavoidable suffering. To be a material creature was to rely on the external world, driven to try to correct this feeling of incompleteness by establishing relations with objects in the world. The individual was not a self-contained being holding itself as property to be defended from the world, but a being which must open itself to external influences. Marx defined passion in terms of this basic human objective, as the force which drove the practical activity by which people 'affirm themselves' in their relations with the world.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 151-2.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 155.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 159.

⁸⁹ Marx, *EPM 1844*, p. 135.

⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 135-6.

These relations included those between individuals and objects, the most basic being the felt bodily need to appropriate and consume food, water, and air. The fundamental importance of labour activity arose from the need to establish such relations, through which both the external world and the individual were mutually transformed. There was no catalogue of human passions correlating with a limited number of needs, but a limitless horizon of development, expansion, and variability. Marx argued that the character of the passions was formed by the complex web of relations into which individuals were driven, to satisfy their feeling of incompleteness. As he wrote, ‘man’s *feelings*, passions etc.’:

... have by no means merely one mode of affirmation, but rather ... the distinct character of their existence, of their life, is constituted by the distinct mode of their affirmation. In what manner the object exists for them, is the characteristic mode of their gratification.⁹¹

The passions, then, could not be understood solely from the side of the individual body, abstracted from the concrete activity through which they found gratification. These ‘modes of affirmation’ differed according to the social, historical, and cultural context. Passions, in Marx’s theory, were an inseparable unity of both the individual’s drives, biologically given and universal, and the historically contingent means of gratifying and transforming those drives by way of interaction with the objects of the passionate subject’s world.

Stanley neglected the many statements of Marx to the effect that capitalism provided, at best, the ‘*semblance* of human existence’ even for the owners of capital themselves.⁹² For Stanley, the object of desire, need, and passion was always conceived as a commodity, and gratification was always depicted as consumption. Other human beings than the desiring subject were almost entirely absent in Stanley’s work. For Marx’s philosophy, the relations which people, as inherently sociable creatures, were driven to establish with each other was far more important. As he wrote,

If we assume man to be man, and his relation to the world to be a human one, then love can be exchanged only for love, trust for trust, and so on ... Every one of your relations to man – and to nature – must be a particular expression, corresponding to the object of your will, of your real individual life. If you love without evoking love

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 135.

⁹² Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, *The Holy Family or Critique of Critical Critique* translated by R. Dixon (Moscow, 1956), p. 51.

in return – that is, if your loving as loving does not produce reciprocal love; if through a living expression of yourself as a loving person you do not make yourself a loved person, then your love is impotent – a misfortune.⁹³

Both Fourier and Marx were concerned with how the sphere of production could satisfy the passions, far more than with consumption. For Marx, productive activity was potentially ‘twice affirming’, as the activity of a personality creating an object which was an expression of that personality, and by the satisfaction of creating an object meeting human needs, affirming oneself as part of a human community. Under the regime of private property and wage labour, however, this productive activity was divorced from these aims:

... in his work ... [the worker] does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. He feels at home when he is not working, and when he is working he does not feel at home ... It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need; it is merely a means to satisfy needs external to it. Its alien character emerges clearly in the fact that as soon as no physical or other compulsion exists, labour is shunned like the plague.⁹⁴

Capitalist social relations, by denying the emotional satisfactions of productive social activity to the wage worker, reduce the worker to the area in which he is most free: ‘in his animal functions – eating, drinking, procreating, or at most in his dwelling and in dressing-up’.⁹⁵ This alienation inherent to capitalist production processes suffused the whole of society, defining its superstructure of moral values and passionate relationships also. Money was at once the ‘bond of all bonds’ and the ‘universal means of separation’.⁹⁶ Marx reached repeatedly for the metaphor of prostitution, writing of money as the:

... pimp between man’s need and the object, between his life and his means of life. But *that which* mediates *my* life for me, also *mediates* the existence of other people *for me*.⁹⁷

In place of myriad passions driving individuals to establish and maintain meaningful relationships with one another, individuals must first barter with the pimp. There was no question for Marx of truly reciprocal, affirmative passionate

⁹³ Marx, *EPM 1844*, p. 140.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

relations when commodities were the chief mediator of social bonds and the law of value was the gatekeeper to the world of cooperation and productive activity.

In these conditions of atomism and alienation, passions are diverted into unreal ‘modes of affirmation’. Religion for Marx was, famously, ‘the heart of a heartless world’,⁹⁸ and he decisively rejected the humanist religiosity of Feuerbach for returning the rule of the abstract love of God under the guise of love for an abstract notion of man. As Engels wrote:

The possibility of purely human sentiments in our intercourse with other human beings has nowadays been sufficiently curtailed by the society in which we must live, which is based upon class antagonism and class rule. We have no reason to curtail it still more by exalting these sentiments to a religion.⁹⁹

Despite his reputation among some British socialists as a philosopher of economic self-interest or class interest alone,¹⁰⁰ Marx opposed what he saw as the bourgeois ideal that ‘all passions and activities must be submerged in *avarice*’.¹⁰¹

The project of restraining the host of unruly passions by the rule of self-interest was, moreover, doomed to failure, as Marx wrote in a comment on Stirner’s depiction of a ‘bourgeois egoist’:

The ‘avaricious man’ ... is nothing but a figure on whom moral readers for children and novels dilate, but that actually occurs only as an exception, and is by no means the representative of the avaricious bourgeois. The latter, on the contrary, have no need to deny the ‘promptings of conscience’, ‘the sense of honour’, etc., or to restrict themselves to the one passion of avarice alone. On the contrary, their avarice engenders a series of other passions – political, etc. – the satisfaction of which the bourgeois on no account sacrifice.¹⁰²

The project of restraint through the lionisation of self-interest was fraught with unintended consequences.

Marx was critical of any ideology which would seek to direct a single passion to become the dominating force in a personality,¹⁰³ in which case

⁹⁸ Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel’s ‘Philosophy of Right’* translated by Annette Jolin & Joseph O’Malley (Cambridge, 1970), p. 131.

⁹⁹ Friedrich Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy* translated by C.P. Dutt (New York, 1941), p. 35.

¹⁰⁰ See especially Bertrand Russell’s criticisms of Marx in chapter four of this thesis.

¹⁰¹ Marx, *EPM 1844*, p. 119.

¹⁰² Karl Marx, *The German Ideology: Including Theses on Feuerbach and Introduction to The Critique of Political Economy* (New York, 1976), p. 265.

¹⁰³ Such as can be found in the ideas of the Russian nihilist Sergey Nechayev, whose ‘Revolutionary Catechism’ sought to instil in revolutionaries the domination of the ‘revolutionary passion’ to the exclusion of all else:

‘passion assumes an abstract, isolated character [and] confronts me as an alien power...’.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, Marx attacked ‘crude’ communism, an enforced material equality in which ‘the category of labourer is not abolished but extended to all men’, for its failure to displace material avarice as the single ruling passion governing production and distribution of resources: ‘*envy* constituting itself as a power is the disguise in which *avarice* re-establishes itself and satisfies itself’.¹⁰⁵ Marx criticised wage labour not over the idea that the extraction of surplus value left the worker with less than the value of their labour, but that even wealth in alienated society meant poverty of the passionate life.

Marx devoted a substantial amount of space in his critique of Stirner, the egoist and critic of the Young Hegelians who was equally antagonistic to bourgeois liberalism’s attempt to discipline the passions by means of morality and the state, to Stirner’s own failure to avoid a similar form of self-denial.¹⁰⁶ Stirner sought to tame the ‘abyss of lawless and unregulated impulses, desires, wishes, passions ... chaos without light or guiding star’ without reaching for any external force to provide guidance, whether it be God, acquisitiveness, morality, or communist revolution.¹⁰⁷ He wrote against the ‘dominion of the desires and passions’, arguing that the passions ought to be understood as the ‘property’ of

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1. The revolutionary is a doomed man. He has no personal interests, no business affairs, no emotions, no attachments, no property, and no name. Everything in him is wholly absorbed in the single thought and the single passion for revolution ...
 6. Tyrannical toward himself, he must be tyrannical toward others. All the gentle and enervating sentiments of kinship, love, friendship, gratitude, and even honour, must be suppressed in him and give place to the cold and single-minded passion for revolution. For him, there exists only one pleasure, one consolation, one reward, one satisfaction – the success of the revolution ...
 7. The nature of the true revolutionary excludes all sentimentality, romanticism, infatuation, and exaltation. All private hatred and revenge must also be excluded. Revolutionary passion, practiced at every moment of the day until it becomes a habit, is to be employed with cold calculation. At all times, and in all places, the revolutionary must obey not his personal impulses, but only those which serve the cause of the revolution.

Marx’s criticism of the reification of passion applies with force regarding Nechayev. See: Sergey Nechayev, ‘The Revolutionary Catechism’ (1869) [online] at <https://www.marxists.org/subject/anarchism/nechayev/catechism.htm> [Accessed 14.7.2017].

¹⁰⁴ Marx, *German Ideology*, p. 280.

¹⁰⁵ Marx, *EPM 1844*, pp. 100-1.

¹⁰⁶ See: Paul Thomas, ‘Karl Marx and Max Stirner’, *Political Theory* 3, 2 (May, 1975), 159-79.

¹⁰⁷ Max Stirner, *The Ego and His Own* translated by Steven T. Byington (New York, 1907), p. 212.

the ego and subordinated to it.¹⁰⁸ Thoughts, passions, beliefs – Stirner insisted that the ego ‘annihilate’ any such item of ‘property’ belonging to it by self-criticism, if it threatened to make ‘any movement toward independence’ and set up any power over the free, ever-changing egoist.¹⁰⁹ John Henry Mackay praised Stirner’s uneventful life as an expression of his ‘ataraxic’ quality, his cultivation of ‘emotional detachment’ from the world in order to avoid becoming a slave to any individual passion.¹¹⁰ For Marx this was simply an evasion, missing both that the tendency towards such one-sided fixations was embedded in the social division of labour and class rather than primarily in consciousness, and that the ‘ego’ Stirner called upon to police the passions was an abstract notion, setting up a tyranny over the self as strong as any other fixed idea. As has been seen, for Marx the passions were ‘truly ontological affirmations of being’ and not ‘merely anthropological’ – there was no sense in divorcing them from the self, and making them the ‘property’ of the ego.¹¹¹ The ideal of *ataraxic* ‘emotional detachment’ ran directly counter to the most famous of Marx’s *Theses on Feuerbach*, the injunction to immerse oneself in the world, to change the world and by doing so change one’s self.

Instead, Marx looked forward, beyond the capitalist mode of production, to a social form which would allow its citizens to pursue their myriad passions without coming into conflict. This was not imagined as a return to a previous more authentic mode of life, however. Marx did not lionise feudal social

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., pp. 204, 388.

¹⁰⁹ Leon Trotsky wrote of Shakespeare’s tragic characters as precisely such figures, echoing Marx’s repeated use of *Timon of Athens* to illustrate commodity fetishism and the reification of avarice:

In the tragedies of Shakespeare, which would be entirely unthinkable without the Reformation, the fate of the ancients and the passions of the mediaeval Christians are crowded out by individual human passions, such as love, jealousy, revengeful greediness, and spiritual dissension. But in every one of Shakespeare’s dramas, the individual passion is carried to such a high degree of tension that it outgrows the individual, becomes super-personal, and is transformed into a fate of a certain kind. The jealousy of Othello, the ambition of Macbeth, the greed of Shylock, the love of Romeo and Juliet, the arrogance of Coriolanus, the spiritual wavering of Hamlet, are all of this kind...

See: Leon Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution* edited by William Keach, translated by Rose Strunsky (Chicago, 2005), pp. 11-2.

¹¹⁰ David Leopold, ‘A Solitary Life’ in *Max Stirner* edited by Saul Newman (London, 2011), p. 32.

¹¹¹ Marx, *EPM 1844*, p. 135.

relations as being based on true organic feeling, and refused to ‘join in the sentimental tears wept over [the displacement of feudalism] by romanticism’.¹¹² He saw alienation under capitalism as a necessary step towards the establishment of truly human relations, by dissolving hierarchical feudal bonds developed in previous epochs. As Marx wrote,

Only through developed industry – *i.e.*, through mediation of private property, does the ontological essence of human passion come into being, both in its totality and in its humanity; the science of man is, therefore, itself a product of the self-formation of man through practical activity.¹¹³

Reified acquisitiveness provided a standard of value by which economically rational decisions could be made, and around which large-scale associative labour could initially be organised. The establishment of social relations defined by acquisitiveness or economic self-interest brought diverse people into social relationships, developed the productive forces and progressively minimised the amount of socially necessary labour, broke the power of the hierarchical and alienated passions of religious ideology, and tore down artificial national barriers – creating the conditions for the emancipation of labour and of true human development.

The Appetites of *Capital*: The ‘Discourse of the Passions’ in the ‘Mature’ Marx

So far, I have not strayed from what commentators have called the ‘philosophical’ or ‘young Marx’. For many commentators, the ‘mature’ Marx of *Capital* emerged through a devastating self-criticism of these writings, the negation of his youth and the transition from philosophy to science. Louis Althusser, for example, argued the point forcefully and influentially:

Of course Marx’s youth did *lead* to Marxism, but only at the price of a prodigious break with his origins, a heroic struggle against the illusions he had inherited from the Germany in which he was born, and an acute attention to the realities concealed by these illusions.¹¹⁴

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 63.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 135-6.

¹¹⁴ Louis Althusser, ‘On the Young Marx’ in *For Marx* translated by Ben Brewster (London, 2005), p. 84.

In the case of Marx's work on the passions there is a shift of focus in his later work, though there are continuities which do not suggest the 'prodigious break' argued for by Althusser. I argue that Marx's mature thoughts on the role of the passions regarding capital, class struggle, and revolution were not a rejection of these earlier philosophical ideas, but that these earlier ideas provided much of the foundation and justification for his later work.¹¹⁵ His attempt to discover a 'scientific socialism' did not come after he had finished with the 'discourse of the passions' – the passions were the basis on which previous political philosophers, from Hobbes to Fourier, had sought to found such a science of politics.

Though Marx's use of 'passion' as an explicit key concept appeared to diminish in his later works, this was not because he cast it off as a youthful adventure in bourgeois philosophy, but for reasons internal to the theory itself. When writing of how reified avarice assumed an isolated, abstract character, and confronted whole social formations as an alien power objectified in the laws and tendencies of the capitalist mode of production, it was more appropriate, he argued, to analyse those laws in the impersonal language of political economy.¹¹⁶ The passion of acquisitiveness seemed to disappear because it had been transformed into a social power, defining the 'economic rationality' of a whole mode of production. It is this economic rationality specific to the capitalist mode of production, depicted in ideological form in classical political economy, which *Capital* sought to present theoretically and historically through a critique of political economy: the logic of commodity fetishism, the labour theory of value, and the various laws and tendencies which drove the development of the productive forces, but also class struggle, catastrophe, and revolutionary upheaval.

Where passion appears in *Capital*, it is almost invariably used to describe how acquisitiveness, the desire for the accumulation of money, had come to be objectified in the whole system of capitalist production, defined by the

¹¹⁵ Much as Fredy Perlman argued. See: Fredy Perlman, 'Commodity Fetishism: An Introduction to I.I. Rubin's Essay on Marx's Theory of Value' (1968) [online] available at <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/> [Accessed 7.8.2016].

¹¹⁶ See Marx's valuable reflections on the role of 'impersonal reason' in chapter two of *The Poverty of Philosophy* (Chicago, 1920), 'The Metaphysics of Political Economy'.

‘boundless drive for enrichment, this passionate chase after value’.¹¹⁷ Marx wrote mostly not of passionate people any longer, but of the passions and appetites of capital itself, having taken on these human qualities. In one passage Marx depicted this transition directly:

At the historical dawn of the capitalist mode of production – and every capitalist upstart has to go through this historical phase individually – avarice, and the drive for self-enrichment, are the passions which are entirely predominant. But the progress of capitalist production not only creates a world of delights; it lays open, in the form of speculation and the credit system, a thousand sources of sudden enrichment ... there develops in the breast of the capitalist a Faustian conflict between the passion for accumulation and the desire for enjoyment.¹¹⁸

Where Marx presented this transition occurring within individual capitalists, Engels already in 1844 had written of it occurring in the development of political economy: the ‘science of enrichment born of the merchants’ mutual envy and greed’, the ‘avaricious character’ of its subject progressively hidden as political economy developed and cloaked itself in the impersonal language of science.¹¹⁹ As the laws of competition take hold, the avariciousness of the capitalist is transformed into an external necessity imposed upon the capitalist. Capital’s own independent ‘passion for accumulation’ now confronts the capitalist as an objective economic law, overturning all moral and traditional laws in its ‘blind and measureless drive, its insatiable appetite for surplus labour’.¹²⁰

If passions other than the appetites of capital itself are largely absent from this work, that is not because they were now absent from Marx’s philosophy but because they were largely absent from the mode of political economy which he was deconstructing. In *Capital*, passions became multiple again only in descriptions of revolution and class struggle. Marx wrote of the transformation from feudalism to capitalism, the long disruptive process of the ‘primitive accumulation of capital’ within the context of the *ancien regime* and its culmination in bourgeois revolutions:

¹¹⁷ Marx, *Capital*, p. 254.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 741.

¹¹⁹ Friedrich Engels, *Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy* translated by Martin Milligan (1996) [online] available at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/df-jahrbucher/outlines.htm> [Accessed 19.9.2016].

¹²⁰ Marx, *Capital*, p. 375. Though this quotation suffices, it is interesting to note that the first English translation of *Capital* by Edward Aveling reads ‘blind unrestrainable passion’ in place of ‘insatiable appetite’, placing it within the ‘discourse of the passions’ more clearly for early British socialists.

At a certain stage of development, [feudal society] brings forth the material agencies for its own dissolution. From that moment new forces and new passions spring up in the bosom of society; but the old social organisation fetters them and keep them down. It must be annihilated; it is annihilated ... The expropriation of the immediate producers was accomplished with merciless Vandalism, and under the stimulus of passions the most infamous, the most sordid, the pettiest, the most meanly odious.¹²¹

The irony in this passage, in the context of the political philosophy described by Hirschman and Holmes above, was that this explosion of sordid, odious passions in the wars, slavery, colonial subjugation, and famine of primitive accumulation was precisely the culmination of the attempt to ‘bridle’ such passions by the domination of self-interest. In this sense the transition to capitalism represented a historical precursor of the socialist revolution, when repressed passions would return in a destructive mode. To discuss Marx’s understanding of the role of the passions in class struggle and revolution, I will first describe the role of the passions in Hegel’s *Philosophy of History* (1837) and evaluate Robert C. Tucker’s interpretation of its influence on Marx.

G.W.F. Hegel: The Dialectic of Passion and Reason in History

The theory of the passions shared by Marx and Engels was deeply influenced by Hegel’s thoughts in the lectures which became the *Philosophy of History* (1837) after his death. In this work, the state represents the objectification of human reason, the guardian of civilisation. Through the state,

... [man’s] own essence – Reason – is objectively present to him ... it possesses objective immediate existence for him. Thus only is he fully conscious; thus only is he a partaker of morality...¹²²

There was a crucial difference between Hegel and those like Hobbes and Burke, however, in that Hegel described a dialectic in history between the passions and the developing rational state. In this way, he was able to include events regarded as irrational and passionate into the rational course of history, necessary to the unfolding of the World-Spirit. This dialectic of passion and restraint was an important influence on how Marx and Engels conceptualised historical development, driven by class struggle and revolution.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 928.

¹²² G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* translated by John Sibree (Ontario, 2001), p. 54.

Hegel saw the history of the world as the gradual unfolding of Spirit or self-consciousness according to its own internal logic, and as such ‘its development has been a rational process ... the rational necessary course’.¹²³ When we look at recorded history, however, we see only the rule of violent passions without any obvious rational progress.¹²⁴ History confronts its reader as the ‘slaughter-bench at which the happiness of peoples, the wisdom of State, and the virtue of individuals have been victimised’.¹²⁵

When we look at this display of passions, and the consequences of their violence; the Unreason which is associated not only with them, but even (rather we might say *especially*) with *good* designs and righteous aims; when we see the evil, the vice, the ruin that has befallen the most flourishing kingdoms which the mind of man ever created; we can scarce avoid being filled with sorrow at this universal taint of corruption: and, since this decay is not the work of mere Nature, but of the Human Will – a moral embitterment – a revolt of the Good Spirit (if it have a place within us) may well be the result of our reflections. Without rhetorical exaggeration, a simple truthful combination of the miseries that have overwhelmed the noblest of nations and polities, and the finest exemplars of private virtue – forms a picture of most fearful aspect, and excites emotions of the profoundest and most hopeless sadness, counterbalanced by no consolatory result.¹²⁶

Hegel lamented that this image prompted observers to withdraw from the ‘intolerable disgust’ provoked by ‘these sorrowful reflections’ into a solipsistic voyeurism, severing their involvement in universal human history into ‘the more agreeable environment of our individual life’: ‘we retreat into the selfishness that stands on the quiet shore, and thence enjoy in safety the distant spectacle of “wrecks confusedly hurled”’.¹²⁷

To overcome this disillusion with the human race, it was necessary to reconcile the belief that history had followed a necessary and rational course with the manifest horrors provoked by the violent passions of historical agents. Hegel called this the ‘cunning of reason’: that in the historical process, the development towards the rule of rational self-consciousness embodied in the perfect state was driven by these irruptions of violent and selfish passions. Reason ‘sets the passions to work for itself, while that which develops its

¹²³ Ibid., p. 24.

¹²⁴ Kant’s discourse on our inability to sense the direction of human development by looking at history in *Contest of the Faculties*, and the necessity of finding clues to this direction by the human response to exceptional revolutionary events, runs heavily through Hegel’s text.

¹²⁵ Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, p. 35.

¹²⁶ Ibid., pp. 34-5.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 35.

existence through such impulsion pays the penalty, and suffers loss'.¹²⁸ Reason was not self-conscious in the process of history, but historical agents were caught in a rational process, in which the fuller meaning of their own passion-driven activity was veiled to them.

For Hegel, as for Marx, the passions drive individuals to give overwhelming attention to an object, 'concentrating all [their] desires and powers upon it'.¹²⁹ As Hegel wrote,

Passions, private aims, and the satisfaction of selfish desires, are ... most effective springs of action. Their power lies in the fact that they respect none of the limitations which justice and morality would impose on them; and that these natural impulses have a more direct influence over man than the artificial and tedious discipline that tends to order and self-restraint, law and morality.¹³⁰

'*Nothing great in the world*', Hegel affirmed, 'has been accomplished without *passion*'.¹³¹ The most important passions were those of the 'great historical men', whose own private passions unconsciously aligned with deep, concealed forces which Hegel called the 'will of the World-Spirit'.¹³² Without insight into the ultimate causes which conjured the passions directing their activity, experiencing them as entirely subjective, the transgressive passions of the great men of history nevertheless advanced the progress of reason, harmonising with the possibilities in the historical situation for its own transcendence.

The private passions of the great historical men, the Alexanders, the Caesars, the Cromwells, the Robespierres and Napoleons, were progressive insofar as they directed those men to concentrate their powers towards breaking the limitations of their historical context. Events and epochs regarded as irrational, violent, and passionate were therefore integrated into the rational course of history.¹³³ The passions urged the negation of the present when it had exhausted its own creative potential, while the progress of reason followed through the subsequent Thermidorian reaction, the negation of these passions in

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 44.

¹³³ This allowed the mature, conservative Hegel to nevertheless justify the French Revolution in some sense, which he had passionately supported in his youth. He echoed Kant: 'Emotions of a lofty character stirred men's minds at that time; a spiritual enthusiasm thrilled through the world, as if the reconciliation between the Divine and the Secular was now first accomplished'. *Ibid.*, p. 467.

turn, and the stabilisation of a new context in which all that was positive in the passionate revolt is consolidated.

For Hegel, civilisation developed in order to gratify, contain, and subordinate these unruly passions to reason and morality, to disarm these transgressive passions in various ways and put them to rational use. After a long historical process of conflict and strife, the ‘desired harmony’ would be achieved. With the perfection of the state in response to passionate challenges, there would be no misalignment between the passions and the state of things which would produce Romantic world-historical heroes chafing at their limitations.¹³⁴

The Passions of Class Struggle

This doctrine influenced the idea of history as a history of class struggles developed by Marx and Engels. In a similar manner, Marx’s definition of the passions made them integral within a schema of historical development. I have shown that, for Marx, man was an objective, sensuous being, which must seek to gratify its drives by acting on objects existing in the external world, and that he defined passion as this relation between the human being and these objects. For Marx, what was particularly ‘human’ about this mode of being was that the external world was not ‘directly given in a form adequate to the *human* being’.¹³⁵ Man differed from the animals insofar as they were perfectly fitted to their given, static, environment.¹³⁶ Man’s initial environment, however, was incapable of satisfying the drives, and so the passionate relationships people maintained with the world led them to try to transform this environment, to make it fit for human purposes. This included the social environment, and the transformation of the social environment necessarily entailed the transformation of the self, and the reappearance of the disharmony between the individual and the environment on a higher level. Passion, in these disharmonious conditions, would take many

¹³⁴ Ibid., pp. 37-8.

¹³⁵ Marx, *EPM 1844*, p. 156.

¹³⁶ The pre-Darwinian nature of this idea is obvious, but it is also obvious why Marx then saw the theory of natural evolution as supportive of his own ideas when he read Darwin.

forms, including the destructive, transgressive passions of class conflict and revolution.

Following Hegel, Engels asserted that ‘it is precisely the wicked passions of man – greed and lust for power – which, since the emergence of class antagonisms, serve as levers of historical development’.¹³⁷ Engels was scornful of Feuerbach’s ‘extravagant deification of love’, though appreciative of Feuerbach’s intention to undermine the ‘intolerable sovereign rule of “pure reason”’.¹³⁸ As he wrote,

... love! – yes, with Feuerbach, love is everywhere and at all times the wonder-working god who should help to surmount all difficulties of practical life – and at that in a society which is split into classes with diametrically opposite interests. At this point, the last relic of the revolutionary character disappears from his philosophy, leaving only the old cant: Love one another – fall into each other’s arms regardless of distinctions of sex or estate – a universal orgy of reconciliation!¹³⁹

Rather, Engels saw the growth of the wrathful passions of the working class as proof of their vitality and awakening to their historical mission:

This rage, this passion, is rather the proof that the workers feel the inhumanity of their position, that they refuse to be degraded to the level of brutes, and that they will one day free themselves from servitude to the bourgeoisie.¹⁴⁰

Marx concurred. In the very first work he and Engels worked on as a partnership, he invoked the Hegelian ‘negation of the negation’ to explain the violent passions of the proletariat, the ‘indignation to which it is necessarily driven by the contradiction between its human *nature* and its conditions of life, which is

¹³⁷ Engels, *Feuerbach*, p. 37.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 18-9. Althusser credited Feuerbach with displacing the liberal subject in this manner:

In his humanism of alienation, he gave them the theoretical concepts that enabled them to think the alienation of the human essence as an indispensable moment in the realisation of the human essence, unreason (the irrational *reality* of the State) as a necessary moment in the realisation of reason (the idea of the State). It thus enabled them to *think* what they would otherwise have suffered as irrationality itself: the necessary *connexion* between reason and unreason. Of course, this relation remained trapped in a philosophical anthropology, its basis, with this theoretical proviso: the remanipulation of the concept of man, indispensable to think the historical relation between historical reason and unreason. Man ceases to be defined by reason and freedom: he becomes, in his very principle, ‘communalist’, concrete intersubjectivity, love, fraternity, ‘species being’.

Louis Althusser, ‘Marxism and Humanism’ in *For Marx* translated by Ben Brewster (London, 2005), p. 225.

¹³⁹ Engels, *Feuerbach*, p. 40.

¹⁴⁰ Friedrich Engels, *Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844* translated by Florence Kelley Wischnewetzky (New York, 2008), p. 118.

the outright, decisive and comprehensive negation of that nature'.¹⁴¹ The way of life reserved for the proletariat prompted the swelling of violent passions, compelling it towards destructive activity, riots and Luddite frame-breaking. This alienated mode of being, for Marx and Engels, was the strongest in the great urban centres formed in the divisions of city and country. Engels deplored the 'brutal indifference, the unfeeling isolation of each in his private interest' found in the crowds of the great cities, the 'dissolution of mankind into monads'.¹⁴² It was in the city that feudal ties had been fully dissolved, and where 'the social war, the war of each against all, is ... openly declared'.¹⁴³ The large cities were thus the key sites of proletarian class formation out of these individual monads, the arenas in which the revolutionary passions of the proletariat would ultimately overflow the restraints placed upon them by the social organisation of society, its ideology, its morality, and its repressive institutions of state.

In Tucker's interpretation, Marx's theory of the passions was a fusion of Hegel's philosophy of history and classical political economy, each of them defined by their insistence on the 'beneficent uses of evil'. Where the former saw the realisation of reason through the self-aggrandising passions of great men, and the latter saw social rationality spontaneously arising through the private passion of acquisitiveness or self-interest exercised by all men, Tucker argued that Marx combined the two into a system that was politically, morally, and economically nihilist: 'Hegelianism here crosses with the conception of society as an economic machine to reproduce the modern moral heresy – the theory of the uses of evil – in its most malignant form'.¹⁴⁴ According to Tucker, the ideal Marxian proletariat was filled with 'wrath and vengeance', while the ideal capitalist was filled with the passion of acquisitiveness:

¹⁴¹ Marx & Engels, *Holy Family*, p. 51.

¹⁴² Engels, *Condition of the Working Class*, p. 24. The affinities between Engels' use of the Epicurean monad and its appearance in Marx's doctoral dissertation is interesting. As Boris Kuznetsov highlighted, Marx was fond of Lucretius's poetic formulation of the clinamen as 'something in the breast that can fight back and resist', the unpredictable swerve that breaks the static isolation of Epicurean atoms falling parallel in the void, bringing them into an encounter and causing the emergence of the new. See: Boris Kuznetsov, *Reason and Being* edited by Carolyn R. Fawcett & Robert S. Cohen, translated by Lynn Visson (Lancaster, 1987), p. 78.

¹⁴³ Engels, *Condition of the Working Class*, p. 24.

¹⁴⁴ Robert C. Tucker, 'The Cunning of Reason in Hegel and Marx', *Review of Politics* 18, 3 (July, 1956), 278.

His figure of the capitalist is not a simple economic egoist in the form of a thrifty, respectable, law-abiding tradesman. He does not conform to any remotely authentic historical image of the bourgeois. He is a product of German philosophical mythology, a satanic figure who is the captive of his own overpowering grand passion, the passion of 'self-expansion'. Marx's 'self-expansion of capital' is a metamorphosis of Hegel's passion for self-aggrandisement in the world-historical individual.¹⁴⁵

The influence of Hegel's understanding of the passions was undoubtedly strong as Tucker argued. However, Tucker was inattentive to Marx's writing on the alienation and reification of the passion of acquisitiveness, how through the competitive market system what originated in acquisitiveness became embodied in a series of laws and tendencies around which capitalists and labourers must regulate their behaviour or else face economic ruin, regardless of their own subjective passions.

Tucker also focused only on the Hegelian image of the passions overcoming moral limitations and restraints, neglecting the influence of philosophers like Fourier who had a much more positive view of the role of the passions in social life. As Tucker wrote:

When he employs the word 'passions', Hegel especially has in mind the range of emotions which centre in the will to be great: pride, ambition, the love of fame, the craving for power, the urge to conquer.¹⁴⁶

There is some truth in this for Hegel, but it is not the whole truth, as there is no sense in Hegel that the limitations imposed on the passions were necessarily rational and moral in an ahistorical sense, only that they were relatively rational and moral within the context of specific human societies. The passions of great historical individuals, then, may drive 'immoral' actions in the context which they were tasked with overcoming, but could be satisfied by perfectly moral actions in the future context they would create by their transgression, which for Hegel was necessarily a higher morality. Tucker began by accurately speaking of 'passions', but armed with this definition soon slid into using 'private vice' and 'moral evil' as if they were synonyms for 'passion'.

Marx's theory, however, did not end with the destructive passions of the proletariat, or with the pursuit of class interest. Marx thought that proletarians driven by indignation at their material conditions and by the hatred of their

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 282.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 270.

exploiters would, in the course of their struggle, be led into positive emotional relationships with each other. These relationships would provide both the rational and emotional foundations for the new society, prepared under the capitalist mode of production just the same as the economic basis of socialism:

When communist *workmen* associate with one another, theory, propaganda, etc., is their first end. But at the same time, as a result of this association, they acquire a new need – the need for society – and what appears as a means becomes an end. You can observe this practical process in its most splendid results whenever you see French socialist workers together. Such things as smoking, drinking, eating, etc., are no longer means of contact or means that bring together. Company, association, and conversation, which again has society as its end, are enough for them; the brotherhood of man is no mere phrase with them, but a fact of life, and the nobility of man shines upon us from their work-hardened bodies.¹⁴⁷

Initially, the revolt of the proletariat would be directed only against the immediate and obvious barriers to working-class fulfilment, divorced from the idea of any broader liberation. Working-class passions would drive the struggle for emancipation regardless of ‘what this or that proletarian, or even the whole of the proletariat at the moment *considers* as its aim’.¹⁴⁸

This included the passion of acquisitiveness or self-interest, transforming into class interest, itself. In a short article, Schlomo Avinieri wrote of the strong influence of Hegel’s ‘cunning of reason’ on Marx’s theory of class struggle, but made a similar mistake to Tucker. Where Tucker equated passion with moral evil, Avinieri wrote of ‘passion/self-interest’ and simply ‘self-interest’ throughout much of the article - Marx’s philosophy of myriad passions corresponding to many and varied needs was dissolved into self-interest alone.¹⁴⁹

Marx’s variety of passions cannot be reduced to acquisitiveness and class interest. However, the working-class struggle for material gain within the sphere of commodity fetishism, where the logic of reified acquisitiveness held sway, did remain an important part of the broader class struggle. Class struggle operated on multiple levels that interacted, and the economic struggle was a necessary precondition for the truly revolutionary struggle for liberation of the full human personality.

¹⁴⁷ Marx, *EPM 1844*, pp. 123-4.

¹⁴⁸ Marx & Engels, *Holy Family*, p. 53.

¹⁴⁹ Schlomo Avinieri, ‘The Instrumentality of Passion in the World of Reason: Hegel and Marx’, *Political Theory* 1, 4 (November, 1973), 395-7.

The worth of the struggle over wages and working conditions was chiefly in the unintended consequences of raising the price of labour. This would make it increasingly more cost-effective for the owners of capital to replace workers with machinery, raising the organic composition of capital, minimising the labour required to produce the necessaries of social life, and creating the material conditions for socialist society. As Marx wrote, ‘capital ... quite unintentionally – reduces human labour, expenditure of energy, to a minimum. This will redound to the benefit of emancipated labour, and is the condition of its emancipation’.¹⁵⁰ It would also eventually create the conditions for the success of the revolution, by plunging capitalism into crises arising ultimately from the contradiction between the measurement of value by socially-necessary labour-time and the increasing absurdity of this standard of value in a world of large-scale machinery and associative industry:

... As soon as labour in the direct form has ceased to be the great well-spring of wealth, labour time ceases and must cease to be its measure, and hence exchange value [must cease to be the measure] of use value. The surplus labour of the mass has ceased to be the condition for the development of general wealth, just as the non-labour of the few, for the development of the general powers of the human head. With that, production based on exchange value breaks down, and the direct, material production process is stripped of the form of penury and antithesis. The free development of individualities, and hence not the reduction of necessary labour time so as to posit surplus labour, but rather the general reduction of the necessary labour of society to a minimum, which then corresponds to the artistic, scientific, etc. development of the individuals in the time set free, and with the means created, for all of them. Capital itself is the moving contradiction, [in] that it presses to reduce labour time to a minimum, while it posits labour time, on the other side, as sole measure and source of wealth.¹⁵¹

Class interest, then, was only a beginning.

The inevitable revolution in Europe, Marx thought, would ‘take a form more brutal or humane, according to the degree of development of the working class itself’.¹⁵² Through the shared experience of struggle, driven initially by economic acquisitiveness and the wrathful passions of suffering beings placed in an intolerable environment, there would arise both the emotional foundations for a truly fraternal social form and a philosophical, communicative ‘public sphere’ in which an expansive human reason could be developed. Engels wrote

¹⁵⁰ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* translated by Martin Nicolaus (London, 1973), p. 701.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 706-7.

¹⁵² Marx, *Capital*, p. 92.

that the task for the proletarian movement was to become conscious of the underlying laws governing historical development, the ‘levers which immediately determine passion or deliberation’.¹⁵³ In other words, the key to ‘scientific socialism’ was to understand the interaction of the passions and the environment, discovering human ‘laws of motion’.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I have traced the historiography of the ‘discourse of the passions’ in Western political philosophy from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth century, with special attention given to Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. I have shown how scholars have insisted upon the centrality of the concept of passion in Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment thought, and I have argued that this discourse was integral to way these philosophers responded to the revolutionary upheavals of their day.

From Fourier and Marx, the contours of a particularly socialist understanding of the passions can be derived. They saw the passions as a universal element in human nature, grounding the possibility of a universal social form and providing the basis for a generally applicable science of politics. Passions were not necessarily an evil influence which had to be restrained by the state and an economics of self-interest, but were integral to the human personality. They spurred activity in the world and were the basis of social relationships. Passion was therefore the basis of public discourse, rather than the antithesis of reason. The destructive, transgressive, and revolutionary nature of passionate activity was not due to the nature of the passions themselves, but because the social environment was out of harmony with the passions. For Marx, though this liberal framework had been appropriate for a previous level of human development, the growth of proletarian discontent showed that capitalist structures were ripe for displacement by those of socialism, which would be less one-sided, less focused on satisfying immediate necessities, and more fulfilling for the varied passions of the full human personality.

¹⁵³ Engels, *Feuerbach*, p. 50

In the following chapter I will look at the role of the passions and sentiments in British socialist thought from the ‘socialist revival’ of the 1880s to the early 1900s. British socialists debated key issues raised by Marx’s theory, seeking to understand the emotions driving class struggle. They hoped to build a society which could satisfy the passions better than capitalism, which they argued distorted emotional lives by placing too much stress on self-interest. I will show the emergence of approaches to the emotions developed by non-Marxian ‘ethical’ or ‘sentimental’ socialists, and the crucial challenge of Fabian socialism. I will go on to show how the increasing prominence of Darwinian ideas in British political discourse, especially biological notions of ‘instinct’ and ‘emotion’, challenged the place of the passions and sentiments in socialist thought.

Chapter Two. Sympathy and the Social Instinct in British Socialist Thought, 1884-1910

Yea, hide your idol deep as hell for shame;
 Let none henceforth make mention of its name;
 Let hate and strife and strain and struggle cease;
 Let social war give place to social peace;
 Let waste and want no longer be descried,
 Nor luxury and famine side by side;
 Let faith and friendship flourish once again;
 Let long-lost love resume her ancient reign;
 Let lust of gold decay; let envy die;
 Let Mammon's self fall headlong from the sky;
 Blot out the record of his worship; yea,
 Cover it up for shame, hide it away.

- *Justice*, 1884.¹

In chapter one I argued that key formative theorists of European socialism, most importantly Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, developed their thinking about the passionate and irrational in response to a trend in bourgeois political philosophy which interpreted the passions as destructive of social order and in need of restraint by the state, alongside the encouragement of self-interest as the least harmful of the passions. This chapter will show how British socialists continued to develop a self-consciously distinctive socialist way of understanding emotions.

This chapter will examine how British socialists integrated the passions into their philosophies, including the critique of the alienated emotional relations endemic to capitalist society, and the desire to re-found society upon more harmonious emotional relations based on sympathy and fellowship. It will show how early socialists sought to negotiate the challenges and contradictions raised by this project, such as how they could relate to such discordant emotional phenomena as discontent and class hatred. As the implications of the theory of evolution became clear, changing conceptions of the emotional in British discourse challenged this quest for harmony. This chapter will argue that British socialism of the revival period was marked by the process through which the

¹ 'Hide It Away', *Justice* 20 December 1884, p. 3.

‘discourse of the passions’ was challenged by a scientific discourse of emotion and instinct. I argue that socialist understandings of the emotions in this period reflected the mixture and transference of meaning characteristic of this moment, in which the new categories related to biology and natural evolution retained connotations of earlier categories associated with philosophy and spirit. In British socialism, these two discourses intermingled to produce a hybrid discourse – a sentimentalist emotional style for the age of biological instinct.² Before turning to the main themes of this socialist sentimentalism, I will provide an overview of the socialist revival and its historiography.

The British Socialist Revival and the Labour Party’s First Decade, 1884-1910

The 1880s and 1890s are known to historians of the Left in Britain as the ‘socialist revival’, when socialism became a prominent ideological tendency and its basic ideas were developed.³ In the 1880s Britain appeared to be entering an economic, social, and political crisis, combining a continuing agricultural depression, soaring unemployment, and unrest in Ireland. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the ‘entry of the masses’ into the mainstream of British political life,⁴ posing a critical challenge to the political establishment. This period saw the foundation of a great number of new socialist organisations and publications, and in 1900 the Labour Representation Committee (LRC) was formed explicitly to represent the working classes in the public sphere. In the three decades between the overt adoption of a socialist programme by the Social

² The beliefs of the Earl of Shaftesbury, described by William Reddy, provide a good definition of sentimentalism: ‘... men were equipped with an “inward eye” that enabled them to perceive the morally good. Moral perceptions became available to the mind via inborn sentiments. Feelings of benevolence, pity, love, and gratitude gave shape to moral judgment and rendered moral action pleasurable.’ William M. Reddy, ‘Sentimentalism and Its Erasure: The Role of Emotions in the Era of the French Revolution’, *Journal of Modern History* 72, 1 (March, 2000), 120.

³ See: Arthur E. Bestor Jr., ‘The Evolution of the Socialist Vocabulary’, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 9, 3 (June, 1948), 259-302; Kirk Willis, ‘The Introduction and Critical Reception of Marxist Thought in Britain, 1850-1900’, *Historical Journal* 20, 2 (June, 1977), 417-59. For the ideological preparation of the socialist revival in the period ‘which separated the last of the Chartists from the first of the modern Socialists’, see: Royden Harrison, *Before the Socialists: Studies in Labour and Politics 1861-1881* (London, 1965).

⁴ Eric Hobsbawm, *Fractured Times: Culture and Society in the Twentieth Century* (London, 2014), p. xiii.

Democratic Federation (SDF) in 1884 and the beginning of the First World War in 1914, the British socialist movement had grown from a few hundred largely metropolitan adherents into a broad social movement linked to millions of the working class organised in the Labour-affiliated trade unions.

To bring some order to the anarchic diversity of early British socialism, historians have generally divided the movement into three broad categories. The first is a Marxist or Social Democratic tendency, centred on the SDF and its offshoots, including the Socialist League, the Socialist Labour Party (SLP), and the Socialist Party of Great Britain (SPGB).⁵ Encounters with Marxist and other radical ‘continental’ ideas, like the anarchism of Mikhail Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin, were crucial to the initial surge in interest which produced the socialist revival, but were applied unsystematically, adapted and modified through their interaction with indigenous radical and working-class political traditions, producing a distinctively British socialist culture.

The second category is a more amorphous ‘ethical’ or ‘sentimental’ strain, chiefly represented by the Independent Labour Party (ILP) founded in 1893 and the Clarion movement organised around Robert Blatchford, but it also included a variety of groups with various levels of political engagement, from socialist churches to utopian communities. These socialists were adherents of what they commonly called the ‘religion of socialism’, understood as a revival of moral feeling, and saw socialism as a crusade for a more just, happy, and beautiful life for all denied it.⁶ For these ethical or sentimental socialists, schemes of economic and political reorganisation were of secondary importance next to the revitalisation of purpose and meaning in social life.

The third category is a more positivist and ‘collectivist’ tendency associated with the Fabian Society. The Fabian Society was initially formed in early 1884 by middle-class followers of the religious philosopher Thomas Davidson, who shared his desire for a more ethically conscious ‘new life’ but

⁵ See: Chushichi Tsuzuki, *H.M. Hyndman and British Socialism* edited by Henry Pelling (Oxford, 1961); Martin Crick, *The History of the Social-Democratic Federation* (Keele, 1994); Graham Johnson, ‘“Making Reform the Instrument of Revolution”: British Social Democracy, 1881-1911’, *Historical Journal* 43, 4 (2000), 977-1002.

⁶ See: Stephen Yeo, ‘A New Life: The Religion of Socialism in Britain, 1883-1896’, *History Workshop* 4 (Autumn, 1977), 5-56.

were dissatisfied with his individualistic methods.⁷ They looked especially to liberalism, radicalism,⁸ and social democracy to provide a more active engagement with the ills of society as a whole. In the critique of these tendencies, they developed their own rationalist and utilitarian alternative to Marxism. The Fabians pioneered a ‘gradualist’ and evolutionary, as opposed to revolutionary, socialism based on the incremental growth of state and local authority guidance of the economy, aiming to supersede capitalism by a more efficient alternative while avoiding a chaotic revolutionary breakdown of the system. Though never great in numbers, the Fabian Society attracted many influential figures, including the playwright George Bernard Shaw, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, and, for a time, the science fiction writer H.G. Wells. They pioneered the tactic of ‘permeation’, bringing collectivist ideas to the attention of Britain’s political establishment.

The Fabian Society’s talents for translating the vague desires of socialism into practicable short-term programmes ensured they had a strong intellectual influence on Labour, even if their approach left many more ambitious socialists dissatisfied. The Fabians were commonly critiqued for a tendency towards elitism and technocratic authoritarianism, though more libertarian forms of socialism, such as the Guild Socialism of G.D.H. Cole, emerged out of critical involvement in the Fabian Society.

Socialists often maintained multiple membership of different groups and read literature from across the movement, so common themes provided for a distinct socialist culture encompassing all of these tendencies. Despite efforts by socialist theorists to distinguish their own group from all others, individual socialists tended to be influenced to varying degrees by all three traditions.

Alongside the development of the socialist movement, this period saw the growth and politicisation of the labour movement, identified with a particular tradition of its own. ‘Labourism’ was primarily concerned with the material conditions of work, with issues of employment, pay, housing, working

⁷ A.M. McBriar, *Fabian Socialism and English Politics 1884-1918* (Cambridge, 1966).

⁸ For the influence of Radicalism on the Fabian Society, see: Jon Lawrence, ‘Popular Radicalism and the Socialist Revival in Britain’, *Journal of British Studies* 31, 2 (April, 1992), 163-86.

conditions and hours. The Labourist critique of laissez-faire capitalism was chiefly that it prevented workers from enjoying the full value of their labour, and they sought to redistribute wealth through trade union struggle and eventually, spurred by the political obstacles to what they considered their purely economic struggle, through parliamentary action. Labourism centred around the Trades Union Congress (TUC), focused on building and defending the power of the organised working class regarding immediate issues. It was concerned less with the organisation and achievement of the world of tomorrow than in winning a better deal for workers in the continued context of capitalist social relations.

From the late 1880s onwards, marked by iconic strikes by the match-girls in 1888, textile workers in 1888-9, and dockers and gas-workers from 1889-90, the labour movement entered a phase known as the 'New Unionism', during which unskilled and semi-skilled workers were brought into the trade union movement, previously dominated by the skilled artisanal workers organised in craft unions. In 1900 the LRC was formed with the participation of socialist groups and the organisations of the labour movement, representing the interests of the working class in the Houses of Parliament.⁹ The LRC was refashioned as the Labour Party after the 1906 general election. From the start, many socialists criticised Labour for its reluctance to break out from under the wing of liberalism and for the conservatism of the trade union establishment.

The 1910s saw critical, existential challenges to both the socialist movement and the labour movement. The strikes and riots of the Great Unrest, which challenged both socialist theorists and the trade union establishment, passed directly into the crises of the First World War and the rise of European revolutionary movements, followed in Britain by industrial unrest of an even greater intensity than before. I argue in chapter three that a process of disintegration and reintegration of socialist ideas over this decade changed the character of the movement, a process in which contesting interpretations of the Russian Revolution were crucial. This chapter will break with the tradition in the historiography of British socialism that defines the 1880s to 1914 as a

⁹ For the early history of the Labour Party, see: Duncan Tanner, *Political Change and the Labour Party: 1900-1918* (Cambridge, 1990); Andrew Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party* (Basingstoke, 2008).

discrete era brought to an end by the First World War, and instead end on the cusp of the Great Unrest. The task of this chapter is to outline the early socialist movement's culture in terms of its understandings of emotion and irrationality before 1910, as it sought to build on the critique of capitalism by Marx and other precursors. It aims to identify the key themes of British socialism's ideological engagement with emotion, before the start of the decade which began in a great outburst of class struggle, led into the Great War, and culminated in the consolidation of a socialist state in Russia and revolutionary uprisings across Europe and beyond.

The Historiography of Early 'Sentimental Socialism'

Early British socialism has profited from the attention of some of the most celebrated social and political historians of the twentieth century.¹⁰ They sought to understand how socialism emerged, and tried to explain how its origins shaped the character of the British Labour movement.¹¹ Since the 'cultural turn' of the 1970s, there has been a shift in focus towards seeing how British socialism was created and sustained through discursive practices.¹² Historians have been critical of the 'economic determinism' evident in many older social histories of the Labour movement, which, they contend, understood socialist ideology as a natural or inevitable product of the proletarianisation of British society and the development of the trade union movement. As Mark Bevir wrote, historians have become interested in the 'contingent processes by which people made socialism', modifying and supplementing inherited cultural traditions in

¹⁰ See, for instance: Max Beer, *A History of British Socialism* (London, 1920); Cole, *A History of Socialist Thought vols. I-III* (London, 1953-6); Henry Pelling, *The Origins of the Labour Party, 1880-1900* (Oxford, 1965); Eric Hobsbawm, *Labouring Men: Studies in the History of Labour* (London, 1979).

¹¹ See: Tanner, 'Development of British Socialism'.

¹² See, for example: Sheila Rowbotham & Jeffrey Weeks, *Socialism and the New Life: The Personal and Sexual Politics of Edward Carpenter and Havelock Ellis* (London, 1977); Ian Britain, *Fabianism and Culture: A study in British socialism and the arts c. 1884-1918* (London, 1982); Chris Waters, *British Socialists and the Politics of Popular Culture, 1884-1914* (Manchester, 1990); Karen Hunt, "'Strong Minds, Great Hearts, True Faith and Ready Hands'?: Exploring Socialist Masculinities Before the First World War', *Labour History Review* 69, 2 (August, 2004), 201-17; Ruth Livesey, *Socialism, Sex, and the Culture of Aestheticism in Britain, 1880-1914* (Oxford, 2007).

response to the specific dilemmas raised by their epoch, rather than ‘as the natural outcome of workers’ reacting to the prior formation of capitalism’.¹³

Thomas Linehan has perhaps gone the furthest in challenging what he called the ‘older historiography’ by defining British socialism of the 1880s and 1890s as ‘a species of modernism’, placing it in the context of fin-de-siècle culture rather than the more familiar narrative – of developments in trade unionism, the cooperative movement, and the economic troubles of the British Empire.¹⁴ For Linehan, this ‘older historiography’ had a tendency to reduce the vibrancy of early British socialism to mere Labour Party prehistory, rather than seeing it on its own terms.¹⁵ With the LRC only created in 1900, the socialism of this period cannot be reduced to ‘what Labour governments do’, as Herbert Morrison famously quipped.¹⁶ Far from equating socialism with Clause Four of the post-1918 Labour Party’s constitution,¹⁷ socialist texts must be read closely to understand what was meant by its advocates and opponents, and how these meanings changed. As Ruth Livesey demonstrated in her study of the gendered aesthetics of the early socialist movement, attention to the ‘cultural origins of British socialism’ allows historians to understand the ‘fusion of questions of artistic production, taste, and the nature of beauty with capitalism, class consciousness, and revolution’.¹⁸

In Linehan’s interpretation, the ‘modern socialist sensibility’ arose as a ‘highly anguished’ and contradictory response to processes of modernisation,

¹³ Mark Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 298, 6.

¹⁴ Thomas Linehan, *Modernism and British Socialism* (London, 2012), p. 6.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5. There is no need however to caricature the ‘older historiography’ as narrow economic determinists in order to justify new approaches and an interest in new themes, as Eric Hobsbawm wrote in regard to the ‘older historiography’ of his own day:

As to quality, it is difficult to judge the present against the past, and some of us would not be too happy to step into the ring with, say, Sidney and Beatrice Webb or Gustav Mayer, but we are fortunately not obliged to confront them face to face, since we can stand on their shoulders.

Eric Hobsbawm, ‘Labour History and Ideology’, *Journal of Social History* 7, 4 (Summer, 1974), 371.

¹⁶ Herbert Morrison quoted in Robert Pearce, *Attlee’s Labour Governments, 1945-51* (London, 2006), p. 2.

¹⁷ ‘IV. To secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange, and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service’.

¹⁸ Livesey, *Socialism*, p. 5.

the ‘relentless disintegration of traditional frames of reference and established forms’.¹⁹ Socialists sought, he argued, to ‘fuse the spiritual with the material’, achieving a transcendent social fellowship to negate the impoverishment of life, the ‘profane time’ and ‘abstract space’, characteristic of modern industrial capitalism.²⁰ In many ways, Linehan’s understanding of early British socialism echoed that of Stanley Pierson, who saw its spiritualist discourse as a response to the ‘social homelessness’ or ‘divided consciousness’ of the lower middle class.²¹ Pierson argued that a distressing psychological gap had opened up between the self-image of the lower middle classes and their experience of social life, which the fantastic, utopian, and religious-revivalist character of early socialism helped to fill. This was a crisis of morality and culture, as traditional values failed to provide adequate guidance in a changing world.

A common division within the early British socialist movement is identified across this historiography, though framed in varied ways.²² Ethical or ‘sentimental’ socialism is often contrasted with the collectivist socialism of the Fabian Society – explained by Pierson as the adaptation of Marxism to native British culture traditions, its rationalism blending into Utilitarianism and its ‘ethical or visionary’ element becoming assimilated to Romantic traditions.²³ Recent cultural historians like Linehan have been attracted to the ‘socialist revival’ or the ‘religion of socialism’ period and the sentimental character of its discourse, seeing its variability and heterodoxy as the sign of a healthy culture of experimentation. Linehan criticised the Fabians for allegedly seeking to eliminate difference in the socialist movement, ‘to render socialism homogenous by erasing all spiritual, religious, romantic, mystical and utopian ... influences from contemporary socialist thinking and practice’.²⁴ Paul Salvesson

¹⁹ Linehan, *Modernism*, p. 17.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²¹ Stanley Pierson, *British Socialists: The Journey from Fantasy to Politics* (London, 1979), p. 17. See also: Stanley Pierson, *Marxism and the Origins of British Socialism: The Struggle for a New Consciousness* (Ithaca, 1973).

²² This division is not new. In the 1950s Andrew Hacker defined the division as believers in ‘original sin’ on the Right of the Labour Party versus utopians on the Left, with the key different being whether the perfect society could get rid of the irrational elements of human life, or whether the irrational would persist as an element of human nature. See: Andrew Hacker, ‘Original Sin vs. Utopia in British Socialism’, *Review of Politics* 18, 2 (April, 1956), 184-206.

²³ Pierson, *Marxism*, p. 272.

²⁴ Linehan, *Modernism*, p. 135.

substantially echoed this narrative in his study of early socialist cultures in the North of England. He described the 1890s and 1900s as the ‘heroic years of British socialism’, during which there was built a ‘distinctive socialist culture ... which was more than an economic doctrine and formed a whole way of life, at both individual and collective levels’.²⁵ In Salvesson’s narrative, this socialism was unfortunately displaced by the ‘increasingly centralist and statist’ socialisms of the twentieth century – Fabianism and Leninism.²⁶

This wave of interest in the sentimental, utopian and ‘modernist’ side of the socialist revival is in part a response to historians who denigrated it, championing instead the practical political achievements of socialists working through the Labour movement. Pierson provided a classic example of this, depicting this early history as a passage from ‘fantasy to politics’. In his narrative, socialism matured from a vague faith in the future goodness of society into a collection of concrete policy positions and a parliamentary machine through which they might be achieved.²⁷ Royden Harrison, responding to Stephen Yeo’s more sympathetic account, described the ‘religion of socialism’ period as ‘tawdry and absurd’,

The sigh, if not of the hard-pressed creature, then of the contrue commuter in Croyden; the soul, if not of soulless circumstances, then of repentant stock-brokers and gilded spinsters; the heart, if not of the heartless world, then, at least, of “cosmic mooniness”; the opium if not of the people exactly, then of that moderately well situated part of it which could find solace in sandals and sodomy at Milthorpe or in playing at being “Raven” and “Batwing” at Kingston-upon-Thames.²⁸

In Geoffrey Foote’s history of the Labour Party’s political thought, it was the need for socialists within the party to adapt around the more fundamental ideology of Labourism which pushed socialists towards a more realistic

²⁵ Paul Salvesson, *Socialism with a Northern Accent* (London, 2012), p. 69.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

²⁷ Pierson, *British Socialists*.

²⁸ Royden Harrison, ‘The Religion of Socialism’, *History Workshop* 5 (Spring, 1978), 217, 215. ‘Raven and Batwing’ possibly referred to members of the Kibbo Kift, in which ‘Food reformers, dress reformers, homeopaths, pantheists, occultists, folklorists and animal rights activists were to mix with a variety of land reformers, anarchists, socialists, liberals and nationalists’. J.F.C. Craven refers to ‘leading and respected Kinsmen “Batwing” and “Blue Swift”’. See: J.F.C. Craven, ‘Redskins in Epping Forest: John Hargrave, the Kibbo Kift and the Woodcraft Experience’ (1998) PhD Thesis: University College London, p. 254. ‘Sandals and sodomy at Milthorpe’ clearly referred to Edward Carpenter’s Derbyshire home, which he shared with the flamboyant George Merrill. See: Rowbotham & Weeks, *Socialism and the New Life*.

approach.²⁹ Foote saw the focus on sentiment in the socialism of ‘ethical’ figures like Edward Carpenter, John Bruce Glasier, and Keir Hardie as a weakness to be overcome, signifying a ‘withdrawal from the world [which was] impossible to translate into the practical politics of government’.³⁰ For Foote, talk of alienation and sentiment by early British socialists was merely a rhetorical device covering a gap in their practical programme, ‘lulling [themselves] into a state of vague elevation while concealing unresolved political problems’.³¹ D.D. Wilson’s dissertation on the role of ‘fellowship’ and ‘sentiment’ in early British socialism, chiefly through a study of members of the Fellowship of the New Life, shows both how sentimentalism helped to condition British socialism as it developed, but also how disillusioned former adherents of the Fellowship were apt to fall into a semi-fascistic ‘retreat from reason’.³² A closer look at the changing ways that British socialists understood emotion itself can help us to understand these divisions, but also shows strong continuities between these two allegedly opposed socialisms.

From Passions to Emotions in Nineteenth-Century British Thought

Romanticism and utilitarianism, fantasy and politics, culture and economics, socialist modernism and Fabian high modernism: using such binary concepts historians have ultimately reduced the nuanced internal differences within the early socialist movement to, on the one hand, a victorious tendency that can be defined by the predominance of science and ‘reason’ and, on the other, a defeated tendency that can be defined by the predominance of ‘sentimentality’. I argue, on the contrary, that the socialist engagement with the passions and sentiments, which was so manifest in ethical or sentimental socialism, was not simply a superficial device for concealing its inadequacies. Nor was it entirely displaced in Fabian socialism’s more ‘realistic’ concern with economics and politics – the Fabians and other ‘unsentimental’ socialists continued to discuss

²⁹ Geoffrey Foote, *The Labour Party’s Political Thought: A History* (London, 1985).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

³² D.D. Wilson, ‘The Search for Fellowship and Sentiment in British Socialism, 1880-1914’ (1971). M.A. Dissertation: University of Warwick, 74.

very similar themes, albeit in terms of the biological instincts rather than the passions of philosophy.

Instead, I argue that understanding the emotions remained a pressing concern for all socialists, even if shifts in theory and terminology can obscure these continuities. Where historians of the British socialist revival have seen the focus on sentiment fade away in socialist discourse after the ‘religion of socialism’ period in favour of practical politics, historians of emotion have depicted a cultural shift in late nineteenth-century British discourse, during which such terms as sentiment and passion were replaced by a discourse of instinct and emotion. To follow the themes of ‘sentimental socialism’ into the twentieth century, it is necessary to take account of this transformation.

Thomas Dixon has shown how the nineteenth century saw a paradigm shift in the way that psychological thinkers understood what we call the emotions, writing that:

It is an immensely striking fact of the history of English-language psychological thought that during the period between c.1800 and c.1850 a wholesale change in established vocabulary occurred such that those engaged in theoretical discussions about phenomena including hope, fear, love, hate, joy, sorrow, anger and the like no longer primarily discussed the passions or affections of the soul, nor the sentiments, but almost invariably referred to ‘the emotions’. This transition is as striking as if the established conceptual terms such as ‘reason’ or ‘memory’ or ‘imagination’ or ‘will’ had been quite suddenly replaced by a whole new category.³³

As this change, and its wider implications, filtered through into the broader culture, the older notions which embedded the passions, affections, and sentiments within a network of theologically and philosophically conditioned concepts like ‘soul’ or ‘will’, carrying connotations of moral responsibility and meaning, were not simply and cleanly replaced by the new ‘scientific’ alternative. This is apparent in the language used by socialists, in which the discourse of sentiment and Feuerbachian, capitalised ‘Love’ often mixed with the biological language of instinct and impulse. There was a degree of transference – the disenchanting drive to place the emotions wholly in the body rather than the spirit or soul contributed as much to an enchantment of the body

³³ Thomas Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 4.

as to the disenchantment of higher feeling, and gave the body many of the properties of the spirit in the socialist imagination. As Livesey wrote,

Far from firm boundaries existing between the spiritual and the material, the utopian and the reformist, the seeming opposites are literally bound together in this past.³⁴

Socialists sought to retain the enchantment inherent in the older concepts of the creeds that inspired them, of Christian sympathy and revolutionary Romantic passion. Ruth Levitas observed that Marxism's unstable dialectical fusion of utilitarian and romantic elements was a 'fragile synthesis, constantly in danger of disintegrating into its component parts, but one which must therefore constantly be re-established'.³⁵ Much of the diversity of socialism in the revival period reflected its historical moment, that the ideology crystallised at a point of crisis for those concepts grounding their 'sentimentalist' emotional style, and during the emergence of a new dominant discourse. Socialist discourse concerning the emotions does not suggest such a radical discontinuity between 'sentimental' or 'ethical' socialisms and a more 'scientific' Fabian alternative in the decades before 1910. Rather, the themes of sentimental or ethical socialism regarding the passions and sentiments, especially concerning the leading role of 'sympathy', were adopted by the Fabians though translated into a more scientific idiom, and fitted into a new discursive context. The socialist movement's character was formed in this encounter of two emotional styles, in the process of working out their contradictions, in the attempt to salvage old certainties in a new guise, and in the forced adaptation to new modes of thinking and feeling.

'Let Lust of Gold Decay': A Critique of Capitalist Emotions

The first time many socialists were exposed to the Marxist critique of political economy came when extracts of *Capital* appeared in the literary journal *To-Day* in 1883, alongside essays on Byron, Schopenhauer, Comte, extracts of poetry, and serialised novels by George Bernard Shaw and others. This publication soon became an official Social Democratic journal.³⁶ For most socialist thinkers, Marx's work was a strong critique of capitalism in the sphere of economics, but

³⁴ Livesey, *Socialism*, p. 6.

³⁵ Ruth Levitas, 'Marxism, Romanticism and Utopia: Ernst Bloch and William Morris', *Radical Philosophy* 51 (1989), 35.

³⁶ *To-Day* (1883).

insufficient in scope, too technical and too dry to entirely capture the spirit of humanist revolt which had drawn them to socialism. They sought a total critique of capitalist society and culture, and drew on a variety of sources to supplement the attack on capitalist economics with an attack on the alienated emotional lives it produced. Socialists argued that capitalism discouraged the kinds of emotions which were necessary for a healthy and meaningful social life, while fostering such undesirable emotional dispositions as greed, economic anxiety, and class resentment. Around the core critique of economic irrationality and the desire to remove fetters to the growth of productive forces, there developed a diverse array of socialisms based on the various ways one could frame dissatisfaction with the subjective experience of industrial capitalism.

The influence of Romanticism on socialists was strong.³⁷ The Romantic movement had long been dismayed by the threat posed to strong passionate attachments by the industrial ‘cash nexus’.³⁸ Socialism’s debt to Romanticism was demonstrated by the famous survey listing the favourite reading material of the 1906 cohort of Labour MPs, with John Ruskin narrowly beating the Bible as the most influential.³⁹

This influence on British socialism was especially clear in William Morris. Morris was a towering figure in the early British socialist movement and a strong critic of the tendency to reduce socialism to a narrow economic question. In his thought the critique of political economy was enriched by being joined to the passionate cultural critiques of Thomas Carlyle and Ruskin.⁴⁰ Morris sharply criticised the tendency of some in the Fabian Society to view socialism simply as the achievement of a middle-class standard of life for all. By the end of the 1880s, the Fabians were beginning to differentiate themselves from the rest of the socialist movement by their sober realism and rejection of Marxist articles

³⁷ See: Jonathan Mendilow, *The Romantic Tradition in British Political Thought* (Totowa, N.J., 1986) and Jonathan Mendilow, ‘Carlyle, Marx & the ILP: Alternative Routes to Socialism’, *Polity* 17, 2 (Winter, 1984), 225-47; George Hendrick, ‘Henry S. Salt, the Late Victorian Socialists, and Thoreau’, *New England Quarterly* 50, 3 (September, 1977), 409-22; Elynor G. Davis, ‘Mill, Socialism and the English Romantics: An Interpretation’, *Economica* 52, 207 (August, 1985), 345-58.

³⁸ For the importance of British Romanticism’s interest in the emotions, see: Joel Faflak & Richard C. Sha (eds), *Romanticism and the Emotions* (Cambridge, 2014).

³⁹ Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (London, 2008), p. 42.

⁴⁰ See: E.P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (London, 2011); Peter Faulkner, ‘Ruskin and Morris’, *Journal of the William Morris Society* 14 (2000), 6-17.

of faith.⁴¹ For Morris, the alienation of middle-class emotional lives, their repression of passion and sympathy, made that project deeply undesirable. He asked,

Shall we be ashamed of our love and our hunger and our mirth, and believe that it is wicked of us not to try to dispense with the joys that accompany procreation of our species, and the keeping of ourselves alive, those joys of desire which make us understand that the beasts too may be happy? Shall we all, in short, as the 'refined' middle-classes now do, wear ourselves away in the anxiety to stave off all trouble, emotion, and responsibility, in order that we may at last merge all our troubles into one, the trouble that we have been born for nothing but to be afraid to die? All this which is now the life of refined civilisation will be impossible then.⁴²

'Refined civilisation' and the dispassionate, utilitarian viewpoint which was the chief ideology of its growing managerial middle class, were defined by the command to repress passion and sympathy in the face of 'natural laws' reasoned from first principles.

Marx had mocked the superstitious belief in the permanence and universal applicability of the 'natural laws' operating under the capitalist mode of production, which had taken hold only through centuries of state intervention, rather than spontaneously from the acquisitiveness inherent in human nature after the release of feudal restraints.⁴³ These laws, he argued, led to a host of unintended consequences not taken account of in the theory of laissez-faire – like the division of society into classes, the growth of monopoly, and the tendency for the rate of profit to fall, spurring economic crises.

Sexual passion had to be repressed in the face of the population problem, while social sympathy had to be repressed so as not to unnaturally impact upon the Malthusian correctives to overpopulation, and to the functioning of the self-

⁴¹ McBriar, *Fabian Socialism*, pp. 13-22.

⁴² William Morris, 'On Some "Practical" Socialists', *Commonweal* 18 February 1888, 52.

⁴³ As Marx wrote, ending a historical chapter on the labours of the state to aid the primitive accumulation of capital:

Tantae molis erat to unleash the 'eternal natural laws' of the capitalist mode of production, to complete the process of separation between the workers and the conditions of their labour, to transform, at one pole, the social means of production and subsistence into capital, and at the opposite pole, the mass of the population into wage-labourers, into the free 'labouring poor', that artificial product of modern history. If money, according to Augier, 'comes into the world with a congenital blood-stain on one cheek', capital comes dripping from head to toe, from every pore, with blood and dirt.

Marx, *Capital*, pp. 925-6.

correcting market more broadly. Herbert Spencer argued that ‘sympathy with one in suffering suppresses ... remembrance of his transgressions’, and insisted that sympathy for those afflicted with hardship interfered with ‘the law that a creature not energetic to maintain itself must die’.⁴⁴ For Spencer, transgressing these ‘natural’ laws would lead to far worse results in the future, and so one must learn to harden one’s heart against sympathies which conflicted with knowledge of these laws. This was clear in the response of ‘hard-line’ Liberals to the famines of the British Empire which so disgusted many British progressives, as in the ‘Great Famine’ of 1876-8, during which the appeal to self-regulating economic laws enabled the colonial government to ‘override the humanitarian concerns of the local colonial administrators and the British public’, and continue to export food while millions starved.⁴⁵

For socialists, if the results of laissez-faire conflicted with natural human inclinations and led to catastrophic unforeseen circumstances, it was because classical political economy had based its theories on a faulty understanding of acquisitiveness as a benign passion to be championed while all others must be denigrated. Morris condemned the idea that when natural human passions conflicted with economic imperatives, the former must always give way to the latter. In a work co-written with E. Belfort Bax, Morris condemned the exaggerated ‘sham sentimentality’ of bourgeois civilisation which followed from this hollowness of real passion and sympathy, which they felt poisoned every area of cultural life. They likened bourgeois philanthropic overtures to the working classes to Edgar Allen Poe’s Ship of the Dead and its smiling seaman, in the distance seeming like deliverance to stranded mariners, when in fact ‘his amicable smile was caused by his jaws, denuded of the flesh, showing his white teeth set in a perpetual grin’.⁴⁶ They lamented how family bonds and affections had been overtaken by commercialism and broken for the working classes by the anti-social norms of industry, which laissez-faire Liberals argued would not

⁴⁴ Herbert Spencer, *The Man versus the State* (London, 1902), pp. 18-9.

⁴⁵ Rune Miller Stahl, ‘The Economics of Starvation: Laissez-Faire Ideology and Famine in Colonial India’ in *Intellectual History of Economic Normativities* edited by Mikkel Thorup (New York, 2016), p. 179. See also: Salim Rashid, ‘The Policy of Laissez-Faire During Scarcities’, *Economic Journal* 90, 359 (September, 1980), 493-503.

⁴⁶ William Morris & E. Belfort Bax, *Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome* (London, 1893), pp. 2-3.

be able to survive if children were taken out of the factories and put into schools.⁴⁷ Bourgeois religion, art, politics, and morality were all similarly a ‘sham’, emptied of the social emotion that might give them meaning. Morris launched his critique especially at the effect of this decay of feeling in labour and artistry of all kinds, as with his disgust at bourgeois writers, ‘[spinning] out their own insides like silkworms into dreary yarns of their sickly feelings and futile speculations’.⁴⁸

Marxists like Morris and Bax saw religion as itself a part of the problem, to be overcome by a truly humanised and rational culture which would organise social feelings in a new way. However, for many non-Marxists in the British socialist movement Christianity was a strong influence, providing a resonant language with which to frame the critique of bourgeois hypocrisy and the capitalist repression of sympathy.⁴⁹ Keir Hardie decried the effect of capitalist conditions on the emotional lives of the working class, perverting any attempt to follow Christ’s example of sympathy.⁵⁰ ‘Everything’, he wrote,

... savouring of a human relationship is destroyed. The machine must be kept going to grind out dividends, even if every generous impulse and kindly aspiration be crushed to nothingness.⁵¹

Conditions of life for the workers and their families, according to Hardie, were such as would drive them ‘for ever in revolt’ against their own society, a condition which made a Christian life based in sympathy impossible.⁵² Similarly, Robert S. Gilliard, in a 1905 lecture, argued that the ‘Kingdom of God’ in Christian theology should be taken as a metaphor for unselfish relations between people, ‘that unselfish love in human hearts which realises the brotherhood and sisterhood of human beings under one common Father’.⁵³ In his view, the encouragement given by the capitalist system to acquisitiveness distorted the Christian ethic of service: ‘Riches were obtained by the exaction of

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 7.

⁴⁸ Morris, ‘On Some “Practical” Socialists’, 52.

⁴⁹ For an overview of the Christian Socialist movement, see: Peter d’A. Jones, *The Christian Socialist Revival, 1877-1914: Religion, Class, and Social Conscience in Late-Victorian England* (New Jersey, 1968).

⁵⁰ J. Keir Hardie, *Can a Man be a Christian on a Pound a Week?* (London, 1898), p. 18.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 16.

⁵² Ibid., p. 3.

⁵³ Clipping from the *Mercury*, September 1905. Glasier papers GP/4/1, University of Liverpool Archive.

service, a method by which human love is stopped in its flow outwardly in service of others and turned inwardly in service of self'.⁵⁴

An anecdote from the autobiography of William Jupp, often cited by historians when discussing the atmosphere of early British socialism, demonstrates this felt disconnect between the desire for an all-embracing sympathy and the realities of a class-divided society. Jupp wrote of the extreme sentimentality that fed into his socialism.⁵⁵ He wrote in the third person, calling himself 'the Wayfarer', and is worth quoting at length:

Sentimentality, that besetting weakness of ill-balanced, emotional natures, and of all of us at certain stages of our development, betrayed some of these good altruists into much benevolent folly, both of speech and conduct. The Wayfarer did not wholly escape this. There was a considerable strain of sentiment in him, always liable to run over into sentimentality when the feelings were strongly moved either by persons or ideas. One morning he had been reading the chapter in 'Ecce Homo' on 'The Enthusiasm of Humanity'. The idea which so largely pervades that book, that virtue, to be worth anything, must be *enthusiastic*, or impassioned, so wrought upon him that he could not stay there with his books and sermons, doing the work that seemed appointed him and that was more or less appropriate to him just then. He must find something to do for others that savoured of self-denial and self-forgetting. He hurried out of doors, seeking for opportunities of altruistic service! He came upon some working men trenching in the road for the drainage or water supply of the district. Their hard toil seemed a reproach to him, their honest sweat a reflection on his sedentary habits and perhaps quite useless labours as a preacher. He must do something with or for these laborious toilers. As he stood there wondering where he should begin, or how to give tangible form to his effusive zeal, he became aware of something altogether foolish in his attitude and purpose. He was about to make himself ridiculous. These men were doing their work, requiring no aid or interference from him. Had he not better go back and attend his own?⁵⁶

Part of the problem, then, was that humanistic feeling was made ridiculous by class society and could find no outlet – social sympathy could not cross class barriers. The higher sentiments of service and belonging withered in contact with reality, in which humanity was divided into self-contained spheres. The answer, for Jupp, was to mediate that passionate sympathy through socialism to create a higher synthesis, removing class barriers between people, and removing the contradiction between egotism and altruism. Common to both the Romantic and Christian strands of critique which supplemented the core economic and political critique in early British socialism was the idea that human nature was

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Wilson, 'Fellowship and Sentiment', pp. 4-5; Linehan, *Modernism*, p. 29.

⁵⁶ William J. Jupp, *Wayfarings: A Record of Adventure and Liberation in the Life of the Spirit* (London, 1918), pp. 66-7.

being ill-served by capitalism, and that socialism would provide a more meaningful organisation of emotional lives.

‘Let Long-Lost Love Resume Her Ancient Reign’: The Socialism of Human Nature

We are told by the poet that: -

‘Two principles in human nature reign,
Self-love to urge and reason to restrain.’

Another principle which manifests itself as an essential feature of our common human nature is sentiment or altruism.

- *Socialist Standard*, 1905.⁵⁷

Socialist ideas about the emotions gave them an anchor for their political project. Like in Fourier’s system, the transformed society imagined by British socialists would be designed to harmonise with the passions of human nature. Socialists commonly justified their belief that a new, more harmonious social system was possible by referring to emotions such as sympathy, solidarity, comradeship, or fellowship. Such social emotions could never be truly satisfied outside of a socialist order, least of all in a capitalist order based around the primacy of avarice, and they drove the struggle to achieve the social revolution.

Following the strong environmentalism of Robert Owen, socialists commonly dismissed the idea of an unchanging human nature as often simply a naturalisation of class hierarchy, as ‘old Hammond’ in *News from Nowhere* (1890) retorts, when it is suggested that political strife arose from ‘human nature’:

‘Human nature! ... what human nature? The human nature of paupers, of slaves, of slave-holders, or the human nature of wealthy freemen? Which? Come, tell me that!’⁵⁸

Morris argued that socialism would bring a qualitative change in the whole emotional tenor of life. ‘It would be impossible’, he wrote, ‘to desire many things which are now the main objects of desire ... we shall burn what we once

⁵⁷ H.E., ‘The Inevitability of Socialism’, *Socialist Standard* Saturday 7 October 1905, 1.

⁵⁸ William Morris, *News from Nowhere, or An Epoch of Rest, being some chapters from a Utopian Romance* (London, 1905), p. 96.

adored, and adore what we once burned'.⁵⁹ All of the ugliness of civilisation, a by-product of its warped emotional life, would disappear.

However, as convinced as socialists were of the strong role played by environmental factors in forming an individual's character and determining their fate, they did not think of man as a *tabula rasa* whom one could mould and remould as one pleased. The limits to human plasticity were divine, anthropological, historical, and/or biological, depending on one's particular philosophy. Mankind had been imbued with innate passions and sentiments by God, history, or natural selection, as elements which drove the process of social development from primitive communism to modern communism, from equilibrium to equilibrium. Rather than the alienated and superficial pleasures afforded by capitalist society as a mere moment in the valorisation of capital, Morris wrote that:

The pleasures of such a society would be founded on the free exercise of the sense and passions of a healthy human animal, so far as this did not injure the other individuals of the community and so offend against social unity: no one would be ashamed of humanity or ask for anything better than its due development.⁶⁰

Creative labour was of special importance in this system, no longer unnaturally divorced from the pleasures of art. There would be:

... the Democracy of Art, the ennobling of daily and common work, which will one day put hope and pleasure in the place of fear and pain, as the forces which move men to labour and keep the world a-going.⁶¹

Whereas in capitalist conditions of life external discipline was required to restrain the passions and prevent harm to other individuals and to maintain the order of a class society, once socialism had been achieved, emotion would find positive outlets, harmonising between individuals rather than clashing discordantly, and naturally incline individuals towards maintaining social order.

The:

... social bond would be habitually and instinctively felt, so that there would be no need to be always asserting it by set forms: the family of blood-relationship would melt into that of the community and of humanity.⁶²

⁵⁹ Morris, 'On Some "Practical" Socialists', 52.

⁶⁰ William Morris, 'The Society of the Future (1887)' in *British Socialism: Socialist Thought from the 1880s to 1960s* edited by Antony Wright (London, 1983), p. 55.

⁶¹ William Morris, *Labour and Pleasure versus Labour and Sorrow: An Address*, 19 February 1880, p. 30.

⁶² Morris, 'Society of the Future' in *British Socialism* edited by Wright, p. 55.

Gilliard's writing, firmly on the sentimental and Christian socialist wing, was an extreme example of the tendency for socialists to endow bare material with spiritual properties. Mankind's original loss of Edenic, innocent and loving social relations, he wrote, arose from the 'allurement of the senses' which made the capitalist regime of acquisitiveness superficially attractive,⁶³ but the answer was not to turn away from the body. Rather, humanity must reach for the spiritual that is immanent in the sensual:

*... the only antidote to the deadly poison of the sensualism with which men are bitten in to-day's wilderness is the looking towards this very sensual principle in the recognition that, in its proper relation to the inner spiritual life. [sic] It also is Christ-like, Human, and Divine.*⁶⁴

Regardless of the varied thoughts, programmes and concepts socialists used to grasp this sentiment, they often saw their thinking as a response to an unconscious 'inner impulse ... not so much a thought as a sentiment'.⁶⁵ For Gilliard, a divinely-imputed 'Love for Humanity' lay behind the socialist revival in all its varied manifestations, existing as a real, sensuous, bodily sentiment provoking dissatisfaction with capitalist society. This 'Love' was baked into the clay of humanity to fulfil on earth God's intention for a 'communised' human society, including in the scope of loving relations not only all people existing, but all peoples ever:

This Love, in its very essence and infinitude, ensures that every human being who now exists, who has existed, and who will exist, must be a partaker of its ultimate realisation by the human race; for Infinite Love is unthinkable if it left out one human being from its Infinite concern.⁶⁶

Anthropology often replaced divinity for those socialists who sought a more secular and scientific basis for their beliefs, who commonly wrote of the return to earth of the natural social harmony thought to govern primitive communism.⁶⁷ As Bax wrote, history was the path 'from Socialism to Socialism'.⁶⁸ Bax

⁶³ Robert S. Gilliard, *Divine Basis of Society* (London, 1905), Epigraph.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* Italics in original.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 88-9.

⁶⁷ For an analysis of this theme in Morris, see: Stephen F. Eisenman, 'Communism in Furs: A Dream of Prehistory in William Morris's "John Ball"', *Art Bulletin* 87, 1 (March, 2005), 92-110.

⁶⁸ E. Belfort Bax, 'Preface' in *The Religion of Socialism: Being Essays in Modern Socialist Criticism* (London, 1891), p. iii.

imagined primitive humanity to have been steeped in an unconscious socialist solidarity, though pregnant with latent contradictions.

In Hegelian fashion, for Bax history was the unfolding of oppositions, and the two he identified as most important were the antagonism between nature and mind, and the antagonism between the individual and society.⁶⁹ These contradictions drove the development of individual consciousness, leading to the differentiation of individuals from society and of humanity from nature, breaking the original state of social harmony. The emotions, sitting on the line between nature and mind and between individual and society, were thus a key site through which these basic historical antagonisms were felt, and spurred the activity by which they were fought out. What Bax called the ‘alogical’ became a key and recurring concept across his philosophical works, though one difficult to pin down clearly; as one reviewer wrote, ‘an unequivocal definition of the term is nowhere given’.⁷⁰ Part of the problem was that Bax conceived the alogical as something beyond conceptual thought and representation:

... it is based on something outside reason, outside thought and the processes of thought – it is based on immediacy, on apprehension, on the intuitiveness, the *thisness*, of feeling, and on will-impulse (feeling being static will, and will dynamic feeling).⁷¹

For Bax, all aspects of reality as received by consciousness were a synthesis of the logical and the alogical, ‘the deepest and most wide-reaching antithesis in conscious experience’.⁷² However, within this synthesis the alogical had absolute primacy, as the underlying and pre-individual force which provided the raw material on which conscious reason must work and which it must struggle to represent, having entered the consciousness uncalled for. The alogical provided a means by which Bax could reconcile individual free-will and the movement of the supra-individual Hegelian Spirit. As he wrote,

The socialist movement is not the coinage of one man, of one body of men, or of one nation; it is the expression at once of a necessary phase of economic evolution, and of a yearning which fills the hearts of the people of all countries and nations

⁶⁹ E. Belfort Bax, ‘Universal History From a Socialist Perspective’ in *Religion of Socialism*, pp. 6-7.

⁷⁰ Arthur O. Lovejoy, ‘Review: *The Roots of Reality*’, *Philosophical Review* 18, 1 (January, 1909), 76.

⁷¹ E. Belfort Bax, *The Roots of Reality: Being Suggestions for a Philosophical Reconstruction* (New York, 1908), p. 316.

⁷² Bax, *Roots of Reality*, p. 291.

throughout the civilised world to-day – a yearning which individuals may formulate, but which no individual can create.⁷³

Socialist doctrine, for Bax, represented an attempt to grasp and express the alogical yearning which had come upon great amounts of people at that particular historical moment, which Gilliard had interpreted as a revival of divine ‘Love’. The very broadness of such feeling was interpreted as a sign that society was on the cusp of a great change, that the historical moment was pregnant with the possibility of a new social organisation based on the realisation of true humanist sentiment:

.... We have traced the fundamental idea at the basis of conscience and of moral conduct to be that of equality or of justice. This again we have pointed out as the root-principle of the revolutionary trinity – Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. But this idea of justice itself we have traced back to its origin in that alogical somewhat, or feeling, termed *sympathy*. This emotion is immediate and absolute, and hence inexpressible in any logical formula.⁷⁴

Though a great distance separated the Marxist Bax from the Christians and from the others he derided as ‘unscientific socialists’, he was similarly led to ‘sympathy’ as the foundation of socialist ethics and the fundamental alogical driving power of the socialist revolution. Socialists argued that a great change in the organisation of society was to come not only because of arcane discussions around the trajectory of the rate of profit and its relation to capitalist crises, but because they detected an emotional yearning for social transformation among growing numbers of people.

Integrating Darwin: Biological and Instinctive Socialisms

Historians of British socialism have become increasingly interested in the links between socialism and Darwinism before 1914.⁷⁵ They have sought to undermine the common claim, seen in the philosopher Peter Singer’s call for a ‘Darwinian Left’, that socialism neglected biological ideas. Singer argued that

⁷³ E. Belfort Bax, ‘Address to Trades’ Unions’ in *Religion of Socialism*, p. 161.

⁷⁴ E. Belfort Bax, ‘A Socialist’s Interpretation of Ethical Evolution’, *International Journal of Ethics* 19, 3 (April, 1909), 361.

⁷⁵ See, for instance: David Stack, ‘The First Darwinian Left: Radical and Socialist Responses to Darwin, 1859-1914’, *History of Political Thought* 21, 4 (Winter, 2000), 682-710; David Stack, *The First Darwinian Left: Socialism and Darwinism 1859-1914* (Cheltenham, 2003); Piers J. Hale, ‘Of Mice and Men: Evolution and the Socialist Utopia. William Morris, H.G. Wells, and George Bernard Shaw’, *Journal of the History of Biology* 43, 1 (2010), 17-66.

socialism under the shadow of Marx was enamoured with the idea that humanity was infinitely plastic, defined only by its cultural environment and not constrained by any unchangeable human nature.⁷⁶ Darwinism and the attempt to link politics and biology, according to Singer, was therefore abandoned to the Right.

Darwinian thinking was a crucial challenge to how British socialists theorised the passions and sentiments. According to Paul White, Darwin's work *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872) '[uprooted] the natural theological structure that predominated in British works on the subject and [installed] a reflex model of emotions as evolved from animal impulses'.⁷⁷ The implications for critics of socialism like Herbert Spencer were clear: humanity had evolved in conditions of strife, and the instincts of acquisitiveness and aggression were therefore too deeply embedded in human nature for socialist reforms to work:

The machinery of Communism, like existing social machinery, has to be framed out of existing human nature; and the defects of existing human nature will generate in the one the same evils as in the other. The love of power, the selfishness, the injustice, the untruthfulness, which often in comparatively short times bring private organisations to disaster, will inevitably, where their effects accumulate from generation to generation, work evils far greater and less remediable ... The belief, not only of the socialists but also of those so-called Liberals who are diligently preparing the way for them, is that by due skill an ill-working humanity may be framed into well-working institutions. It is a delusion. The defective natures of citizens will show themselves in the bad acting of whatever social structure they are arranged into. There is no political alchemy by which you can get golden conduct out of leaden instincts.⁷⁸

The idea that Darwinian theory sanctioned economic liberalism was a strong challenge for socialist thinkers. It implied that any socialist scheme could only be an artificial imposition, as F.W. Headley argued, fundamentally 'conflicting ... with ineradicable human instincts'.⁷⁹

In response, British socialists often echoed the critique of Darwinism by Marx. Though appreciative of Darwin's scientific work, Marx criticised him for unconsciously reproducing the bourgeois liberal world to which he belonged in his observations. In a work that became famous in Britain, the Italian socialist

⁷⁶ Singer, *Darwinian Left*.

⁷⁷ Paul White, 'Darwin's Emotions: The Scientific Self and the Sentiment of Objectivity', *Isis* 100, 4 (December, 2009), 813.

⁷⁸ Spencer, *Man versus the State*, pp. 41, 43.

⁷⁹ F.W. Headley, *Darwinism and Modern Socialism* (London, 1909), pp. v-vi.

Enrico Ferri argued that Spencer's own 'organic metaphor' for society, as a 'body politic' growing in the manner of an organism, was more fitted to socialist and especially Marxist arguments than to laissez-faire.⁸⁰ Rather than rejecting biology, socialists hoped to show that biological thinking could support their ideas about the power of social sentiment. They wanted to prove, in the words of the geneticist Karl Pearson, that 'Socialism, despite Haeckel, despite Herbert Spencer, is consonant with the whole teaching modern Science, and with all the doctrines of modern rationalism'.⁸¹

The connections between Darwinism and British socialism have been explored principally by David Stack, who argued that 'organic and evolutionary language profoundly influenced the form and content' of late nineteenth-century British socialism, marking it off from earlier utopian socialism, Marxism, and the New Liberalism of their day.⁸² He argued that left-wingers like Peter Kropotkin and Edward Aveling used the idea of a 'social instinct' as a way to counteract the Malthusian and laissez-faire implications of evolution by natural selection, for 'disarming those erected biological barriers to socialism'.⁸³ For Stack, this was an unfruitful response to Darwin. He argued that socialists were on stronger grounds when they asserted a strong dichotomy between humans and animals as a way of justifying their project of environmental transformation. This neglects the connections between the discourse of the passions in utopian thinkers like Fourier, the Marxist engagement with the passions, the role of sentiment and sympathy in the 'religion of socialism' period, and that of 'social instinct' in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The latter was not just a defensive response to Darwinism, but a continuation and development of existing themes which were central to socialism.

Emotions were at the centre of this encounter between Darwinism and socialism – specifically, the extent to which acquisitiveness was thought to be the defining instinct, apparently giving a 'natural' and unchangeable basis to capitalist economic relations, or whether it was one instinct among others which

⁸⁰ See: Naomi Beck, 'Enrico Ferri's Scientific Socialism: A Marxist Interpretation of Herbert Spencer's Organic Analogy', *Journal of the History of Biology* 38, 2 (Summer, 2005), 301-25.

⁸¹ Karl Pearson, *The Moral Basis of Socialism* (London, 1887), p. 7.

⁸² Stack, *First Darwinian Left*, p. vii.

⁸³ Stack, 'First Darwinian Left', 684.

did not necessarily manifest itself in a whole system of capitalist relations. Kropotkin's appeal to the evolutionary role of altruism as an evolutionary product was not an individual aberration, but part of a broader tradition. Socialists argued that sympathy, solidarity, or an otherwise labelled 'social instinct' was basic to human nature, as important for the scientific study of human society as the instincts which drove competition within the species, if not more important. Pearson argued that socialism could found a new, rational morality in place of the discredited religious morality of the past by understanding these social instincts:

Socialism arises from the recognition (1) that the sole aim of mankind is happiness in this life, and (2), that the course of evolution, and the struggle of group against group, has produced a strong social instinct in mankind, so that, directly or indirectly, the pleasure of the individual lies in forwarding the prosperity of the society, of which he is a member.⁸⁴

In such a way, the philosophical and spiritual theories of the passions and sentiments which were an important element of early British socialist discourse passed into a secular idiom, recast in terms of biological 'instinct'. This argument was used against the liberal interpretation of Darwin's ideas, but also had a life beyond this role, drawing on existing themes in socialist and radical discourse. Willard Wolfe traced the Fabian concern with 'social sympathies and altruism' back to the Positivism of Auguste Comte as much as it was a response to Darwin.⁸⁵ Additionally, much work on biological science in the Victorian period has uncovered how 'sympathy' was not just a feeble response to the properly Darwinian instinct of competitive greed, but an important concept in evolutionary thinking in its own right.⁸⁶

W.K. Burton, writing for the Fabians, provided an early attempt to flesh out the implications of this counter to the individualistic claim. He argued that Darwin's model of evolution supported socialist assumptions about the primacy of the community over the individual interest, natural selection having favoured

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁸⁵ Willard Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism: Men and Ideas in the Formation of Fabian Socialist Doctrines, 1881-1889* (London, 1975), p. 210.

⁸⁶ See: D.P. Crook, 'Peter Chalmers Mitchell and Antiwar Evolutionism in Britain during the Great War', *Journal of the History of Biology* 22, 2 (Summer, 1989), 325-56; Caroline Sumpter, 'On Suffering and Sympathy: *Jude the Obscure*, Evolution, and Ethics', *Victorian Studies* 53, 4 (2011), 665-87; Rob Boddice, *The Science of Sympathy: Morality, Evolution, and Victorian Civilisation* (Illinois, 2016).

those who herded together for mutual protection, producing an innate ‘Socialistic instinct’.⁸⁷ Burton explained the moral malaise afflicting the middle classes in this period with reference to their violation of this basic ‘Socialistic instinct’ on behalf of more immediately satisfying but more temporarily pleasurable instincts. As he wrote,

... I do not gather from Darwin whether he who feels this sense of dissatisfaction of necessity knows precisely whence it arises – just what instinct it is that has been violated. I incline to think that he does not – and that the general feeling of misery and discontent, entirely apart from any specific physical suffering which pervades the whole of civilised mankind at this time is due to the fact that at least ninety-nine out of a hundred of men and women are habitually violating the most persistent of all instincts namely the social instinct. That the persistent instinct is constantly being violated on account, perhaps, of stronger but less constant instincts, with the result that mankind is filled with a general feeling of regret.⁸⁸

Decadence resulted from the liberal misdiagnosis of this general feeling of unease in society, as individualistic thinkers wrongly interpreted their unhappiness as the result of an insufficient amount of these temporary pleasures. Additionally, ever more immediate and temporary pleasures of growing strength were needed to counteract the growing feelings of discontent for even a short duration, an effect intensified by the weakening strength of habitual pleasures as they lost their novelty.

Burton argued that an over-reliance on economic reason in formulating social philosophies had led humanity into ‘many strange and terrible errors’, the violation of instincts which it did not understand.⁸⁹ He argued that the ossification of class society had institutionalised these errors, and Spencer’s thinking had given them ideological sanction. However, there did exist forces through which the social instinct could be reasserted: women, in whom the ‘Socialistic instinct’ was thought to be particularly strong, and in the working classes, for whom the compensatory pleasures which diverted the middle classes from developing the social instinct were thought to be weak.

Though newly translated into the idiom of Darwinian thought, each of these was a common idea in the socialist movement, deriving from the strong Positivist influence on the British Left which Wolfe identified. As one

⁸⁷ W.K. Burton, ‘Ye Shall be as Gods Knowing Good and Evil’, *Practical Socialist* 1, 11 (November, 1886), 171.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 171-2.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 172.

commentator on Comte, writing for the Social Democratic journal *To-Day*, wrote:

... [Comte] believes that in Woman affection and the social sympathies are more developed, so he assumes that the Working Classes for various reasons – for instance, because they are more exposed to feel the hardships and vicissitudes of life, will be more susceptible to the new religion, having a more developed sentimental life.⁹⁰

Given the general trajectory, of a middle-class struggle for transitory pleasures at the expense of the working class, of strengthening social instincts in the working classes in response to their ever more miserable condition, alongside the natural strength of feminine social instincts, Burton saw the forces of instinctive socialism building inexorably.

Others felt that the challenge of biological evolutionary ideas undermined earlier socialist hopes far more deeply, and that the new stress on instincts could not be disarmed by appealing to the ‘social instinct’. As the leading British socialist utopian thinker of the early twentieth century, H.G. Wells criticised earlier utopians like Morris for basing their fictional perfect societies on a human race uncannily improved in its fundamental nature. He wrote his influential *Modern Utopia* of 1905 with the conscious limitation of a static humanity, whose faults continued to drive men into conflict and make any harmonious and finalised utopia impossible. Wells included the emotions alongside the natural disasters which would forever afflict humanity, confounding the quest for a fully harmonious and planned society:

We are to restrict ourselves first to the limitations of human possibility as we know them in the men and women of this world today, and then to all the inhumanity, all the insubordination of nature. We are to shape our state in a world of uncertain seasons, sudden catastrophes, antagonistic diseases, and inimical beasts and vermin, out of men and women with like passions, like uncertainties of mood and desire to our own.⁹¹

Piers J. Hale argued that, for Wells, ‘the just management of [the] war against humanity’s animal passions was to be the primary role of the state’.⁹²

⁹⁰ Franz Ludwig Lehmann, ‘Pessimism, Positivism, and Socialism’, *To-Day: The Monthly Magazine of Scientific Socialism* 2, 4 (October, 1884), 369.

⁹¹ H.G. Wells, *A Modern Utopia* (London, 2005), pp. 12-3.

⁹² Piers J. Hale, ‘Labour and the Human Relationship with Nature: The Naturalisation of Politics in the Work of Thomas Henry Huxley, Herbert George Wells, and William Morris’, *Journal of the History of Biology* 36 (2003), 265. See also Hale, ‘Of Mice and Men’; William J. Hyde, ‘The Socialism of H.G. Wells in the Early Twentieth Century’, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 17, 2 (April, 1956), 217-34.

There is a crucial difference in Wells when compared with the liberal doctrine of restraint and self-interest, however. As Reba Soffer wrote, the 1880-1914 period saw ‘in England a genuine, vital revolution in the contents, methodology, and purposes of social thought’.⁹³ New models of social science, from Marshall’s economics to William James’ psychology, offered the promise of a guided society based on rigorous empirical detail:

The new social scientists’ analysis of history as a gratuitous complex of random forces led them to believe that planning would defeat irrationality and inhumanity ... no part of society could be left to develop haphazardly.⁹⁴

In Wells’ conception of socialism, the defensive and preventative role of the liberal state in restraining the insubordination of the passions was to pass over onto the offensive. The state would utilise all the human sciences to plan with rigorous exactitude the best social organisation to account for man’s inherent irrationality. Emotions would be channelled in productive ways, beyond the chaos which the unscientific palliative of economic self-interest had produced. For Wells, this project called for both detailed scientific knowledge of the emotions, sorting humanity into categories according to their natural inclinations, and for a form of political organisation which could administer such a system. In Wells’ case, this would be an omnipotent technocratic state directed by an elite he called the Samurai, following a strict body of rules designed ‘to discipline [their own] impulses and emotions’, making them fit public servants of a scientific state.⁹⁵

Numerous historical studies have shown how the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the intensification of connections between politics and the human sciences, making subjectivity and the emotions a site of reforming political projects.⁹⁶ Sociology was the key avenue through which the human sciences influenced British socialism in the years before the First World War, as

⁹³ Reba N. Soffer, ‘The Revolution in English Social Thought, 1880-1914’, *American Historical Review* 75, 7 (December, 1970), 1938.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1961.

⁹⁵ Wells, *Modern Utopia*, p. 188

⁹⁶ See: Greg Eghigian, Andreas Killen & Christine Leuenberger, ‘The Self as Project: Politics and the Human Sciences in the Twentieth Century’, *Osiris* 22, 1 (2007), 1-25; Rob Boddice, ‘The Affective Turn: Historicising the Emotions’ in *Psychology and History: Interdisciplinary Explorations* edited by Cristian Tileagă & Jovan Byford (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 147-65; Rob Boddice, ‘The Manly Mind? Revisiting the Victorian “Sex in Brain” Debate’, *Gender & History* 23, 2 (August, 2011), 321-40.

theorists sought to give socialism a scientific grounding. The political scientist Graham Wallas influentially sought to use biological sociology to understand the irrational influences on politics, and to derive the basis for political rationality.⁹⁷ As Ramsay MacDonald, who based his own socialism on a view of society as an evolving social organism, wrote, Darwin had presented,

... a view of biological evolution which fundamentally affected our view of social evolution, and which, in consequence, indicated to us a more commanding standpoint from which to judge our Socialist proposals, a more accurate way for carrying them into effect, and a more scientific phraseology in which to express them. Darwinism applied to sociology is as far in advance of Hegelianism as Hegelianism was in advance of Kantian individualism.⁹⁸

Despite the anti-biological turn taken by British sociology after 1908 under the influence of L.T. Hobhouse, Chris Renwick has argued that the field was initially defined by the debates about the relationship between sociology and biology, with many early figures like Patrick Geddes and the eugenicist Francis Galton favouring a close connection.⁹⁹ Gillian Swanson argued that, even under Hobhouse, interest in biology continued to define British sociology, which grew out of instinct theory and ideas of collective psychology which retained a biological basis.¹⁰⁰ In the early years of the *Sociological Review* journal, which had been founded in 1908 under Hobhouse's editorship and which included such important socialist figures as MacDonald, Sidney Webb, R.H. Tawney, and Wallas on its council,¹⁰¹ numerous articles emphasised instinctive and emotional prompts to the formation of groups as positive phenomena underpinning human society. The investigation of these social instincts and emotions was to be a crucial element of social science.

Wilfred Trotter's articles on the 'herd instinct' were the most influential of these. Trotter's conception of sociology was suited for the socialist project. He saw sociology as an activist science, developing knowledge of 'associated man' in order to forecast and direct human behaviour in a more rational way.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Graham Wallas, *Human Nature in Politics* (London, 1908).

⁹⁸ J. Ramsay MacDonald, *Socialism and Society* (London, 1908), p. 110.

⁹⁹ Chris Renwick, *British Sociology's Lost Biological Roots: A History of Futures Past* (Basingstoke, 2012).

¹⁰⁰ Gillian Swanson, 'Collectivity, human fulfilment and the "force of life": Wilfred Trotter's concept of the herd instinct in early 20th-century Britain', *History of the Human Sciences* 27, 1 (2014), 25.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹⁰² Trotter, 'Herd Instinct', 227.

In order to derive such scientific knowledge he insisted that it was necessary to study humanity at a level below the seemingly autonomous individual will. One must go deeper, to the level of emotion and instinct: 'it is in the region of feeling, using the term in the broadest sense, that the key is to be sought'.¹⁰³

Trotter retained the socialist concern with natural sympathy, harmony, and the emotional unrest that arose from social disharmony, and placed it into a framework of biological instinct theory. He argued that previous instinct theorists had been led astray by their individualism, trying and failing to grasp human behaviour as arising from three primary instincts: for self-preservation, nutrition, and sex. Trotter introduced 'gregariousness' or the 'herd instinct' as a fourth basic instinct, to explain the complex behaviours exhibited by social animals. This instinct cut across, balked, and diverted the three other instincts in complex ways, and understanding it was integral to understanding human behaviour.

Influenced by the American psychologist Boris Sidis' work, Trotter saw emotional suggestibility or 'herd emotion' as part of the normal working of a mind whose natural environment was its social unit, rather than an example of abnormal or pathological psychology. Trotter criticised those who sought to breed out suggestibility for provoking irrational behaviour. He argued that both the irrationalities of the 'herd emotions' and their great benefits were inalienable consequences of this same underlying 'gregarious' instinct:

It does not seem to have been fully understood that if you attack suggestibility by selection, and that is what you do if you breed for rationality, you are attacking gregariousness ... we should exchange the manageable unreason of man for the inhuman rationality of the tiger.¹⁰⁴

As such, Trotter sought to disassociate suggestibility from irrationality, arguing that it could equally well serve to bolster reason given a social environment that favoured rationality.¹⁰⁵ Suggestibility was neutral as to the content of the beliefs, attitudes, and feelings it threw the weight of social force behind. As well as being the impulse behind majority intolerance of minorities and conservatism, the herd

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Wilfred Trotter, 'Sociological Application of the Psychology of Herd Instinct', *Sociological Review* 2, 1 (1909), 38.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

instinct also lay behind the deep altruism that sent sensitive individuals to the dungeons, gallows, and the cross in protest at cruelty and injustice.

To explain many of the irrationalities and contradictions arising from gregariousness and suggestibility, Trotter posited something like the dialectical development through stages found in historical materialism. Rather than seeing evolution as a necessarily gradual process, he argued that evolution had thus far exhibited two great revolutionary leaps: from the unicellular to the multicellular organism and from the solitary animal to the social unit or 'herd'. With each leap, the broader unit became the object of Darwinian selective pressures instead of the self-contained individual and 'natural selection is withdrawn from within the commune'.¹⁰⁶ These revolutionary leaps were made at the moment when the single cell or individual was prevented from developing further by the limitations of its own solitary existence, except by developing a more expansive gregariousness. He highlighted two crucial elements driving this process, working much like Marxism's driving contradiction between productive forces and social relations. The first was 'variability' or complexity, as when cells or individuals within the broader unit take on different specialised functions. Variability tended to grow at a constant rate much like Marx's productive forces. The second was the capability for 'intercommunication' which maintained the strength of gregariousness across the whole group despite its growing variety, which grew by revolutionary leaps in the manner of Marx's social relations.

Humanity at the dawn of the twentieth century, Trotter argued, showed a much stronger variability than its low level of intercommunication allowed to be realised, meaning that the full advantages of its potential gregariousness were not being realised. The reality of a functionally interdependent world society was not yet matched by an expansion of the 'herd instinct'. This complex world society was, therefore, not yet a felt reality for its variety of classes, nations, and functional units. The result of this increasing strain between constantly expanding variability and stagnant intercommunication of social feeling was a socio-cultural and even a biological crisis. A growing minority, whose

¹⁰⁶ Trotter, 'Herd Instinct', 232.

gregarious feelings aligned to the broader human community, found their 'herd instinct' frustrated:

By providing its members with a herd tradition which is constantly at war with feeling and with experience, society drives them inevitably into resistiveness on the one hand, or into mental instability on the other, conditions which have this in common, that they tend to exaggerate that isolation of the individual which is shown us by the intellect to be unnatural and by the heart to be disastrously cruel.¹⁰⁷

Much as the early socialists had seen a growth of sympathetic feeling as a sign that society was ripe for further evolution into a socialist commonwealth, Trotter saw the growth of mental instability as a sign of an expanding gregariousness, prevented from realising itself productively by an outgrown social form. There thus arose a conflict, rooted in the emotions, between those who felt their 'herd' to be the entirety of human society, who were frustrated by divisions of status and nation, and those who felt their 'herd' to be their nation or their social class, increasingly frustrated by the growing functional interdependence of the human race:

... Thus we see society cleft by the instinctive qualities of its members into two great classes, each to a great extent possessing what the other lacks, and each falling disastrously below the possibilities of human personality.¹⁰⁸

Unless humanity could reconcile these two groups by a further leap, bringing scientific rationality to the social organisation of instinct and feeling organised on the level of the 'world herd', he feared potential disaster, humanity proving 'but one more of nature's failures, ignominiously to be swept from her worktable to make way for another venture of her tireless curiosity and patience'.¹⁰⁹

Trotter, then, saw society as an organism growing in complexity and size, its component parts held together by 'gregariousness' or 'herd instinct'. While society grew in complexity, or variability, by inexorable gradual processes, the expansion of social feeling must occur by revolutionary leaps, breaking the institutional barriers to the spread of sympathy. Should this social organism develop in complexity and size beyond the power of its gregarious 'glue' to hold it together, it would disintegrate into conflicting groups. The alternative was a third revolution, which would overcome the two key

¹⁰⁷ Trotter, 'Sociological Application', 52.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 54.

contradictions afflicting the modern world: between an internationally-integrated human society with social sympathies which ended at the national border on the one hand, and on the other of a functionally interdependent economic life in which social sympathies were restricted by class. The portents of imperial rivalry and class struggle indicated that human society had reached its breaking point, while the spontaneous growth of socialist and internationalist feelings, which socialist theorists sought to translate into a definite political programme, were the germination of this third ‘biological’ revolution. Precisely how to overcome the barriers to a broader sympathy, however, was a key problem which divided socialists – would the victorious class struggle lay the basis for a new international sympathy, or would it frustrate the socialist project by tearing the social organism apart?

‘Let Social War Give Place to Social Peace’: The Passions of Struggle

Oh! Christian love is a thing divine,
And charity saveth tenfold;
But Christian hate is a thing as sublime,
The hatred of sin, and the idol’s shrine,
Where Mammon is worshipped in gold.

The hatred of murder, and craft, and deceit –
That upholdeth the money lord’s sway;
Oh, if England had but a manful beat,
Tho’ the tyrants stood thick as the stones in the street,
I’d trample them down ‘neath the dust at my feet
In the light of a single day.

- Ernest Jones, 1851.¹¹⁰

For socialists, there was a contradiction between the alienating life of competitive capitalism and the desire for a more socially-harmonious life, which they imagined to be dimly felt and yearned for among broad layers of the population. They thought that this contradiction, making itself felt in the emotions of the people, would produce the condition for realising socialism – the ‘vast mass of discontent’ necessary to force social revolution.¹¹¹ The

¹¹⁰ Poem of the Chartist leader Ernest Jones, reproduced in the *Labour Leader* 14 October 1904, 327.

¹¹¹ Morris & Bax, *Socialism*, p. 17.

conditions of life for the working class meant that their discontent, and therefore their potential energy and will for the revolution, would be especially strong. Socialists looked to the organised working-class movement as an undeveloped expression of this discontent. It was a crucial task to understand the working classes and to fuse the labour movement's partial struggle for better material conditions into their own struggle for a fuller and more human life. In order for the working class to become fit agents for revolutionary change, socialists would have to help the workers to understand the meaning of their emotional or 'alogical' discontent, and develop this discontent into a clarified, conscious plan for social reorganisation.

The emotional implications of the Marxist interpretation of history created a significant fault line among socialists. They broadly agreed that the new life would be based on a bedrock of expanded feelings of sympathy or solidarity, but socialists disagreed over how far these humanistic and classless sentiments could guide behaviour in the struggle to achieve the end of class rule as compared with the passions driving class conflict. Sidney Webb, a leading Fabian, hoped for the passage to socialism to be achieved incrementally by the reasonable assent of society as a whole, and regretted the association of socialism with class hatred:

Socialism suffers ... from the imperfections of its advocates and adherents. Springing, as it does, from the existence of hideous social wrongs, and the unspeakable misery of tens of thousands of sufferers, we must not be surprised to find it frequently allied with bitterness, hatred and the wild justice of revenge.¹¹²

Ethical socialists also tended to speak in terms of a division between the sacred, higher affections and sentiments which must be cultivated even in conditions of class division, and the profane passions of envy and hatred which constantly tempted the working class, and which must not be indulged in.

This issue came to a head in 1904, when two articles by Hardie sparked a running debate between the revolutionary Social Democrats and the non-revolutionary socialists, who were becoming increasingly respectable and parliamentary during the period of the Lib-Lab electoral pact. This debate touched on the inter-related issues of Marxism, class struggle, revolution, and

¹¹² Sidney Webb, 'Socialism in England (1890)' in *British Socialism* edited by Wright, p. 61.

class hatred. It drew interventions from prominent socialists of all the movement's traditions, from Hyndman, Max Beer, and Robert Blatchford supporting the doctrine of class war, to John Bruce Glasier from the ILP and George Bernard Shaw from the Fabians dismissing it. Hardie argued that Marxism had been led astray by its failure to understand human feeling, misled by the formative revolutionary passions of the 1840s and the rationalism of Hegelian philosophy:

The class war dogma is admittedly based on the theory of Socialism set forth in the Communist Manifesto of Marx and Engels, which was written in 1847, when Europe was a seething, turgid mass of revolutionary enthusiasm. It is an exposition of Socialism from the Materialistic or Hegelian point of view, which was then much in vogue. It does not touch one human sentiment or feeling. However correct it may be as a form of words, it is lacking in feeling, and cannot now be defended as being scientifically correct. It entirely leaves the human element out of account.¹¹³

For Hardie, socialism was too expansive a creed to be degraded by appeals to class conflict, which 'fosters a belief that mere class hatred will transform Society'.¹¹⁴ The ILP writer J.H. Harley was one of many who supported Hardie's broadside against class hatred in the *Labour Leader*:

There is too much disposition to appeal only to the feelings that estrange us, to the wrath that surges in our hearts at the oppression of the baser capitalist or the resentment which racks our spirit at the heartlessness of the hardened bureaucrat. These have all their place in the complete gamut of our affections, but Socialism appeals to every part of our human nature, and Socialism is built up of hope much more than of hatred.¹¹⁵

With the extension of suffrage to great numbers of working-class males by the Second and Third Reform Acts of 1867 and 1884, Hardie considered the political conquest of power by the working class to have been accomplished. If the capitalist system continued, he argued, it was not because the workers had yet to violently wrest control from the bourgeoisie, but because they lacked the education to use the power they had already been granted. The true struggle was not of class against class, but of conscious socialists, coming from all sections of the people, to educate the people in the principles of sympathy against the selfishness on which capitalism was ultimately based, and which pervaded all

¹¹³ J. Keir Hardie, 'An Indictment of the Class War', *Labour Leader* Friday 9 September 1904, 272.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 160.

¹¹⁵ J.H.H., 'On the ... Watchtower', *Labour Leader* Friday 28 October 1904, 349.

classes.¹¹⁶ Ramsay MacDonald concurred, and contrasted the irrationality of revolution to the rationality of evolution:

The assumption that by a class triumph Society is to emerge from the epoch of class conflict and sail gaily away upon the calm waters of fraternity, can be held only by those who have not ceased to believe in the magical and the irrational ... The scheme upon which humanity evolves to higher and more humane stages of existence is either rational or it is not. If it is not, all organised attempts to hasten reform and make it effective – Socialism included – are waste effort. If it is rational, then progress becomes a matter of intellectual conviction, and man, seeking intellectual peace as well as economic security, will have to choose which he is to pursue.¹¹⁷

For Social Democrats, this was a grotesque reversion to pre-scientific moralising, lacking understanding of power, the state, and the nature of class society, which set British socialism apart from its more advanced comrades on the continent. Social Democrats, and other non-Marxist socialists like G.D.H. Cole who recognised the objective basis of class struggle, thought it utopian to try to cultivate a broad sympathy reaching across class barriers while classes remained. It was not possible to simply live an ethical life as if humanity was not divided so fundamentally. Instead, they hoped to fix on existing emotions arising from class society which could be developed into clarified class consciousness. ‘Scientific socialists’ stressed ‘reason in revolt’: the interplay between the workers’ class interest, their feelings of class antagonism, and the development of their reason and higher sentiments as all necessary moments leading to the coming revolution, which would dismantle the bourgeois state and economic institutions which were a barrier to the development of a broader sympathy.

Bax had depicted the French Revolution of 1789 as resulting from an outburst of evil emotion among the masses whose role was necessarily subordinate to that of the bourgeois revolutionaries. He depicted Paris on the eve of revolution as filled ‘with desperate, hungry, and ragged strangers’,¹¹⁸ transported in the course of the revolution to the extremes of emotion: ‘a revulsion of feeling took place all round, from terror to elation, from hatred to gratitude’.¹¹⁹ His narrative weaved a festival atmosphere of popular enthusiasm

¹¹⁶ Hardie, ‘Indictment of the Class War’, 160.

¹¹⁷ MacDonald, *Socialism and Society*, pp. 139-40.

¹¹⁸ E. Belfort Bax, *The Story of the French Revolution* (London, 1892), p. 9.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

and joy with fury, frenzy, and despair in turn, as the masses of Parisians changed their moods suddenly in response to the actions of the primary agents possessed with real political intentions, the middle-class revolutionary leaders. 1789 had taken on this character, he argued, because the ‘time was as yet not ripe’ for the socialist revolution – the proletariat had to pass through a further century of historical experience before their incoherent emotional revolt could be developed into the clarity of modern socialism, but its emotional revolt was a necessary stage towards this result.¹²⁰

The young T.A. Jackson, then associated with the SPGB which had split from the SDF in 1904 in order to preserve its revolutionary purity, gave the common argument: the workers must become ‘class conscious’. As he wrote,

Socialism is possible when the workers, organised in the Socialist Party, proceed to establish it ... Without the workers so consciously organised nothing can be done. The first thing then is to make the working-men ‘class conscious.’¹²¹

For Jackson, this consciousness consisted in giving the ‘impressions and emotions’ of working-class experience an ordered intellectual form.¹²² In Social Democratic circles the emphasis was sometimes placed on the working class coming *en masse* to an intellectual understanding of the Marxist analysis of capitalism and its relation to their personal experience, and to conscious acceptance of the socialist programme as a necessity demanded by history, such as with Jackson in this period. For others in the Social Democratic tradition this was impractical and unnecessary, a minority of the working class coming to such a conscious understanding of socialism would be sufficient while the majority continued to be motivated by class hatred. For Bax himself, an elite of disciplined, conscious revolutionaries from amongst the proletariat would take the place of the middle-class activists of the French Revolution, arising ‘out [of] the stagnant inert mass’.¹²³ Similarly in *News from Nowhere*, it is the presence of socialists among the masses, actively taking part in class conflicts, that prevents their revolution from being dominated by the brutal passions:

... the old pressure of the master having been taken off these poor men, it seemed likely that nothing but the mere animal necessities and passions of men who have

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 62.

¹²¹ T.A.J., “‘Class Consciousness’”, *Socialist Standard* Saturday 7 July 1906, 7.

¹²² Ibid., 6.

¹²³ E. Belfort Bax, ‘Some Bourgeois Idols; or Ideals, Reals, and Shams’ in *Religion of Socialism*, p. 119.

any hold on them, and that mere general overturn would be the result. Doubtless this would have happened if it had not been that the huge mass had been leavened by Socialist opinion in the first place, and in the second by actual contact with declared Socialists...¹²⁴

In the novel, it is only by engaging in class struggle that the universal sympathy desired by socialists could become a possible living reality. Social Democrats argued that a revolutionary transition to socialism was a necessity, because only by engaging in such a struggle could the working class be developed into a serious political force able to reconstruct society anew.

Among non-revolutionary socialists, a looser notion of ‘struggle’ without its connotations of class conflict played much the same formative role. This was the struggle of the early Christians rather than of class against class, a proselytising struggle. Commenting on the passivity of the majority of people, Bruce Glasier, a keen reader of Walt Whitman, exalted the socialist movement as the modern expression of the ‘Pioneers’ whose struggles throughout the whole of human history, ‘with their voices and their pens’, embodied the historical experience of the people as a whole:

It is they who have made the dumb to speak, the deaf to hear. Nay, they have themselves been the eyes and ears and tongues of the People, and their heads and hearts too. It is through them that the People have felt their oppression and pain; it is through them that the soul of the People has been awakened. They have been the Democracy – they have been the Divine Discontent.¹²⁵

For each tendency in British socialism, though the struggle for socialism would necessarily mean the development of a higher reason, the spur to this development remained in the realm of the emotions which arose at the historical moment when society was on the cusp of transformation, drawing the agents of social change towards the new world. As Carpenter wrote,

When a new desire has declared itself within the human heart, when a fresh plexus is forming among the nerves – then the revolutions of nations are already decided, and histories unwritten are written.¹²⁶

Socialists, then, agreed that their project required the further development of reason and consciousness among the working classes but disagreed on how it might be effected. This advance of reason was tied to the development of a more

¹²⁴ Morris, *News from Nowhere*, p. 139.

¹²⁵ John Bruce Glasier, ‘The Pioneers and the People’, *Labour Leader* Friday 22nd December 1905, p. 453.

¹²⁶ Edward Carpenter, *Towards Democracy* (London, 1885), p. 49.

expansive ‘social instinct’, of sympathy, solidarity, or simply the ‘Socialistic instinct’. Ethical socialists hoped to seize on and encourage the higher sentiments directly as against the baser passions of class struggle, while Marxists thought this to be utopian, and argued that the successful prosecution of class struggle was necessary for the rule of higher sentiments to become possible. In both cases, there was a marked confidence in the ability of the great masses of people to attain the rationality and a broader sympathy which would be characteristic of a socialist system, through the process of a developmental struggle led by socialists themselves.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have looked at the place of the emotions in early British socialist ideology. I have shown the key role of ‘sympathy’ understood in varied interchangeable ways: as solidarity, altruism, sentiment, social instinct, herd instinct, or Socialistic instinct. Under whatever label, and in the context of whichever philosophical and scientific theories different socialists used to understand the emotions, this was the emotional force holding social groups together. Socialists critiqued the institutions of capitalism as ill-fitted to human beings endowed with natural human sympathy, and wanted to create a social form in which sympathy and the other positive emotions could flourish. They interpreted the spontaneous spread of socialist ideas as a result of the growth of this sympathy, straining against the institutions and norms of Victorian civilisation. It was a moment characterised by contradictions: human society across the world had grown increasingly integrated, and the members of society increasingly interdependent, yet social sympathies continued to be confined to groups – to nations and classes within this broader human community. Unless the institutions confining social sympathies to national and class groupings were transformed, and the barriers to a world-wide human sympathy removed, social instinct would be turned inward and intensified. This would spur conflicts between nations and between classes within nations, potentially shaking civilisation to pieces.

The joint promise and threat of the growth of sympathy was made clearer in the adoption of a biological language of emotions, and the attempt to found a

science of sociology upon biological foundations. A historiographical controversy has arisen over the discourse of ‘social instincts’ among biologists in this period – did it arise mainly from a concern over the degeneration of civilisation, the irrationality of densely-herded citizens? Such concern was especially evident after the experience of patriotic crowds during the Boer War, during which, as John Allett wrote, ‘the jingoism, the blood lust, the rumour-mongering in the yellow press and especially the mass hysteria exhibited on “Mafeking Night” ... seemed to strip Victorian England of its civilised veneer’.¹²⁷ Intellectual historians like Allett and Soffer have linked the concern with ‘social instinct’ to an elitist and conservative discourse, as an ‘elitist critique of mass urban democracy’.¹²⁸

Or, alternatively, was it first and foremost an assertion of sociability against a narrow individualism? The work of such figures as Pearson and Trotter cannot easily be understood as an authoritarian distrust of social emotion. For Gillian Swanson, Trotter’s ‘herd instinct’ was primarily a concept used by social progressives to underline ‘the limits of “life” understood in terms of an individual organism’.¹²⁹ As she wrote,

... the attention given to crowd psychology in histories of inter-war anxiety over the management of urban populations and the influence of mass culture overstates its prevalence in psychological thinking in this period, and the routine invocation that the development of collective psychology was driven by a ‘fear’ of the irrational and ‘suggestible’ crowd ... has led a more complex, socially nuanced and politically hybrid set of debates concerning the nature of associated life to become eclipsed ... This erroneous reading of Trotter and his associates becomes integrated into sociological and culturalist approaches from the 1970s, acting as a ‘presentist’ ruse for a defence of social constructionism.¹³⁰

I argue that these two interpretations cannot be separated in order to judge one against the other, but coexisted in the original texts themselves. Precisely the features which made ‘social instinct’ so attractive to socialists accustomed to think in terms of sympathy and solidarity made it a potential source of conflict and polarisation, as well as of hope for a general reconciliation of humanity. It

¹²⁷ John Allett, ‘Crowd Psychology and the Theory of Democratic Elitism: The Contribution of William McDougall’, *Political Psychology* 17, 2 (June, 1996), 216.

¹²⁸ Reba N. Soffer, ‘New Elitism: Social Psychology in Prewar England’, *Journal of British Studies* 8, 2 (May, 1969), 111.

¹²⁹ Swanson, ‘Collectivity’, 22.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 22, 30.

was not historians from the 1970s who began to emphasise the dangers of the ‘social instinct’ for spurring conflicts between groups and cementing the trope of the irrational crowd, but the intervention of historical events in the early twentieth century which made its socially destructive potential come to the fore in socialist and psychological writing. The psychoanalyst Ernest Jones, recalling his work with Trotter in the first decade of the 1900s, repeatedly contrasted the pessimistic older Trotter to his younger idealistic self. Jones had been a member of the Fabian Society, and shared Trotter’s conviction that ‘the organising of life in a community would never be satisfactory until it was based on a full knowledge of the biological, including psychological, motivation of man’.¹³¹ Trotter’s ‘dream was that some day these powerful instincts [i.e., those gathered around the herd instinct] would get harnessed to the aim of rational thinking’. Jones continued:

... by free association it occurs to me that there must have been something in common between our attitude to society and Karl Marx’s, without of course his hate and obscurity. I am relieved to think our illusions did not survive as his did, and so have not inflicted on the world any of his harm.

According to Jones, the more pessimistic Trotter stripped of his idealistic illusions, emphasising the irrationalities of the crowd and the dangers of emotional suggestibility, came ‘some ten years later’ – i.e., across the gulf of the Great Unrest, the Great War, and the Russian Revolution.

In the following chapter I will look at how socialists throughout the 1910s sought to apply the theories of emotion developed by biologists, psychologists, and psychoanalysts to grasp the volcanic social disasters of that decade, especially the Great Unrest, the First World War, and the world revolutionary wave sparked by the Russian Revolution of 1917. In particular, I argue that the Russian Revolution was the crucial watershed in causing a shift to a more pessimistic understanding of emotion, because initially it had seemed to promise exactly the kind of emotional revolution socialists had hoped for: a broadened social sympathy breaking its restraints, overcoming the artificial and outdated barriers of nation and class.

¹³¹ Ernest Jones, *Free Associations: Memories of a Psycho-Analyst* (London, 1959), pp. 126-30.

Chapter Three. Labour Unrest, International War, and the February Revolution, 1910-1917

The Labour Movement, indeed the whole of the thinking British public, is to-day the arena of a battle of words, of thoughts and of temperaments. The issue is twofold: are men to be governed by emotion or by reason? Are they to be governed in harmony with the desires of the bulk of the citizens or according to the fervent aspirations of a militant minority in defiance of the will of the majority? Two quite separate questions but each of them raising the same issue: the validity of democratic government.

- From the diary of
Beatrice Webb, 8
December 1913.¹

In a classic text of the socialist revival, *Towards Democracy* (1885), Edward Carpenter called for ‘the enfranchisement of the body’, which he called the ‘latest and best gift long concealed from men’.² It was shown in the second chapter how British socialists adopted and adapted the critique of emotional restraint and the rule of self-interest introduced in chapter one, championing the sentiment of sympathy as a pro-social element in human nature. They faced a number of challenges in adapting this critique to the intellectual climate of late-Victorian Britain. Chief among these was the challenge of successfully articulating and defending their appeal to such sentiments as sympathy and solidarity in the context of a burgeoning discourse of instincts and emotions, which had evolved without any higher plan or necessary moral meaning. In this chapter, I will show how the Great Unrest and the Great War further challenged socialists’ generous account of human emotion.

Historians have debated the impact which the war had on the Labour Party as an electoral force and on the development of British socialist ideology, with some arguing that it was a transformative event and others seeing its impact as marginal compared to deeper structural changes.³ Despite divisions over the

¹ Beatrice Webb, *Beatrice Webb’s Diaries: 1912-1924* edited by Margaret I. Cole (London, 1952), p. 15; partially quoted in Soffer, ‘New Elitism’, 111.

² Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, p. 33.

³ See, for instance: Peter Stansky (ed.), *The Left and the War: The British Labour Party and World War I* (London, 1969); Asa Briggs & John Saville (eds), *Essays in Labour History vol. III: 1886-1923* (London, 1971), especially Royden Harrison’s chapter ‘The War Emergency

war, Labour emerged far more unified than their continental counterparts, and much strengthened both in organisational and ideological terms. Davis argued that the Russian Revolution had a profound effect on Labour's ideology, provoking its leading figures to adapt a more overt socialist position as a bulwark against extremism in Britain.⁴ In 1918 Labour adopted a new constitution and basic programme, drafted with the participation of Sidney Webb and bearing the imprint of Fabian gradualist thinking.⁵ This helped to consolidate Labour as a vehicle for a moderate parliamentary socialism, with Clause IV famously committing the party to 'common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange'. As J.M. Winter wrote,

... the Labour party left the war with an ideological commitment which it could not have made and in a form which it could not have adopted a year earlier, let alone before the outbreak of the First World War.⁶

However, Winter also argued that the period of war and revolution had 'neither a creative nor decisive effect on the development of socialist theory in Britain'.⁷ He saw the effect of the war as purely organisational. Taking R.H. Tawney, G.D.H. Cole, and the Webbs as the key theoreticians, he argued that:

... the most important theoretical statements were made before the outbreak of hostilities. Furthermore, the pre-war ideas of the principal figures of this book dominated socialist writing in the following decade. The continuity of their work in the years 1912-22 is the best evidence against the claim that the war inaugurated a new chapter in socialist thought.⁸

There are a number of problems with the way in which Winter posed the question, most importantly for this study his choice of '1912-22' as the focus. Choosing a starting point in the middle of the Great Unrest obscured the changes in British socialist thought which were a response to the Great Unrest, the war, and the Russian Revolution understood as a continuous process, the unravelling of the relative stability which many Victorian socialists had come to expect.

Workers National Committee', pp. 211-59; Winter, *Socialism and the Challenge of War*; Ross McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party: 1910-1924* (Oxford, 1983); Foote, *Labour Party's Political Thought*; Keith Laybourn, *The Rise of Labour: The British Labour Party 1890-1979* (London, 1988); Tanner, *Political Change*.

⁴ Davis, 'A New Socialist Influence'. See also: Winter, 'Arthur Henderson'.

⁵ Josephine Fishel Milburn, 'The Fabian Society and the British Labour Party', *Western Political Quarterly* 11, 2 (June, 1958), 328.

⁶ Winter, 'Arthur Henderson', 773.

⁷ Winter, *Socialism and the Challenge of War*, p. 270.

⁸ *Ibid.*

In the terms of this particular study, the 1910s was a pivotal decade in the development of British socialist thought. I argue here that the potential irrationality of emotion became a more pressing challenge in the 1910s, as events in that decade severely shook the optimistic belief in inexorable progressive change. This decade was characterised by a destabilising cycle of civil and international conflict, including the Great Unrest, the Great War, and the Russian Revolution. In this context, British intellectuals commonly searched for the root cause of instability among the instincts and emotions of the human race. With the expansion of interest in psychology in the early twentieth century, combined with the character of the events which psychological discourse was used to explain, many progressive thinkers came to see Carpenter's 'gift' more like that of Pandora, the origin of all the catastrophes of the world. Despite the promise of work like Trotter's in the first decade of the twentieth century, whose theory of the 'herd instinct' offered a broadly positive scientific account of the role of emotion in social life, the subsequent integration of scientific theories of emotion into socialist thought was largely conditioned by the pessimism, conflict and disorder of this period.

For British socialists, the Russian Revolution became a symbol of this period, exemplifying its tragedy and its hope. Socialist interpretations of the revolution were coloured by the string of events in which it was embedded, beginning with the Great Unrest, leading into the division of the international socialist movement in the Great War, and culminating in the European political unrest lasting into the early 1920s. In this context, '1917' came to take on such a resonance precisely because it initially seemed to be a deliverance from the violence of this period and a vindication of the ideas and values belonging to the most optimistic of pre-war socialists. The international response to the overthrow of the Tsarist autocracy seemed to exemplify the broader, transnational human sympathy which could overcome national and class divisions. 1917 gave those who were sick of conflict a symbol of this expanded social feeling, the vision of an integrated world civilisation at the moment its prospects appeared to be bleakest.

This chapter looks at the place of emotion in socialist thought from 1910 to 1917. Although the boundary between democratic socialism and

‘revolutionary’ socialism was still not as clear in this period as it would come to seem in later years, especially given that the successor of the SDF, the British Socialist Party (BSP), successfully affiliated to Labour in 1916, here we are primarily interested in the ‘reformist’ and ‘democratic’ socialists. The key theme for this chapter is the growing pessimism about the emotions spurred by the Great Unrest and the Great War, as drivers of class and national conflict, and the deliverance from this pessimism by the February Revolution in Russia.

Syndicalism and the Great Unrest

The facts of the Revolution teach us ... that a people freed from social constraints, the foundations of civilisation, and abandoned to its instinctive impulses, speedily relapses into its ancestral savagery. Every popular revolution which succeeds in triumphing is a temporary return to barbarism.

- Gustave Le Bon, 1913.⁹

The years immediately preceding the outbreak of the First World War saw what Miriam Hansen called a multifaceted ‘crisis of British imperialism’,¹⁰ and provided the backdrop for George Dangerfield’s famous ‘Strange Death of Liberal England’.¹¹ Political norms were challenged by an escalation of militancy in the agitation for women’s suffrage. There was a destabilising power struggle between the House of Commons and House of Lords after the 1909 Liberal ‘Peoples’ Budget’ was blocked by the upper house, and a growing crisis over Irish Home Rule and the position of Ulster which threatened to develop into civil war. In the international sphere, the Morocco crisis of 1911 already had the potential to disrupt the balance of power inherited from the nineteenth century, and ignite the antagonisms of the age of imperialism into a general European war.¹²

⁹ Gustave Le Bon, *The Psychology of Revolution* translated by Bernard Miall (Ontario, 2001), p. 194.

¹⁰ Miriam Hansen, ‘T.E. Hulme, Mercenary of Modernism, or, Fragments of Avantgarde Sensibility in Pre-World War I Britain’, *ELH* 47, 2 (Summer, 1980), 357. See also: Jill Richards, ‘Model Citizens and Millenarian Subjects: Vorticism, Suffrage, and London’s Great Unrest’, *Journal of Modern Literature* 37, 3 (Spring, 2014), 3.

¹¹ George Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England* (London, 1936).

¹² For a measured historical account of this period, see David Powell, *The Edwardian Crisis: Britain, 1901-1914* (Basingstoke, 1996).

For British socialists in this period, the most immediate concern was the ‘Great Unrest’. The years 1910 to 1914 saw what was then a record level of industrial unrest, characterised by an unusually high degree of violence from both the strikers and the state. This period saw such episodes as the Cambrian Combine strike of coal miners in South Wales, which fed into the Tonypandy riots; the transport workers’ strike in Liverpool during which gunboats were placed on the Mersey; and the Dublin Lockout of 1913. Many feared that the unrest was only the beginning of a ‘syndicalist’ revolution, as confrontations between strikers and soldiers escalated.

The Great Unrest was, Yann Béliard wrote, an ‘invisible mountain’, sitting in relation to the even larger post-war wave of strikes as the 1905 revolution in Russia to the more explosive and iconic revolutionary year, 1917.¹³ As he wrote,

In many ways the Great Labour Unrest defies analysis. Those who witnessed it directly were often incapable of finding explanations for it, assimilating it to a mysterious physical illness or an indecipherable mental disorder.¹⁴

The emerging disciplines of social psychology and psychoanalysis were crucial for providing a technical language which could explain the unrest. Gustave Le Bon was a crucial influence on British intellectuals of all political persuasions, as they sought to understand the sudden outbreak of strikes and riots. Le Bon’s *The Crowd* (1895), the founding text of crowd psychology,¹⁵ was first translated into English in 1896. However, during the years of the Great Unrest, the socialist journal the *New Age* became a key populariser of his work and ideas. These ideas informed much of the thinking about collective action in the modern era, an era which Le Bon argued was characterised by the ‘substitution of the unconscious action of crowds for the conscious activity of individuals’.¹⁶ Numerous historical and literary studies attest to the early twentieth-century fascination with ‘crowd-phenomena’, understood as a means of ‘stepping outside of the Enlightenment, and entering a notional space of primordial irrationality’.¹⁷ This concern deeply

¹³ Yann Béliard, ‘Introduction: Revisiting the Great Labour Unrest, 1911-1914’, *Labour History Review* 79, 1 (2014), 3.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁵ Crowd psychology is a sub-set of social psychology interested in the specific behaviours of masses of people gathered in close proximity and forming a ‘crowd’.

¹⁶ Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (London, 2001), p. 4.

¹⁷ Tom Holland, ‘Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, and the Crowd’ (2004). PhD Thesis: University of York, 14.

impacted the way social thinkers of all ideological positions understood ‘the masses’,¹⁸ and what they imagined the tasks of politics to be.¹⁹

For Le Bon, this modern growth in ‘crowd phenomena’ was a phase in the cyclical rise and fall of civilisations. In his reading of history it signalled the decay of civil institutions and a transition between epochs, marking the beginning of a barbarian phase which appeared when civilisations lost their moral strength, their ‘unifying idea’,²⁰ and long suppressed instincts took the opportunity to reassert themselves.²¹ The crowd was not merely a group of individuals, but a combination which took on its own characteristics, a reversion to a more primitive psychology ruled by the ‘instincts, passions, and feelings’ that are the basic equipment of human beings. As he wrote, ‘an individual in a crowd is a grain of sand amid other grains of sand, which the wind stirs up at will’.²² Crowds acted by emotional contagion, which Le Bon argued was the normal means of social direction in the earliest form of human society, the barbarian horde:

Ideas, sentiments, emotions, and beliefs possess in crowds a contagious character as intense as that of microbes. This phenomenon is very natural, since it is observed even in animals when they are together in number ... In the case of men collected in a crowd all emotions are very rapidly contagious...²³

¹⁸ For the history of the term in English social thought in the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries, see: Asa Briggs, ‘The Language of “Mass” and “Masses” in Nineteenth-Century England’ in *Ideology and the Labour Movement: Essays Presented to John Saville* edited by David E. Martin & David Rubinstein (London, 1979), pp. 62-83. Briggs disliked the term, arguing that where the language of ‘class’ more often involved an attempt to understand critically the components of the social structure, use of ‘the masses’ often marked the absence of such an attempt, turning people into abstractions.

¹⁹ See, for instance: Michael Tratner, *Modernism and Mass Politics: Joyce, Woolf, Eliot, Yeats* (Stanford, 1995); Bill Schwarz, ‘Politics and Rhetoric in the Age of Mass Culture’, *History Workshop Journal* 46 (Autumn, 1998), 129-59.

²⁰ Le Bon, *The Crowd*, p. 119.

²¹ It is not sloppily anthropomorphising these instincts to say that they ‘reassert themselves’ – it is the instincts in such situations which are conceived to have agency and not the unified liberal subject, which in Le Bon’s words becomes ‘an automaton’. There are interesting parallels, which become clearer in Trotter’s work discussed in the fourth chapter, between the role of instinct in an individual and of class in a nation. Each is simultaneously a part of a whole (of an individual or a nation), but also extends beyond the whole of which it is part (the shared and contagious nature of instinct between bodies, the internationalism of the proletariat’s shared predicament). Each concept is radically unsettling for the basic subjects of liberal thought, the individual citizen of a state and the state itself, fragmenting them and violating their boundaries, providing the potential bases for new social forms.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 19.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

The crowd, then, was humanity as a naked force of nature, stripped of the weight of culture and reason, and guided by dictatorial ‘crowd masters’: the prehistoric chieftains, the Caesars, Robespierres and Napoleons, who dominated the crowds by sheer strength of personality.²⁴ Instinct theorists and social psychologists often emphasised the dangerous nature of intensified emotions of concentrated urban populations and their vulnerability to emotional suggestion, as one sociologist remarked (taking the London dock strike as his specific example of crowd-phenomena):²⁵

It is the contagious psychical influence that moves a herd of buffaloes or a human crowd, the mood that responds to the waving of flags, the beating of drums, the shouting of the loud-voiced orator, the appeal of the impassioned extremist. It is the contagious psychical influence that carries a man out of himself, but rarely to a higher level, nearly always to a lower. It is an influence that nearly all students of society regard as evil, to be counteracted by education in self-control, the retainment of individuality. The crowd is passionate, stupid, merciless, and immoral. When its passion is just the crowd acts like a fool, when unjust, like a raging beast. It understands only the simple and clamant and spectacular. It can destroy, but it cannot create. It chooses a Barabbas before the Christ.²⁶

For the school of social psychologists working in Britain during the 1910s, the analysis of emotion was therefore central. A proper diagnosis of the social problems plaguing the British Empire, an understanding of how these problems might manifest in the behaviour of its subjects, and potentially a solution to the threat of civilisational decay, required a deeper scientific understanding of the instincts and emotions. In 1912 the psychologist William Brown lamented that the ‘history of men’s views on the nature of the emotions or passions is part of the history of ethical speculation in general’ rather than a strict science, causing such views to be ‘prejudiced and fragmentary’.²⁷ He saw hope in the fact,

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 32-3.

²⁵ This sociologist’s discussion with a trade union leader says a lot about the self-image of the Labour Party and the trade unions, as not only leaders of the working class but also their disciplinarians: ‘The conduct of men as an unorganised mass and their conduct as an organised society differ in a remarkable way. This is well illustrated, as a trade union leader has informed me, by the case of the dock labourers of London. Before they became organised they were at the mercy of mob-orators, but these amateur students of group-psychology lost their ascendancy when the dockers’ union became properly constituted.’ Syndicalism represented in part a reaction against this tendency for socialism to become part of the state system for restraining the passions. R.M. MacIver, ‘What is Social Psychology?’, *Sociological Review* 6, 2 (1913), 149.

²⁶ Ibid., 149-50.

²⁷ William Brown, ‘Emotions and Morals’, *Sociological Review* 5, 3 (1912), 215.

however, that the study of instinct and emotion was becoming disentangled from such moral philosophy.

In particular, William McDougall's neat presentation of instinct theory proved popular. One reviewer wrote that before the appearance of McDougall's *Social Psychology* in 1908, 'there was no scientific definition and classification of instincts' appropriate for 'writers on moral and social evolution' who wished to base themselves entirely on scientific grounds.²⁸ McDougall helped to introduce a basic psychological vocabulary into social thought, and a way of understanding manifest emotions as the subjective form of a basic set of underlying instincts. In the work of McDougall and others, an architecture of universal basic instincts, their corresponding subjective emotions, and their specific combinations in secondary instincts and emotions, was catalogued with ever greater refinement and precision.²⁹ It was hoped that this project of mapping the irrational self would entirely demystify human behaviour, and transform political reform from an art into a science.

These years forced a modification in how British socialists understood the instinctive motivations for working-class collective action, and forced them to clarify their relations to these proletarian instincts. As James Thompson wrote, syndicalism was often presented as a 'revolt against reason, a species of anti-intellectualism' associated with the philosophies of Henri Bergson and, especially, Georges Sorel.³⁰ Sorel gave primacy to passionate class conflict as the driving force of progress, cutting through the pacifying and misleading

²⁸ William Kelley Wright, 'McDougall's Social Psychology in Light of Recent Discussion', *Journal of Philosophy* 18, 6 (March, 1921), 143.

²⁹ See, for instance: William McDougall, *An Introduction to Social Psychology* (London, 1908); William McDougall, A.F. Shand & G.F. Stout, 'Symposium: Instinct and Emotion', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 15, 1 (1915), 22-99; William McDougall, *The Group Mind* (London, 1920).

³⁰ An American MA dissertation from 1949 linked all 'modern revolutionary theories' – Marxism, anarchism, syndicalism, Bolshevism, Fascism, and Nazism – to their shared Romanticism and 'irrationalism'. Ralph Leonard Phillips wrote that the revolutionary was a 'man who lets his life be guided by animal instincts and emotional impulses', and that he 'refuses to submit his actions to the judgment of reason'. Despite interesting parallels and comments, the study is marred by the crude anti-Communism of the early Cold War, depicting signs of revolutionary interest in the irrational as sinister. If concern about the irrational unites Karl Marx, Georges Sorel, V.I. Lenin, and Adolf Hitler, however, it also unites Adam Smith, Thomas Paine, and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. See: Ralph Leonard Phillips, 'Irrationality as a Concept in Modern Revolutionary Theories' (1949) M.A. Dissertation: University of California.

rhetoric of state socialist politicians.³¹ Syndicalism seemed to be based in visceral, active, contagious emotion (commonly described as a kind of ‘fever’)³² very different in character from the affection, sympathy, and solidarity which had been optimistically seen as the key underlying motivations for the formation of collective groups by British socialists. Philip Snowden argued against the syndicalist acceptance of class conflict and the doctrine of the revolutionary General Strike, ‘devised and organised by the “conscious minority,” [while the] majority are swept into the revolution by the influence of infection’.³³ He abhorred the irrationalism of its philosophy, which urged that ‘action should be spontaneous; men should act on their impulses; the instinct of the mob will always lead them to do the right thing’.³⁴ Instead of passionate class conflict, he wrote:

... the present industrial slavery will be abolished by the enlightened self-interest and ethical impulses of all classes ... [The workers] have always had the help of men of wealth and leisure, who had risen above all class feeling and were moved by the social instinct.³⁵

British syndicalist activists themselves were rarely influenced by anti-rationalist philosophies at first-hand, and saw themselves as pursuing rational aims of working-class liberation and economic democracy against statist socialism and trade unionism.³⁶ For the Guild Socialist and heretical Fabian G.D.H. Cole, whose 1913 work *The World of Labour* became a paradigmatic text of the Great Unrest, the instinctive working-class solidarity displayed by the syndicalist movement was not a sign of dissolution into irrationality at all. It was rather the only element which could avert such a dissolution, ‘alone able to substitute ... for the disorderly discontent and unrest of the mass or mob’.³⁷ The Great Unrest, according to Cole, represented in primitive form the formation of a class grouping endowed with its own rationality and coherence, arising from

³¹ James Thompson, ‘The Great Labour Unrest and Political Thought in Britain, 1911-1914’, *Labour History Review* 79, 1 (2014), 43; Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence* edited by Jeremy Jennings (Cambridge, 2004).

³² Béliard, ‘Revisiting the Great Labour Unrest’, 5.

³³ Philip Snowden, *Socialism and Syndicalism* (London, 1913), p. 235.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 239.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

³⁶ See: Bob Holton, *British Syndicalism 1900-1914* (London, 1976).

³⁷ G.D.H. Cole, *The World of Labour* (London, 1920), p. 19.

the flux of passions but requiring the intervention of socialists for sharpness and definition:

... if Trade Unionism is to accomplish its purpose, it must not be content to appeal to the blind 'instinct' that is urging it forward. That 'instinct' is present; but if it is to achieve anything, it must gain consciousness and intelligence. The intelligent capitalist can make short work of the *élan vital* of the workers, unless it is translated into a definite will.³⁸

Here, then, was a way for socialist intellectuals to engage with the proletarian movement – to understand and translate this inchoate instinct into a conscious will to transform society.

In the historiography of British psychology, the early twentieth century is seen as a crucial period in which scientific psychology was consolidated and began to permeate culture more broadly.³⁹ According to Mathew Thompson there was a social permeation of psychological themes in this period, and it became increasingly difficult to conceptualise consciousness without drawing on psychological discourse.⁴⁰ This popular 'psychologising' process, Thompson argued, opened up a more complicated topography of the self and helped to form a peculiarly modern consciousness. This meant recognising the self as the sum of interactions of various elements which often conflicted with one another (such as instincts, emotions, will, and intellect), with most of these conflicts occurring in the unconscious, and all conditioned by evolutionary and personal history. As he wrote, 'confidence in a unitary, rational self was on the wane; belief in a multidimensional and potentially irrational self was on the rise'.⁴¹

According to Nikolas Rose, the half century between 1875 and 1925 was an important historical 'event', in the course of which psychology emerged as a scientific discourse, becoming separated from philosophical 'speculations about the mental life of humans' and entering into the 'domain of positive

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 424-5.

³⁹ See L.S. Hearnshaw, *A Short History of British Psychology 1840-1940* (London, 1964) for an overview of British psychological thinking in this period. Particularly Chapter VII, 'The Foundations of Social Psychology', shows how the twentieth-century development of social psychology was tied to the rise of socialist and collectivist thinking. In the late nineteenth century, he wrote, 'England did not become socialistic, but the prevailing attitudes to the problems of man's relations to society subtly changed...' (p. 109).

⁴⁰ Mathew Thompson, 'Psychology and the Consciousness of Modernity in Britain, 1900-1950', in *Meanings of Modernity* edited by Martin Daunton & Bernhard Rieger (Berg, 2001), p. 97.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 100.

knowledge'.⁴² For Rose this emergence was tied to the emergence of the 'psychological subject'. Individual consciousness became subject to a web of sustaining technologies and practices of representation and intervention, arising from the attempt to 'diagnose, conceptualise and regulate pathologies of conduct'.⁴³

Numerous historians have argued that this 'New Psychology' helped to strengthen elitist and technocratic tendencies in British democratic theory.⁴⁴ Reformers sought to devise a form of state power which could perform scientifically guided intervention on the scale of the entire population, to reconcile the irrational tendencies in man with the common good. Not the philosopher-king, but the administrator armed with knowledge of the human sciences, would be the leading figure of the Wellsian modern utopia. The key task was to create a democracy suited to a twentieth-century psychology, which was self-consciously threatened by its own irrational tendencies.

Many of the themes which came to define British understandings of the Russian Revolution and its aftermath were developed in embryonic form during these pre-war years of crisis. G.K. Chesterton argued that the Great Unrest was a 'revolt against Socialism ... that is, against the theory of the State'.⁴⁵ It was a challenge not only to British imperialism, but to state socialism and corporatist trade unionism as movements in the process of integration into the imperial power structure. Bolshevism in 1917 was instantly grasped by British observers as a species of syndicalism, basing itself on the irrationalist theories British socialists saw underpinning that creed. Syndicalism was a term which 'Bolshevism' quickly subsumed, both in terms of the conversion of many leading syndicalists to the Communist Party and in terms of its use in broader socialist discourse as a revolutionary leftist, even libertarian or anarchist, challenge to organised Labour. The association of Bolshevism with irrationalist theories, and the use of the New Psychology to understand Bolshevism, will be explored in chapters four through six. Meanwhile, the start of the Great War

⁴² Nikolas Rose, *The Psychological Complex: Psychology, Politics and Society in England, 1869-1939* (London, 1985), p. 3.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 13, 226.

⁴⁴ Such as Soffer, 'New Elitism'; Allett, 'Crowd Psychology'.

⁴⁵ G.K. Chesterton quoted in Tom Villis, *Reaction and the Avant-Garde: The Revolt Against Liberal Democracy in Early Twentieth Century Britain* (London, 2006), p. 42.

further undermined socialists' belief in the possibility of escaping the old world rent by national and class antagonisms into a new world based on an expanded sympathy.

1914: The Crowds Go to War

The Great Unrest marked an intensification of class conflict in British society, but it ended with an extraordinary display of national unity. The outbreak of the Great War in the summer of 1914 prevented the unrest from developing further, but it was a deeper challenge still to the socialist project of an expanded human sympathy. Through the summer and autumn of 1914 the Socialist International collapsed as its rhetorical threat of collective action to prevent a European war was revealed to have been bluster. The immediate impact of the war on British socialists was disorientating – for all the talk of war, and peace campaigns before 1914, few socialists had imagined it could actually occur between nations which were part of such a tightly interconnected economic and cultural system. T.A. Jackson recalled that, before the war, socialists:

... had come to believe in a sort of magical *mana* – variously defined as ‘rationality’, ‘civilisation’, ‘culture’, and ‘humanity’ – which would at the last minute, hold the ruling powers back from this culminating atrocity.⁴⁶

As the French historian of international socialism Georges Haupt showed, socialist thinkers across Europe interpreted the 1914 surge of patriotism among the working classes in social psychological terms: as a result of retrograde ‘emotions that surge up irresistibly from the subconscious’ overcoming a recently acquired and superficial commitment to internationalism, in the words of the Dutch socialist Henriette Roland Holst; or for the Austrian socialist Friedrich Adler, following from the development of a ‘surprising state of mind that might in the language of the new psychiatric school of Vienna be described

⁴⁶ T.A. Jackson, *Solo Trumpet* (London, 1953), p. 114. For an account of the confusions and weaknesses of socialist internationalism in Britain in the years preceding the war, but also a positive appraisal of the efforts by socialists to maintain internationalist ideals in the face of overwhelming pressure, see: Douglas J. Newton, *British Labour, European Socialism and the Struggle for Peace 1889-1914* (Oxford, 1985).

as pro-war enthusiasm corresponding to some overcompensation for insurrectional desires'.⁴⁷

For Haupt, it was crucial that the pre-war unrest developing in various European countries and the move towards war should be grasped as interacting processes.⁴⁸ He argued that a relative lull in the anti-war agitation, which had been so influential in preventing European war in 1912 at the height of labour unrest across the continent, was a result of the relative decline in the level of strikes and workers' demonstrations during the first half of 1914. This allowed the internationalist and class-based state of mind he saw prevailing during periods of social conflict to subside, giving imperialistic governments an opportunity to divert this urge towards mass mobilisation into national struggle. As such, Haupt did not attempt to historicise the socialists' use of psychological language in response to the war (of which he gave many more examples), because his own argument rests self-consciously on the universal truth of such social psychological models. He argued himself that 'the diffuse internationalism of the workers' movement could not combat the upsurge from a deeper strata of sensibility, as, for instance, Jacobin patriotism or "visceral" Russophobia'.⁴⁹ For this study, the important element is how socialists sought to understand this tight interconnection between the emotions driving the unrest, the war, and the resurgence of unrest ultimately arising out of the war: socialists' increasing use of instinct and unconscious or dormant emotions to explain the working-class support for their capitalist governments in 1914.

The irrational turn which history seemed to have taken, given the dominance of evolutionary models promising gradual progress and 'organic growth', prompted social thinkers to interest themselves further in problems of psychology. It spurred psychological thinkers to interest themselves in social issues also, prompting a wider diffusion and a development of social psychological themes. In the pages of the *Sociological Review* numerous essays

⁴⁷ Henriette Roland Holst and Friedrich Adler quoted in Georges Haupt, *Socialism and the Great War: The Collapse of the Second International* (Oxford, 1972), p. 230.

⁴⁸ He wrote: '... the revolutions of 1917-19 would not appear as an incident inserted artificially into the history of the Great War or as a violent catastrophe interrupting long-term developments, but as a process in which the war acted as a delaying or a deviating force and not as a catalyst.' *Ibid.*, p. 249.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

contributed to the idea that psychology was the key to the problems raised by the dissolution of the European system into anarchy. The war gave ‘Freudian’⁵⁰ psychoanalysts an important opportunity to convince the intellectual sphere of the worth of their discipline, and of the crucial need to direct more attention to emotion.⁵¹ Psychoanalysis showed its practical worth in the treatment of shell-shock or ‘male hysteria’, understood by W.H.R. Rivers as a coping mechanism for the emotional conflicts of modern warfare. Despite resistance from the military establishment, Elaine Shawalter wrote,

... gradually most military psychologists and medical personnel, if not generals, came to agree that the real cause of shell shock was the emotional disturbance produced by warfare itself, by chronic conditions of fear, tension, horror, disgust, and grief; and that war neurosis was ‘an escape from an intolerable situation’, a compromise negotiated by the psyche between the instinct of self-preservation and the prohibitions against deception or flight, which were ‘rendered impossible by ideals of duty, patriotism, and honour’.⁵²

During this period Ernest Jones,⁵³ who was himself a Fabian in his youth, argued influentially for the importance of Freudian ideas in understanding the underlying instincts and emotions for which the war itself was an outlet. He argued that Freud’s investigations into the unconscious had revealed that ‘man is endowed with a far more intense emotional nature than is generally imagined’, restrained by psychological barriers ‘painfully acquired’ during the development of civilisation.⁵⁴ As Jones wrote,

All the emotions of which we become aware, either in ourselves or in others, represent only tricklings through from the volcanic reservoir that is pent up in the unconscious regions of the mind...⁵⁵

This ‘volcanic’ metaphor, and the broader application of psychoanalysis to whole societies, would become especially important in how British thinkers

⁵⁰ For, as Daniel Pick argued, British intellectuals in particular long struggled to grasp finer distinctions in the psychoanalytic movement, commonly assimilating all theorists to ‘the Freudian school’. See: Daniel Pick, ‘Psychoanalysis, history and national culture’ in *Structures and Transformations in Modern British History: Essays for Gareth Stedman Jones* edited by David Feldman & Jon Lawrence (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 210-36.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

⁵² Elaine Shawalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980* (London, 1987), p. 170.

⁵³ The chief early exponent of Freudian psychoanalysis in Britain, rather than the Chartist leader whose poetry appeared in chapter two.

⁵⁴ Ernest Jones, ‘War and Individual Psychology’, *Sociological Review* 8, 3 (1915), 169.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

understood the emotions associated with the Russian Revolution after the rise of the Bolshevism, as I shall show in the following chapter.⁵⁶

If psychology could diagnose and treat shell-shocked or otherwise pathological individuals, its principles could also be used to diagnose and treat disordered nations.⁵⁷ The American sociologist Charles A. Ellwood argued in the pages of the *Sociological Review* that the war had revealed the rottenness of the emotional foundations of civilisation, which had lost the ‘mutual sympathy and understanding’ securing social cohesion:⁵⁸

... our civilisation has evidently been breeding within itself a mass of barbarians who do not respect its higher values. These are the only enemies of which it has need to be afraid; for Western civilisation is no longer threatened by external foes. If its walls are ever pulled down it will not be by the barbarians of Africa or Asia, but by the barbarians within its gates.⁵⁹

He saw the war as an external expression or reaction to the threat of internal disorder which plagued all European nations, and feared that the war was merely an intimation of a coming social collapse akin to the French Revolution or the fall of Rome. The war was a last, desperate attempt to maintain social cohesion within the European nations in response to this danger, directed against each other in the absence of any other motivating ideal.

The long-term answer to the health of civilisations, Ellwood argued, was for the elite to restore the ‘psychic conditions’ of social cohesion on a firmer basis by the application of psychological knowledge:

The machinist has only to know the principles of physics in order to manipulate the parts of the machine as he will, to secure its harmonious working. But the social leader cannot so easily manipulate the individuals of his group. He must understand human nature in all its phases; that is, he must know the principles of psychology instead of physics to make the social mechanism work harmoniously.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ And, indeed, it has been influential for historians since. Rod Aya criticised the fallacies of the ‘volcanic model’ among historians, writing of revolutions as a result of pathological states of mind dominated by an upsurge of violent passions. See: Rod Aya, ‘Theories of Revolution Reconsidered: Contrasting Models of Collective Violence’, *Theory and Society* 8, 1 (July, 1979), 39-99.

⁵⁷ Susan Kingsley Kent argued that the war could be framed as a traumatic event for the nation as a whole, to be analysed in a similar way to shell-shock in individuals. See: Susan Kingsley Kent, *Aftershocks: Politics and Trauma in Britain, 1918-1931* (Basingstoke, 2009).

⁵⁸ Charles A. Ellwood, ‘The Social Problem and the Present War’, *Sociological Review* 8, 1 (1915), 7.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

No concrete plans were set out, however – intellectuals were left to argue whether socialism or some other system best suited these principles of psychology.

Before any such programme of institutional reform, Ellwood thought that there would have to be a great ‘spiritual awakening’ among the mass of people, restoring a set of common values, the feeling of a shared tradition, the ‘subjective environment’ of culture itself.⁶¹ By 1917, British social thinkers across the political spectrum were hoping for some epochal event which might trigger such a ‘spiritual awakening’ among all of the peoples of Europe to either reinvigorate the war effort and bring a new international order through a democratic victory, or else bring it to a close by means of popular pressure.

March 1917: The Rationality of Revolution

In these circumstances the February Revolution, which occurred in March on the Gregorian calendar, came as a kind of salvation for socialists on both sides of the war divide. The Russian Revolution seemed the very antithesis of the complex of impressions formed by the Great Unrest and the war. Amid the tensions of class and national conflict, which threatened the disintegration of European civilisation, 1917 seemed to herald a turning point. For socialists, it meant nothing less than the reaffirmation of reason and the higher sentiments in the context of a world in which these had lost their power.

A crisis of some sort in the Russian state had been vaguely expected for some time, though nothing of the importance of 1917. As the *New Statesman* revealed in its editorial for the 24th of March 1917,⁶² a palace *coup d'état* replacing Tsar Nicholas II with the Grand Duke Mikhail, organised by leading figures in the Duma and the army, had been widely predicted ‘amongst those who are at all in touch with Russian affairs’.⁶³ It was immediately grasped as an epochal event due to the unexpected involvement of the Russian people, the end

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Which had been founded in 1913 as an organ of Fabian Socialism, aimed at the educated reading public. See: Adrian Smith, *The New Statesman: Portrait of a Political Weekly, 1913-1931* (London, 1996).

⁶³ ‘The Russian Victory’, *New Statesman* 24 March 1917, 580.

of the autocratic system, and the quick formation of a Provisional Government which seemed republican, even if this had not yet been officially confirmed. In the first descriptions and evaluations of the revolution, socialists marvelled at the restraint and rationality of the revolutionary people, and especially of their willingness to follow the liberal and moderate leaders despite having pre-empted the coup and taken the initiative for themselves. As the *New Statesman* wrote of the episode,

That they [the Provisional Government] were able to take charge of it is a considerable tribute on the one hand to the real influence which such men as MM. Rodzianko, Miliukov and Kerensky possess, and on the other to the wisdom and sobriety of the people...⁶⁴

In Arthur Henderson's appraisal, the Russian revolution ranked the highest among the events of human history for 'its completeness, its unanimity, and above all its self-control'.⁶⁵ Harry Snell celebrated the 'week of sacred rage' but also the Russians' ability to quickly bring the violence under control, writing that 'their greatest victory was not over the Tsar, but over themselves'.⁶⁶ John Bruce Glasier saw the influence of Tolstoy, described as the 'most titanic wrestler with the forces that enslave and brutalise the soul', as helping to inoculate the Russian revolutionaries against feelings of vengeance and fear.⁶⁷ Early reports in socialist newspapers minimised conflict, violence, and passion assiduously, depicting a basically bloodless passing of power to enlightened liberal statesmen, 'accomplished amid practically universal assent'.⁶⁸

Aligned to this widespread optimism was the idea of a reconciliation between the forces of liberalism and socialism. 'W. Maisky', then the editor of the *Russian Co-operator*,⁶⁹ wrote on the significance of the Russian Revolution

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Arthur Henderson quoted in Winter, *Socialism and the Challenge of War*, p. 243.

⁶⁶ Harry Snell, 'The Re-Birth of a Nation', *Humanist* (May, 1917), 68.

⁶⁷ John Bruce Glasier, 'Socialist Review Outlook', *Socialist Review* (May-June, 1917), 107.

⁶⁸ 'Comments', *New Statesman* 24 March 1917, 577.

⁶⁹ This is almost certainly Ivan Maisky, soon to be a Menshevik minister in the anti-Bolshevik Komuch government, who later served as the Soviet Ambassador to the United Kingdom in the 1930s and 1940s. 'W. Maisky' was the editor of the London-based journal the *Russian Co-operator*. After returning to Russia to take part in the revolution, it was reported by the *Daily Herald* and various cooperative publications that he had been among those executed by Kolchak's forces in Omsk on December 23rd 1918. See: 'Obituary Notices', *Russian Co-operator* (May, 1919), 66. The recorded biographical details of his life in these obituaries were very similar to that of Ivan Maisky. In his autobiography, Ivan Maisky did not mention being the editor of the *Russian Co-operator* (or needless to say, being executed...), possibly because of its anti-Bolshevik slant, but he did mention being close to ILP figures. He also wrote about

for the *Socialist Review*. He argued that the experience of division in the failed revolution in 1905 taught Russian socialists the necessity of ‘joint action of all progressive forces’, securing in 1917 the success that had been elusive in 1905.⁷⁰ The February Revolution effectively affirmed the tendency for internationalist Liberals to draw closer to socialism as a result of the war, through organisations like the No-Conscription Fellowship (NCF) and the Union of Democratic Control (UDC). The revolution was not conceived in class terms as a proletarian insurrection, but as a manifestation of popular feeling stretching across classes.

One *New Statesman* article based itself on the theme of the rationality of revolutions and the progressive role of the middle classes, of ‘how very respectable, after all, the Red Flag is’.⁷¹ Revolutions were not after all, it affirmed, chiefly the work of the disorganised mob ruled by its passions and its hunger, but succeeded by the ‘assent of the best organised classes’:⁷²

There is, we fancy, no instance of a great revolution ever having been made a success without a considerable amount of help from the upper and middle classes. In times of settled government men instinctively form a picture of the revolutionary as a man without a collar or as a student who takes to politics instead of wild oats. Nothing could be more unlike the reality. The typical revolutionary – at least, the typical successful revolutionary – is the sort of person whose name appears in the list of Birthday Honours.⁷³

‘Coherence and order’ could be brought to revolutions only by the educated classes, a successful revolution could in no way be based on the ‘sudden passions of an ignorant mob’.⁷⁴ The very circumstances moulding the working classes which made them inclined towards riots and violence, their poverty and underdevelopment of character, made them incapable of seeing a revolution through. For the *New Statesman*, the ideal-type revolutionary was ‘free from extravagance and the passion of disorder’, and they cited a range of historical precedents from Simon de Montfort, to Oliver Cromwell, George Washington, and even Maximilien Robespierre, as proof of this thesis.⁷⁵ The ‘crowd’ was only ‘almost indispensable’, while ‘the Girondins are absolutely

organising with Georgy Chicherin to help Russian emigres return after the revolution. In newspaper reports during 1917, ‘W. Maisky’ was listed as chairman of a Committee to help repatriate Russians, with Chicherin as Hon. Secretary.

⁷⁰ W. Maisky, ‘The Russian Revolution’, *Socialist Review* (May-June, 1917), 114.

⁷¹ ‘The Red Flag’, *New Statesman* 24 March 1917, 582.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 583.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 582.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 583.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

indispensable'.⁷⁶ They seemed to find no worrying contradiction in the fact that, as they reported in that same issue,

What seems to have happened is that, having made their plans, [the leaders of the Duma and the army] delayed, fearing to take the plunge; and the plunge might never have been taken had not a popular movement, largely Socialist in its inspiration, forced the event.⁷⁷

Nevertheless, the revolution belonged to the middle classes and had been consciously carried through for essentially rational purposes, the victory of the Entente, which was sanctified by its new association with the revolution.

For the *New Statesman*, the fall of the House of Romanov meant that 'the war, whatever its outcome in other directions, will not have been fought in vain'.⁷⁸ The problem was that Britain, they argued, had lost the exalted and humanistic ideals of the war's early stages. It had ceased to be a war for democracy against Prussian militarism. As the war dragged on, according to the *New Statesman*, the sense of historical possibility it represented had diminished:

... the war ultimately became a custom rather than an inspiration ... a feeling of human helplessness was common. Pessimism had in many people restored to life the theory that human beings were being used by a blind fate in a futile quarrel that would leave everything almost exactly where it had been before except for some millions of mourners.⁷⁹

'The spirit of man' before the Russian Revolution, the *New Statesman* confirmed, had 'seemed ... a decided failure, incapable of self-direction, a doomed and homeless wanderer, hurried nowhere like dust in the wind'.⁸⁰ The chaos of the conflict, the apparent turn of history towards the irrational away from the course of steady and peaceful progress which many socialists had been led to expect, now seemed to be the illusion as history's rational course reasserted itself. The February Revolution came to falsify the pessimistic determinism of the 1910s and forge a link between an Entente victory in the war and the organic, inexorable force of progress which the war had interrupted. For these socialists, the sudden victory of the democratic forces in Russia became a fact of universal historical significance, marking a threshold crossed by the

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ 'Russian Victory', *New Statesman*, 580.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ 'The Spirit of Man', *New Statesman* 14 April 1917, 33.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

entirety of the human race: '[reviving] the faith of vast multitudes of people in the spirit of man ... In the Russian revolution they see the achievement of the almost impossible'.⁸¹

In this initial interpretation of the meaning of 1917, Fabianism seemed to have been temporarily converted to the more spiritual language of ethical socialism. The February Revolution, according to the *New Statesman*, rekindled faith simultaneously in the war and in the romance of revolution: it showed that the 'fires of the world' were not 'burnt out', and that 'the Shelleys govern the world no less than the kings and counting-houses'.⁸² It gave a powerful spur to those who imagined a better world arising out of the destruction of the war, rekindling the heroic ideals of the French Revolution and affirming its faith in the basic goodness of human nature. With the Russian Revolution, the *New Statesman* reported, 'Men are bringing out their Utopias from their cupboards again, and are dusting them with a look of satisfaction'.⁸³

As those socialists who supported the war interpreted the revolution as a vindication of the rationality and idealism of the Entente, many of those who opposed the war sought to dissociate the revolution from it completely. John Bruce Glasier, a founding figure of the ILP and an ally of Ramsay MacDonald, wrote in equally stirring terms about the effect of the Russian Revolution on British socialism and progressivism more broadly, but the link made between the war and the Russian triumph put him in an uncomfortable position. For him, the effort to associate the overthrow of Tsarism with the war was nothing less than an apology for barbarity. He argued that the February Revolution succeeded despite the war and had drawn its power from quite different sources:

... the revolution owes nothing to the war, or to anything appertaining to the war – except the perturbations which hastened, perhaps prematurely, the hour of its birth. Not from war, passion, or lust of conquest, but from Socialism and peace, has Russia derived her new Republic. Nothing that war has power to do could generate the ideas and feelings germinant in the revolution.⁸⁴

According to Bruce Glasier the revolution resulted from a unification of the ancient and habitual 'communal feeling' specific to the Russian people

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., 34.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ John Bruce Glasier, 'Socialist Review Outlook', *Socialist Review* (July-Sep., 1917), 197.

‘fertilised’ by the ideas of Western radicalism and socialism.⁸⁵ This interpretation continued to influence his understanding of the revolution through its different phases up to his death in 1920. The key premise of his writing, as recognised by his contemporaries,⁸⁶ was contained in the phrase: ‘Socialism means not only the socialisation of wealth, but of our lives, our hearts – ourselves’.⁸⁷ Bruce Glasier continued to see socialism as historically inevitable and the Russian Revolution as a sign of this historic inevitability, because it was the manifestation of in-born moral sentiments latent in the human race, which could be detected struggling to realise themselves in social relations since the dawn of human history. He detected in the earliest of ancient Hindu texts as in the works of contemporary socialists ‘an inherent spiritual impulse or self within him [i.e., man in general] leading him into society as a means of unfolding his spiritual nature’.⁸⁸ As he wrote:

... it is well to bear in mind that the sentiment or ideal of the international brotherhood is not a product of modern days. It did not originate in modern material developments, though it has been enormously quickened and spread by them. The sentiment of universal brotherhood existed and found expression in the idealism of mankind in the earliest ages of civilisation. It has been latent apparently in man since his birth as a social being. Like the instincts of sex-love, of motherhood, of friendship, which slumber unfelt and unobserved in the child at birth, to come to awakening later on when conditions favourable to their exercise arise, the sentiment appears to have been prophetic in the social nature of man.⁸⁹

He saw this spiritual impulse as the driving force of history, as it struggled to become manifest in contradiction with inhospitable real conditions. In these last writings, the older socialist discourse of sentiment and altruism sits uneasily and anachronistically alongside the newer emphasis on instinct, but seemed to be vindicated by the Russian Revolution. The revolution was assimilated into such a narrative of struggle, of selfless martyrs and ‘Pioneers’ driven by the ever-growing power of ancient moral sentiments,⁹⁰ whose:

... hearts throb with a gladness
As if their blood were wine,
And their brains burn with a madness

⁸⁵ Ibid., 197-8.

⁸⁶ J.M. Wallace in John Bruce Glasier, *On the Road to Liberty: Poems and Ballads* edited by J.M. Wallace (Manchester, 1921), p. vii.

⁸⁷ John Bruce Glasier, *The Meaning of Socialism* (London, 1920), p. 245.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 26.

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 218-9.

⁹⁰ There are interesting parallels with Trotter’s thoughts on the altruistic martyrs of history, who, for Trotter, represent something like a genetic mutation anticipating humanity’s coming evolutionary leap.

Which shall yet be deemed divine.⁹¹

This was despite the fact that Bruce Glasier fully expected the Soviet state to be overthrown by reaction or otherwise degenerate with the subsidence of the ‘wave of revolutionary excitement’.⁹² In the Russian Revolution, the sentiments of human fellowship had flowered amid the most inhospitable of conditions imaginable. The revolution itself was therefore a ‘temporary symptom’ of the growing strength of social sentiments in the deeper spiritual life of humanity as a whole:

... though the new proletarian republics in Europe may be overwhelmed, or if they stand, do so only by greatly modifying, for the time being, their revolutionary schemes and policy; yet they are the forerunners of the coming of universal Socialism in the world.⁹³

Even in July 1917, as the months dragged on without peace and without the stabilisation of the new Russian republic, Michael Farbman saw the ‘marvellous instinct’ liberated by the overthrow of the autocracy helping the revolutionaries to navigate through their difficulties, guiding and supporting ‘the Revolution when the force of logic alone would have failed’:

I remember how forcibly I was struck at the time by the instinctive and immediate foresight and resource of the revolutionary leaders. Instinct had been the driving power of the Revolution from the outset; it did not fail it now.⁹⁴

The British Democracy and Revolutionary Inspiration

The most immediate practical result of the February Revolution for British socialists was the organisation by the ‘Anglo-Russian Democratic Alliance’⁹⁵ of a large meeting in the Albert Hall on the 31st of March, held to welcome the new Russian democracy. Among historians it has been seen as a key moment in the realignment of the Left during the war, as pacifist and internationalist Liberals and Radicals aligned themselves to the Labour Party.⁹⁶ For its participants, it

⁹¹ ‘Revolution’ in Glasier, *On the Road to Liberty*, p. 71.

⁹² Glasier, *Meaning of Socialism*, p. 239.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 239-40.

⁹⁴ Michael Farbman, *The Russian Revolution & the War* (London, 1917), pp. 39-40. Farbman had been the *Manchester Guardian*’s correspondent in Petrograd during the revolution.

⁹⁵ Organised through George Lansbury’s *Daily Herald*, and involving members of the NCF. See: George Lansbury, *The Miracle of Fleet Street: The Story of the Daily Herald* (Nottingham, 2009), pp. 115-7.

⁹⁶ For instance: Paul Mulvey, *The Political Life of Josiah C. Wedgwood: Land, Liberty and Empire, 1872-1943* (Suffolk, 2010), p. 78; Richard A. Rempel et al. (eds) in Bertrand Russell,

represented something much bigger than this. The heightened emotions its participants described were seen as a sign that a fundamental change in world politics had been effected, that even with the circumstances and course of the revolution in Russia still largely unknown there had been a change that one could feel. The foreword to the published report of the meeting drew out its emotional character for special comment:

No words can describe, and no report of the speeches can hope to convey, the passion which inspired the meeting – its singleness of purpose, its resentment of oppression, its desire for the coming of a new day. It was felt by everyone present that here was the *beginning* – a revolution in thought, a revolution in way of life. Held to welcome the Russian Revolution, the meeting may yet prove to have inaugurated a new era in Great Britain.⁹⁷

In his speech, Lansbury emphasised the triumph of love over jealousies, fears, and anxieties, and lauded especially the refusal of Russian soldiers to fire on demonstrators as initiating a new era in which governmental violence would be simply refused.⁹⁸ The speech by the Irish Nationalist MP Arthur Lynch, who would shortly join the Labour Party, captured something of the meaning of the emotions expressed at the meeting, and is worth quoting at length:

Now I have come here not so much to argue as to enjoy myself, to feel my spirits revived by that infectious enthusiasm of men who look forward to great ideals. The famous French thinker, Pascal, said ‘The heart has reasons which reason cannot understand,’ and to-night I experience that. My feelings, my hopes, outrun my arguments and reason, and, looking at this horrible war which is now convulsing and shaming humanity, amongst all the lurid glare of the war itself I seem to distinguish also another scene, the rosy fingers of the dawn of a new era; and I believe that the things that are now transpiring will echo on through history for a thousand years, and generations yet unborn will look back to the things before our eyes and to meetings such as this, and in history it will be recorded that a new date took place when the Russian Revolutionaries overthrew their secular tyranny, and this date marked a new era for all the generations of men.⁹⁹

For Lynch this emphasis on feeling was no mere rhetorical flourish, but reflected a belief which he had long sought to express through works on poetry, popular psychology, medical psychology, philosophy, and fiction, as well as in the

Collected Papers vol. XIV: Pacifism and Revolution, 1916-18 (London, 1995), p. xxxiv; Martin Ceadel, *Semi-detached Idealists: The British Peace Movement and International Relations, 1854-1945* (Oxford, 2000), p. 227.

⁹⁷ *Russia Free: Ten Speeches Delivered at the Royal Albert Hall London on 31st March 1917* (London, 1917), p. 3.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

actions of his own colourful life.¹⁰⁰ What is most striking about Lynch's works of psychology is that they read very much like similar works of the late nineteenth century, and not at all like the cluster of modern psychological works, of instinct theory and psychoanalysis, which were becoming popular among socialist intellectuals at this time. In a review of Lynch's popular psychological work *Moments of Genius* (1919), Bertrand Russell criticised what he saw as his peculiarly Victorian conception of strong passions providing great men with inspiration during key transformative moments, a worldview in which 'men of genius always think and feel what is correct'.¹⁰¹ Russell saw Lynch's 'Alétheian System' as a species of Victorian sentimentalism. Lynch was dismissive of Freud and Carl Jung, saying that 'it is not likely that anything of value can be built on Freud's psycho-analysis'.¹⁰² He made a single reference to McDougall saying nothing of the content of his ideas, and dealt with Trotter's 'herd instinct' in a single footnote, describing it as a term empty of meaning.¹⁰³ The categories of social psychology especially were alien to Lynch, his focus was on the development of the individual character.

Lynch held to an eclectic philosophy of mind springing, as he wrote, from an initial interest in ethics, rather than a scientific psychology as his contemporaries knew it. His key aim was to understand 'the nature of Reason and the foundation of Belief'.¹⁰⁴ He summarised his key finding in an aphorism which was repeated in his books of the 1890s through to the 1920s: 'the whole man thinks',¹⁰⁵ an associationism positing the individual character as the

¹⁰⁰ Lynch had lived a life every bit as eclectic as his writing, including volunteering for the Boer side in the war of 1899 to 1902 before being elected to Parliament, and as a result was almost hanged for treason. He again volunteered at the outbreak of the First World War, though for the British this time. As an MP in 1917, he campaigned in the House of Commons to have the Tsar stripped of his honorary rank in the British army, and in the general election of 1918 left the Irish Nationalists to stand unsuccessfully for Labour. Before his death in 1934, he published as his last work a book intending to refute Einstein's theory of relativity.

¹⁰¹ Bertrand Russell, 'How Great Men Are Expected to Feel' in *Collected Papers vol. 15: Uncertain Paths to Freedom: Russia and China, 1919-22* edited by Richard A. Rempel et al. (London, 2000), p. 96.

¹⁰² Arthur Lynch, *Principles of Psychology: The Foundation Work of the Alétheian System of Philosophy* (London, 1923), p. 176.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 349.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁰⁵ For example, Arthur Lynch, *Human Documents: Character-Sketches of Representative Men and Women of the Time* (London, 1896), p. v; Arthur Lynch, *Moods of Life: Popular Psychological Studies of Affairs of Every Day* (London, 1921), p. 140; Lynch, *Principles of Psychology*, p. 173.

‘association of ideas, emotions, passions, each with the others’.¹⁰⁶ Lynch was optimistic about the influence of emotion on the workings of reason:

Genius itself is not altogether of intellect; genius is the outpouring into chance channels of an intense life of activity, the opening of the windows of the mind to inspiration; but that requires reparation in the training of toil, it demands determination to win the goal. Not the intellect alone, but the fervour of the heart, the indomitable will are the instruments of glory.¹⁰⁷

Emotional influences in the individual’s environment, according to Lynch, were not threats to individual subjectivity but, rather, tempered and affirmed it. Moments of high emotion were critical to the development of the individual character:

Life is lived greatly in moments; the rest of life is but a toiling up to the heights. And those moments are the most powerful, the most enduring in their influence, that have come by inspiration, serene and deep, or flamed with fire of passion ... We speak of the moment of the stress bending a beam, and here also we see at work the forces that play upon a man, that affect him to his foundations, and make all his fibres strain. There are moments that strike upon the soul so that it vibrates like a bell, startling with its own undreamt-of music, and making the compass of its harmonies, its faults, its flaws, as well as its uttermost strength.¹⁰⁸

It was this kind of emotional ‘inspiration’, which he had tried to chase throughout his life, which Lynch sought to capture in his speech at the Albert Hall. Spurred by the news of the Russian Revolution, this educative character of intensely passionate moments was emphasised in socialist literature. In this, the initial response to the revolution recalled the kind of evangelical, oratorical, soaring moments of enthusiasm prized by thinkers of the earlier ‘religion of socialism’ era. Walter Baker, a future Labour MP, wrote breathlessly about the emotional effect of the Albert Hall rally, and particularly of the ‘intense emotion’ aroused by the singing of ‘Give to us peace in our time, O Lord!’:

The vast capacity of the Albert Hall was crowded to the utmost with an enthusiastic crowd whose emotions and hopes had been excited to the highest pitch by the glorious news from Russia. We have a long acquaintance of popular demonstrations, and never during our experience has such a vast audience of workers been raised to such a frenzy of enthusiasm.¹⁰⁹

For Baker, this emotional exuberance was evidence of the ‘contagion’ of the revolution across international borders, which had ‘stimulated and quickened the

¹⁰⁶ Arthur Lynch, ‘Association’, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 18 (1917-1918), 595.

¹⁰⁷ Arthur Lynch, *Moments of Genius* (London, 1919), p. 3.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

¹⁰⁹ Walter Baker, ‘The Contagion of Revolution’, *Postal and Telegraph Record* 19 April 1917, 395. [Online] available at <http://contentdm.warwick.ac.uk/cdm/ref/collection/russian/id/3616> [Accessed 26.8.2016].

desire for liberty here'.¹¹⁰ Bruce Glasier similarly saw in these mass meetings an awakening of radical sentiments, that the:

... fervour of sympathy in most of those gatherings is fired from a deep, smouldering anger against the repression of freedom in this, our own country, and has been roused into a flame of hope and deliverance from oppression here at home.¹¹¹

This atmosphere of revolutionary inspiration, 'heavy with destiny and fate ... with the breath of revolution in the air',¹¹² was the context in which British socialists called for the formation of Soviets of Workers and Soldiers in Britain, at the Leeds Convention in June 1917.¹¹³ A manifesto produced by the Provisional Committee of the Workers' and Soldiers' Council (which united leading figures of the Labour Party, the ILP and the Marxist BSP) insisted that the Russian Revolution provided the opportunity for the unification of democratic forces across the world, 'stirred deeply by the glorious Revolution' and driven by 'the new restless spirit, pervading the world, demanding organic change'.¹¹⁴ They hoped to translate the emotions of 1917 into an effective progressive counter-offensive against the reactionary results of the war.

Conclusions

Cutting across differences of opinion over the war, even the most moderate and previously anti-revolutionary of British socialists saw the triumph of the Russian Revolution as the awakening of profound emotions, of sympathy, social instinct, or fellowship, which were the antithesis of class and national antagonisms. In the wake of the Great Unrest and the Great War, the Russian Revolution showed that the instincts and emotions of conflict did not enjoy full sway over the human animal. It was proof that emotions were not only irrational and destructive, but that irrationality and destructiveness provoked a revolt of the 'higher sentiments'. The Russian Revolution was thought to embody various harmonious configurations – rationality and emotion, advanced ideas and

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Glasier, 'Socialist Review Outlook', (May-June, 1917), 98.

¹¹² 'Manifesto to District Conferences of the Workers' and Soldiers' Council' (1917) [online] available at

<http://contentdm.warwick.ac.uk/cdm/compoundobject/collection/russian/id/1722/rec/4>

[Accessed 9.8.2017], p. 1.

¹¹³ See: White, 'Soviets in Britain'.

¹¹⁴ 'Manifesto to District Conferences of the Workers' and Soldiers' Council', p. 1.

ancient communal feeling, the middle classes and the people, liberal progressivism and socialist democracy. Just as the French Revolution had spoken to Kant of a 'moral predisposition in the human race', the Russian Revolution reinvigorated the belief in the international, universal sentimental basis of socialism.

The revolution arrived as manna from heaven to British socialists, at a time when such a revival of faith was most needed. Most striking about the immediate responses of British socialists, is that they did not reach for 'crowd psychology' and such-like to explain the emotions of the February Revolution. The implications of the Great Unrest, the burdens and worries of the New Psychology, the pessimism about the irrationality of the human race for allowing such a grinding world war: all of this was set aside for the time being. 1917 marked an efflorescence of Victorian progressive ideals and the unabashed revival of a pre-psychological radical language, a vindication of the most optimistic ideals of Victorian socialism, which the war had fatally wounded but not yet quite finished off, and which continued as an element in the socialist interpretation of the Russian Revolution long after the initial euphoria had dissipated.

However, while 'sentimental' socialism seemed able to explain the February Revolution in the immediate after-glow of the event, it struggled to explain the growing conflicts within the Russian Revolution, the continuation of national conflict and persistence of imperialism, and the rise of Bolshevism. These events made the faith in human sentiments displayed by socialists appear especially naïve and archaic, while it prompted theorists like Trotter, W.H.R. Rivers, Arthur Tansley, and Bertrand Russell to further their psychological and psychoanalytic investigations into the emotions which were destructive of social order. In the following chapter, I will look at how British socialists responded to the rise of Bolshevism by returning to psychological themes familiar from their analyses of the Great Unrest and the war, retrospectively modifying their interpretations of the February Revolution in the process.

Chapter Four. Psychoanalysing the Bolshevik: The New Psychology and the October Revolution

Now it is here, the 'nameless beast', and has set up its kingdom – the impersonal mass is lord of Russia, it is the most important new phenomenon which Bolshevism has produced, a reality which no one can disregard. Whether, like some monstrous creature of fable, it rolls through the streets of the great cities, now growling happily, now roaring with rage, or whether it lies down comfortably on one of the wide squares to enjoy, like an animal, the sun, life, and its own exuberant strength – the many thousand isolated personalities of which it is composed disappear, and we no longer recognise the simple worker in his workaday blouse, the soldier, the typist, the student, or the navy. A mighty and powerful organism has absorbed them all into itself, and a single rumbling voice, incomprehensible and terrifying as the roar of the elements, has swallowed up all their individual cries, their joyful or angry words.

The ardent striving after the 'mass man' arose in Russia at a moment when Western Europe was coming more and more to recognise the modern scientific theory that mass psychology is nothing but the reassertion of the old instincts of the primeval horde, a return, a 'regression' of the human soul to the conditions of a prehistoric, primitive stage of development, which culture long ago surmounted, but which is still to be found occasionally, even now, among savage races.

- René Fülöp-Miller, 1927.¹

The third chapter ended with the optimism of the February Revolution. This heightened sense of possibility, of a revolutionary union of reason and sentimentality emanating from the heroic acts in Russia, was soon challenged by the subsequent course of the Russian Revolution. From being the antithesis of the most pessimistic of 'New Psychological' ideas, the revolution seemed to become their most striking affirmation, providing the investigators of psychopathology with fruitful new material for the application of their concepts. The role of reason and higher sentiments as motivating forces in the revolution were retroactively minimised, its historical promise blunted and tainted by the same irrationalism which it had initially seemed to refute. Socialists began to write of the irrational conditions out of which the revolution sprung not as something that had been overcome, but as something with a continuing and poisonous influence.

¹ René Fülöp-Miller, *The Mind and Face of Bolshevism* (London, 1927), pp. 1, 5.

In September 1917, the *New Statesman* struck a bewildered tone, in contrast to their articles of the early days following the February Revolution. Where the revolution had once seemed a clear reaffirmation of historical progress, now it only seemed to confirm the helplessness of reason in facing the daunting irrationality of history, made by the clash of uncomprehending passions with no clear or necessarily progressive direction. As they wrote,

One notable result of the last three years is that any thinking man must have found his faith in the reliability of history has been rudely shaken. Tremendous events have happened; but what actually happened in each case seems to be interpreted and reported always in accordance with the prejudice of the observers; and it seems extremely improbable that these distorted pictures will not be handed down and become the facts and commonplaces of history. The Russian Revolution has not escaped this fate. It is a curious fact that no unbiased person can say confidently to-day that he knows even approximately what happened in March, 1917.²

With the disappointing failure of the Provisional Government to lay the foundations of a secure liberal democracy, the narrative of the February Revolution itself changed. In one article of early 1918, it was no longer the deed of respectable middle-class revolutionaries but of ‘elemental’, unconscious peasants:

The Russian Revolution started with an elemental breach of discipline and subordination in the army. The deadly blow to Tsarism was not inflicted by educated men fully conscious of their aims, but by the vast illiterate masses of the peasant soldiers who were exasperated by the sufferings and slaughter of the past three years...³

In a complete reversal of the whole atmosphere of the publication in the first months after February 1917, this article was immediately followed by one commending pessimism: ‘Let us, then, enter for a little into the house of despair. We have basked too much in the sunshine of self-approval and cheerfulness. We must plunge deep enough into despair to discover reality’.⁴

The journalism of Julius West, a young Russian-born Fabian, throughout 1917 and 1918 helped to build a picture of Petrograd gripped by continuing

² ‘The Russian Revolution’, *New Statesman* 22 September 1917, 594.

³ “‘In Times of Confusion’”, *New Statesman* 16 March 1918, 563. According to the *New Statesman*: ‘... the Russian Slav – particularly the uneducated – is generally a Bolshevik (or an Anarchist) at the bottom of his heart. He is still in that pseudo-childish state of development when sport is synonymous with smashing things up. He may be capable of indulging in an orgy of violence in order to provide himself with an excuse for an orgy of repentance. Bolshevism attracts him as a theory of life, although he may hate it as a political institution’.

‘Russia: The Next Phase’, *New Statesman* 17 August 1918, 385-6.

⁴ ‘The Uses of Despair’, *New Statesman* 16 March 1918, 563-5.

revolutionary ferment. Often neglected by historians in favour of the more famous and prolific observers Michael Farbman, Arthur Ransome, and Morgan Phillips Price,⁵ West depicted the revolutionary city as a particular emotional space: nightmarish and hallucinatory, characterised by extremes of passion – a city in the grip of the crowd psychology diagnosed by Le Bon. In the first of his ‘Sketches in Petrograd’, published in July 1917 and written immediately before the start of the Kerensky offensive, West described the city as the meeting place for ‘the scum from a hundred whirlpools’,⁶ of myriad nationalities, street-sellers and others difficult to classify. He depicted a world turned upside down, where men in soldiers’ uniforms freely sold pacifist literature on the eve of the great military push, and where the preponderance of red flags and political posters ‘conveys the impression of a fair rather than a revolution’.⁷ Despite the enthusiasm of the political conferences and assemblies, characterised by fervent applause for any and all statements no matter how they contradicted each other, West intuited a souring mood in the city:

A sense of terrified tragedy seems somehow to rest on the city. It defies analysis, but it seems to be connected with a feeling of ineffectiveness and failure which has invaded the minds of most people.⁸

According to West, the term ‘stikhiyny’ had become the word of the moment:

... the adjective ‘stikhiyny’ ... now qualifies the description of almost every human action. Now ‘stikhiyny’ means elemental, perhaps intuitive. One finds Bolshevik leaders justifying most of the things for which they are responsible by the statement that they resulted from elemental forces. Revolution, one soon comes to feel, is a matter of these forces rather than of deliberate organisation. So, too, Petlura, the Ukrainian War Minister, told me that the movement led by him was ‘elemental’.⁹

The accounts of Petrograd by West and others throughout the first years of the revolution depicted it as a crucial site in the struggle between the forces of order and of disorder, reason and unreason, permeated by a nervous uncertainty like ‘camping on a volcano’.¹⁰ The *New Statesman*’s correspondents in early November 1917¹¹ depicted the struggle between the Provisional

⁵ And more long-lived: West died of influenza in 1918, still in his late twenties.

⁶ Julius West, ‘Sketches in Petrograd’, *New Statesman* 28 July 1917, 399.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Julius West, ‘From a Petrograd Diary’, *New Statesman* 4 May 1918, 85.

¹⁰ ‘Petrograd – From July to October’, *New Statesman* 3 November 1917, 106.

¹¹ i.e., before the ‘October’ Revolution.

Government and Bolshevism in such a manner, seeing the government as fighting to ‘raise the standard of revolutionary citizenship’ against a background of spreading Bolshevik ‘infection’.¹² Alexander Kerensky was the great man of order straining against the ‘wild, cruel passions’ which had been released by the fall of the autocratic system,¹³ attempting heroically to canalise the passions of the masses into the war effort and the building of a constitutional republic. When the Bolshevik Party did finally overthrow the Provisional Government and proclaim the government of the Soviets, most British socialists harboured mixed feelings, sympathising on some level with the aims of the Bolsheviks while lamenting the failure of the more moderate socialists and expecting the speedy collapse of the new regime.

Unlike in the earliest celebrations of the revolution, in which reason and emotion seemed to unify and harmonise, now emotion was seen to cut across and undermine the reasoning individual political agent, placing in its stead the irrational crowds of the revolutionary cities which confronted the individual as a dangerous, elemental force. Political manoeuvring in a revolutionary period appeared to be about gauging and controlling the passions of the masses, a competition of demagoguery. The language of the New Psychology, a popular amalgamation of instinct theory and psychoanalysis, became a crucial resource by which socialists would grasp the themes raised by the Russian Revolution.

The 1917 Club and the New Psychology

In nineteen one seven they founded a Club
Partly as brothel & partly as pub
With a membership mainly of literary bores
Redeemed by a girl in Giotto-pink drawers.

- John Armstrong.¹⁴

The 1917 Club, in which socialists, psychoanalysts, and literary figures mixed, was one of the more interesting intellectual developments in Britain to arise as a direct response to the Russian Revolution. It was a place where ‘something

¹² ‘Petrograd’, 105.

¹³ ‘Russia and the Bolsheviks’, *New Statesman* 17 November 1917, 151.

¹⁴ Andrew Lambirth, *John Armstrong: The Paintings* (London, 2009), p. 19. The girl was Elsa Lanchester, known to broader layers of the public as the *Bride of Frankenstein*.

like an intelligentsia' coalesced around the left-wing literary circle, the Bloomsbury group, drawing in intellectuals who opposed the government and the war, and all united by the initial positive influence of the Russian Revolution.¹⁵ Its early driving forces included such figures as Leonard Woolf, Ramsay MacDonald, Henry Nevinson, J.A. Hobson, and Oliver Strachey.¹⁶ It provided a space in which progressives could discuss contemporary issues and obscene theories without being troubled by the Defence of the Realm Act, for those who preferred a kind of modernist Jacobin Club to the gentleman's clubs.

According to Rebecca Beasley, the 1917 Club was representative of the 'imaginative space opened up by Russian models'.¹⁷ Beasley emphasised the influence of Russian literature in this period as providing a positive image suggestive of a new way in which intellectuals could relate to their societies, and which 'facilitated readings of the Russian Revolution as a story about the intellectuals leading the masses to enlightened government'.¹⁸ She cited Leonard Woolf's later description of Lenin as a highbrow trying to transform 'a world based on prejudice and passion into a world based on reason' as exemplifying one of the 'enduring quest narratives of modernism'.¹⁹ This quest for a politics of reason, then, linked the political work of the 1917 Club and the critical literary work of the Hogarth Press as champions of Russian literature, another project of the Woolfs' which began in 1917 and which informed the same intellectual scene. As well as providing Russian texts (which were in high demand), the Hogarth Press was a key disseminator of English-language translations of the classic psychoanalytic texts. Leonard Woolf's own search for an international 'politics of reason', and the importance of psychology for his socialism, have been examined by Lise Butler.²⁰

¹⁵ Rebecca Beasley, 'Russia and the invention of the modernist intelligentsia', in *Geographies of Modernism: Literatures, Cultures, Spaces* edited by Peter Brooker & Andrew Thacker (London, 2005), p. 28.

¹⁶ See: Leonard Woolf, *Beginning Again: An Autobiography of the Years 1911-1918* (London, 1964), pp. 215-7.

¹⁷ Beasley, 'Russia and the invention of the modernist intelligentsia', p. 28.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ See: Lise Butler, 'Leonard Woolf and the Politics of Reason in Interwar Britain' (2010) M.A. Dissertation: Queen's University.

The 1917 Club provided a space linking left-wing politics and advanced literature, and was also a key site through which modern psychological thinking further infused left-wing political thought. Ernest Jones argued that each country experienced a ‘psychological moment ... when interest in the newness of psycho-analysis became acute’: in England, he thought this moment to have been ‘within the first five years after the end of the war’.²¹ Bolshevism and psychoanalysis, each a novelty to British socialists, shared a moment of intense interest. The members of the 1917 Club engaged with this post-war ‘craze’ for psychoanalysis, during which its ideas and terminology suffused British popular culture.

As Graham Richards wrote, ‘to be able to speak Freudish marked one as modern in the same way as being able to refer to electrons, endocrines or the “fourth dimension”’.²² Sandra Ellesley, in her thesis on the popularisation of psychoanalysis in early twentieth-century England, argued that four key cultural debates of the pre-war years provide the context for this popularisation: feminism, modernity,²³ secularisation, and sexual reform.²⁴ Many of the individuals she cited as key figures in her study were socialists, but this is never indicated. They appear only in the context of one or more of these four categories. Richards agreed that psychoanalytic language began to permeate British culture in response to the four ‘cultural debates’ identified by Ellesley, radicalised by the trauma of the Great War. After 1918, he argued:

... [British] ‘psychology’ was desperately seeking a modern psychological vocabulary appropriate to its situation, one in which the now glaring limitations and failures of ‘reason’ could first be understood (‘scientifically’ one might add) and then rectified, one in which the underlying mechanisms of human sociality and harmony could be identified and harnessed in the face of radical social breakdown, and one in which the fading frontiers between sanity and madness, normality and deviance, could be re-established.²⁵

Psychological writing had a special interest for those seeking a non-revolutionary path to socialism. Scholars have argued that Freud’s own work

²¹ Jones, *Free Associations*, p. 230

²² Graham Richards, ‘Britain on the Couch: The Popularisation of Psychoanalysis in Britain 1918-1940’, *Science in Context* 13, 2 (2000), 201.

²³ More appropriately designated ‘aesthetic modernism’ – by modernity, Ellesley meant chiefly the new artistic movements and a related sense of a break from the past.

²⁴ Sandra Ellesley, ‘Psychoanalysis in Early Twentieth-Century England: A Study in the Popularisation of Ideas’ (1995) PhD Thesis: University of Essex, 54.

²⁵ Richards, ‘Britain on the Couch’, 200.

represents an inheritance of themes belonging to nineteenth-century anti-revolutionary iconography, reinterpreted in a 'counterpolitical' way and applied to individual psychology.²⁶ Nevertheless, these writers argued, Freudianism retained key structural affinities with the ideas of writers like Charles Dickens, Thomas Carlyle and the Tory radicals of the 1830s, who described revolution in lurid terms to promote desired reforms, and to reinvigorate the aristocracy, thereby averting a British revolution. It would make sense for social democrats pursuing a similar project of anti-revolutionary reform to be attracted by such a discourse, translated into suitably modernist terms and refreshed through the mediation of Freud. Psychoanalytical themes, seeking social harmony in a world of failing reason, seeking the mechanisms of sociability, were shared by socialism. It would be surprising, then, if socialists were as uninterested in psychoanalysis as the near silence in the historiographies of British socialism and psychoanalysis around this issue seems to imply. Its key questions were their key questions, and the lists of figures Richards identified as ubiquitously present at the important lectures and gatherings by which the early history of British psychoanalysis was made includes a clear majority of people who identified as socialists.²⁷

The 1917 Club helped to facilitate a mutual influence between socialists and psychoanalysts, especially those of the British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology (BSSSP). The BSSSP had been founded in 1913 to promote the quest for knowledge about sexual subjects and boasted important figures of early British psychoanalysis like Jones among its members. As Lesley A. Hall wrote, the 1917 Club became a 'regular haunt' for BSSSP members and the group, in turn, attracted a number of figures on the political Left, 'ranging from Fabians to communists'.²⁸ The modernist quest for a politics of reason and social harmony in a world of passion was, then, informed by the most advanced psychological and psychoanalytic thinking in Britain – the 'New Psychology'.

²⁶ See: Carl E. Schorske, 'Politics and Patricide in Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*', *American Historical Review* 78, 2 (April, 1973), 328-47; Sterrenberg, 'Psychoanalysis and the Iconography of Revolution'.

²⁷ Richards, 'Britain on the Couch', 203.

²⁸ Lesley A. Hall, "'Disinterested Enthusiasm for Sexual Misconduct': The British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology, 1913-47", *Journal of Contemporary History* 30, 4 (October, 1995), 669.

Working in different fields of the human sciences in the years following the revolution, progressive intellectuals (often connected to the Fabian Society)²⁹ like Karl Pearson, W.H.R. Rivers, Bertrand Russell, Arthur Tansley, Wilfred Trotter, and Graham Wallas, interrogated instinct and emotion in light of the revolutionary convulsions of their age. Their thought converged around the New Psychology, which combined instinct theory and the theories of psychoanalysis. All of them were important for developing the New Psychology theoretically, and for disseminating its ideas within the socialist movement.

W.H.R. Rivers, the anthropologist known for his part in the Torres Strait Islands expedition and for treating Siegfried Sassoon's shell-shock during the war, was struck by the turn to the study of the irrational in psychology and its implications for socialist politics.³⁰ If Arthur Lynch represented the efflorescence of an older culture of psychological thinking in response to the February Revolution, Rivers was a key exemplar of the embrace of psychoanalysis in Britain in the context of the war and of Bolshevism. His understanding of Freudian thinking, which he sought to apply to the study of society in his anthropological works, led him to a psychoanalytic interpretation of the Russian Revolution.

In April 1918 Rivers gave a lecture seeking to draw out the similarities, as he saw them, between the Freudian understanding of dreams and his own understanding of myths in primitive society, focusing on the Melanesian peoples who were the main objects of his research.³¹ He argued that the myths of a society were like the dreams of the individual,³² as the same psychological

²⁹ It would be simplistic to describe them as 'Fabians' – Wallas, for instance, is known to have had a complicated history with the Society, but all seem to have maintained some relationship to it and to have mixed in its circles. William F. Stone and David C. Smith emphasised the influence of his time in the Fabian Society as driving Wallas's interest in understanding the irrational even after he had left, particularly through the influence of H.G. Wells and Sidney Webb. William F. Stone & David C. Smith, 'Human Nature in Politics: Graham Wallas and the Fabians', *Political Psychology* 4, 4 (1983), 693-712.

³⁰ Rivers was selected as a parliamentary candidate for Labour shortly before his death in 1922.

³¹ W.H.R. Rivers, *Dreams and Primitive Culture: A Lecture Delivered to the John Rylands Library on the 10th April 1918* (Manchester, 1918).

³² At first, Rivers spoke only in the context of Melanesian society. The 'social revolution' he referred to was that which displaced chieftains. Only later (in *Conflict and Dream*, and *Psychology and Politics*, both 1923) did he explicitly apply this same theory to modern revolutions. To an audience in 1918, however, the modern applications of 'social revolution' and the social 'censor' can hardly have been obscure.

mechanisms warped the long stream of thoughts and emotions which made up the past-life of the individual, or the history of a society.³³ In dreaming, what Freud called the ‘censor’ protected the sleeper from disturbing content arising from the unconscious that might awaken them, transforming such troubling ‘latent’ content into the harmless ‘manifest’ content of the dream. In Rivers’ analogy, this role of ‘censor’ in primitive societies was taken by rulers, priests, sorcerers, and various ruling secret societies, who jealously guarded the true meaning and origins of myths so as not to disturb social order. This ruling class allowed the dispersal of knowledge only in a distorted and mystified form, effectively repressing emotions that threatened their positions at the head of their societies.³⁴

In Freudian theory, the nightmare occurs in the individual sleeper when this censor is overwhelmed by the affective charge carried by disturbing ‘latent’ content, ‘is helpless before the overpowering strength of some emotional stress calling for expression, and ... is forced to let the experience through without transformation of any kind’.³⁵ The nightmare confronts the sleeper with the truth of the psyche. The censor’s repression of painful affect was never truly a solution, merely driving it back into the unconscious, leading ultimately to a pathological and intense ‘excess of affect’.³⁶

Rivers argued that ‘the social counterpart of the nightmare is revolution’.³⁷ Just as the nightmare was the price paid for stretches of undisturbed sleep, the revolution was the price paid for epochs of social peace achieved by restraining the disorderly passions. Attempts to repress the ‘affects natural to the experience of social wrongs’ simply drove those emotions into the unconscious, there to ‘smoulder on beneath the surface’.³⁸ As soon as the power of social censorship was shaken, there would be ‘violent and unregulated, all-or-none manifestations [of painful affect] comparable with those of the

³³ This warping mechanism for Freud worked through symbolism, transformation, displacement, and condensation of dream content.

³⁴ In later works, he came to question with the role of censor as outlined by Freud, and instead saw the transformation of experience as a natural result of infantile conditions (as in the dream, when higher mental functions are inhibited by sleep).

³⁵ Rivers, *Dreams and Primitive Culture*, p. 20.

³⁶ W.H.R. Rivers, *Conflict and Dream* (London, 1923), p. 184.

³⁷ Rivers, *Dreams and Primitive Culture*, p. 20.

³⁸ W.H.R. Rivers, *Psychology and Politics and other Essays* (London, 1923), pp. 71-2.

nightmare'.³⁹ The chieftains, shamans, and acolytes of secret societies would be destroyed in a maddening wave of passion.

In 1922, shortly before his death, Rivers was selected to contest the University of London constituency for the Labour Party. Labour's 1922 manifesto described the party programme as 'the best bulwark against violent upheaval and class wars', and Rivers gave a number of talks on how his research supported this claim.⁴⁰ They showed just how much of his theory linking the Freudian dream to the anthropological myth persisted in his thinking about the problems of the 'civilised' world. For Rivers, socialism meant avoiding the repression and mystification of social problems in order to avoid the 'excess of affect' later. If both the weaving of myths and the eruption of revolution represented infantile attempts to resolve underlying contradictions, it was the duty of socialists to face problems clearly, and solve underlying contradictions by reform. Only by creating social institutions which minimised painful emotions could one avoid the need to repress them through nationalist feeling, external aggression, and authoritarian censorship. Only by reform could one avoid, in the last resort, the intensified pathological explosion: the revolution.

Instinct Theorists on War and Revolution

In 1916 Wilfred Trotter first published *The Instincts of the Herd in War and Peace*, collecting his pre-war articles on gregariousness and the herd instinct, supplementing them with a number of new essays. He sought to use the framework built previously to interpret his epoch, now defined by the state of war. These circumstances intensified both the sense of urgent threat and the utopianism of his earlier texts, fired his patriotism, and led him to substantially modify the broad cosmopolitan optimism of the earlier works. From seeking a solid scientific basis for an international community in the expanding 'herd instinct' before the war, during the conflict he was swept up into chauvinist, bizarre and apocalyptic thinking.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ 'Labour Party General Election Manifesto 1922' in *Labour Party General Election Manifestos, 1900-1997 vol. II* edited by Iain Dale (London, 2000), p. 22.

Trotter now argued that the nation continued to be the proper biological ‘herd unit’ for the level of development reached by civilised mankind. However, in the long period of European peace leading up to 1914, the ‘herd feeling’ grounding each nation was weakened by the growing dominance of the market and the division of society into classes, leading to the development of class-based ‘minor herds’.⁴¹ Simultaneously, as this process of class differentiation and economic internationalisation undermined national herds from within, he argued that the different historical experience of Britain and Germany had placed them on fundamentally opposing paths of evolution. These paths were based on archetypes of sociability which Trotter had found using his ‘comparative’ biological method, of which he identified three: ‘aggressive’ as in the wolf, ‘defensive’ as in the sheep, and ‘socialised’ or ‘industrious’ as in the bee. Britain, he argued, had settled on the evolutionary path appropriate to socialised gregariousness, and Germany, that of the aggressive form of gregariousness.

The crisis in the European system which began in the years before the war resulted from the interactions of these two major tendencies – the dissolution of the national herd by class division, and the struggle between different nations conceived as discrete ‘biological units’. Trotter appeared here not as the theorist of a relatively benign herd instinct holding society together as in his pre-war works and in Swanson’s summary, but as the partisan of a Darwinian struggle between herds, no less ‘red in tooth and claw’. For Trotter, this was at the root of the sheer violence of the war:

It is a war not so much of contending nations as of contending species. We are not taking part in a mere war, but in one of Nature’s august experiments. It is as if she had set herself to try out in her workshop the strength of the socialised and the aggressive types. To the socialised peoples she has entrusted the task of proving that her old faith in cruelty and blood is at last an anachronism. To try them, she has given substance to the creation of a nightmare, and they must destroy this werewolf or die.⁴²

⁴¹ Wilfred Trotter, *Instincts of the Herd in War and Peace* (London, 1919), p. 137.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 174-5. He later clarified that this was not to be taken metaphorically: ‘When I compare German society with the wolf pack, and the feelings, desires, and impulses of the individual German with those of the wolf or dog, I am not intending to use a vague analogy, but to call attention to a real and gross identity. The aggressive social animal has a complete and consistent series of psychical reactions, which will necessarily be traceable in his feelings and his behaviour, whether he is a biped or a quadruped, a man or an insect.’ (pp. 191-2).

In addition, he thought that the war had halted and reversed the growth of class feeling, creating an historic opportunity. Trotter argued that in the early twentieth century humanity had reached a 'nodal point', the first time that a period of accelerated development in the long-span of biological time⁴³ was perceptible to humanity, coinciding with an observable revolution in historical time and subject to the political choices of human agents.⁴⁴ The victory and further development of the socialised type of gregariousness would open a new biological epoch. Firstly, this would entail the extension of the 'socialised' herd unit to encompass, eventually, the whole of the human race, as the 'sympathy' felt between herd-members spilled over established national borders. Secondly, it would require that humanity bring the instincts themselves under conscious social direction, creating a fully socialised world-state in which the perfection of altruistic feeling would enable individuals to be coordinated 'unobstructed by egoism or hatred, by harshness or arrogance or the wolfish lust for blood':⁴⁵

Man, conscious as a species of his true status and destiny, realising the direction of the path to which he is irrevocably committed by Nature, with a moral code based on the unshakeable natural foundation of altruism, could begin to draw on those stores of power which will be opened to him by a true combination, and the rendering available in co-ordinated action of the maximal energy of each individual ... the mere occupation and re-occupation of the stale and blood-drenched earth would be to them barbarians' work; time and space would be their quarry, destiny and the human soul the lands they would invade; they would sail their ships into the gulfs of the ether and lay tribute upon the sun and stars.⁴⁶

Ultimately, in this 'socialised' state, individual bodies would be as individual cells, coordinated by mechanisms of emotional suggestion as cells are coordinated by electrical and chemical impulses. Either humanity would seize its opportunity to make this biological-historical leap and achieve this 'million-minded ... new creature',⁴⁷ or it would inevitably bring disaster upon itself. Beyond the rise and fall of mere states and empires, for Trotter the early twentieth century had the weight of a 'moment of destiny in the evolution of the human species'.⁴⁸ Even at his most nationalistic, this is far from the image

⁴³ I.e., a biological revolution of the type which had occurred just twice before since the emergence of life: the development of the unicellular into the multicellular organism, and of the individual animal into the gregarious unit. See chapter two.

⁴⁴ Trotter, *Instincts of the Herd*, p. 101.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 139, 163.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

implied when historians assimilated Trotter to an uncomplicated reactionary politics, referring to ‘popular conservative sociologists, like Gustave Le Bon ... and Wilfred Trotter’.⁴⁹

In the immediate post-war years, Trotter was soon disabused of the notion that Britain’s victory in the war would bring this cosmic revolution close. In his postscript of 1919, he observed that the ‘great liberation of feeling’ involved in the national struggle, in which he had seen so much promise, quickly diminished. This left individuals to turn with even greater intensity to their class-based ‘minor herds’ for the intoxicating feeling of satisfied gregariousness:

With the outbreak of war the national unit became the source of moral power, social feeling became wide in its basis and strong in intensity. To the individual life became more intense and more significant, and in essence, in spite of horror and pain, better worth living ... [Since the war] National feeling is no longer able to supply him with moral vigour and interest. He must turn once more to his class for what the nation as a whole has been so much more efficiently supplying. Life has regained for him much of its old tameness, the nation in which he has lived vividly during the war is resuming its vagueness and becoming once more merely the state, remote and quasi-hostile. But the war has shown him what interest and moral vigour are in life, and he will not easily accept the absence of these; he has acquired the appetite for them, he has, so to speak, tasted blood. The tasteless social dietary of pre-war England is not likely to satisfy his invigorated palate.⁵⁰

Trotter imagined that the masses had swung rapidly from satisfying the herd-instinct in their socio-economic class during the Great Unrest, to national-patriotic feeling during the war, and then back with increased vigour to a class-based form of gregariousness, an oscillation felt most intensely in Russia. He saw the masses as highly psychologically unstable: one could have been part of the syndicalist revolt before the war, the most ardent persecutor of pacifists during it, and declare one’s allegiance to the world Bolshevik Revolution soon after without self-contradiction, as each of these was but a means of satisfying a constant but promiscuous instinctive urge. Such an instinctive urge had driven the leaders of the pre-war syndicalist movement towards entirely different extremisms: Ben Tillett an ardent British patriot, James Connolly an Irish martyr, and Tom Mann a Bolshevik.

⁴⁹ Lee Sterrenberg, ‘Psychoanalysis and the Iconography of Revolution’, *Victorian Studies* 19, 2 (Dec., 1975), 262.

⁵⁰ Trotter, *Instincts of the Herd*, pp. 235-7.

When Arthur Tansley, the ecologist known for coining the term ‘ecosystem’,⁵¹ published his popular outline of the ‘New Psychology’ in 1920 seeking to synthesise recent works of psychoanalysis and instinct theory for non-specialists, he stressed the dangerous elements of the herd instinct rather than depicting it as the basis of altruism. Tansley wrote of the herd instinct in terms that call to mind Le Bon’s crowd, and it is the stress on these aspects that have weighed on the term since, rather than Trotter’s original hopes:

There is nothing divine about the herd or social instinct as such, and the reverence, almost amounting to worship, with which it is sometimes regarded is entirely out of place ... Many of its crude manifestations – craven fear of public opinion, slavery to catchwords, excessive national and class consciousness and assertion – of which the world is over full at the present moment, are quite definite and formidable obstacles to the evolution of a better society. Herd instinct in its raw form *is* an animal character, and the more clearly we recognise the fact the better position we shall be in to master it and direct it to worthier ends...⁵²

As part of Tansley’s sober synthesis, Trotter’s work was stripped of its odd comparisons between national characteristics and gregarious beasts, but also of its revolutionary utopianism. Though the project of uniting mankind into a ‘universal herd’ or ‘world herd’⁵³ remained, as well as the task of bringing ‘mind into harmony with its environment’,⁵⁴ these were not dwelled upon – the more pressing problem was the intensifying conflict of national and class feeling.⁵⁵ For theorists like Trotter and Tansley, it appeared that the masses would oscillate with ever growing violence and ever greater intensity of feeling between their national and class herds unless scientifically-trained politicians intervened effectively.

This shift implied a substantially more complicated, lengthy, and politically interventionist project than had been previously imagined by believers in an organic evolution towards socialism. In a talk given on the state of anthropology

⁵¹ Tansley’s relations with the Fabian Society are uncertain, though he is commonly cited as either a Fabian, or ‘Fabian style’ socialist of the most moderate kind, and this is detectable in his psychological writing. He was attacked for being a ‘Botanical Bolshevik’ in 1917, over his ideas for reforming the curriculum for teaching botany. He became interested in psychoanalysis after a dream in 1916, which was taken to symbolise his covert opposition to public opinion during the war, and later undertook analysis with Freud. See: Laura Cameron & John Forrester, “A Nice Type of English Scientist”: Tansley and Freud’, *History Workshop Journal* 48 (Autumn, 1999), 64-100.

⁵² Arthur Tansley, *The New Psychology and its Relation to Life* (London, 1922), p. 11.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 292.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 240, 295.

in 1920, Karl Pearson took up the theme of aggressive instincts, eschewing the earlier insistence on sympathy as a basic sentiment in his overtly socialist works. He wondered whether a tendency to aggression and struggle might, after all, be a more basic ‘innate passion’ in human nature, evidence of humanity’s ‘troglodyte’ origins:

It *does* matter in regard to the gravest problems before mankind to-day whether our ancestry was hylobatic or troglodyte. For five years the whole world has been a stage for brutality and violence ... And as aftermath we see in almost every land an orgy of violent crime, a sense of lost security, and at times we dread that our very civilisation may perish owing to the weakening of the social ties, a deadening of the responsibilities of class to class. This outbreak of violence which has so appalled the thinking world, is it the sporadic appearance of an innate passion for the raw and brutal in mankind, or is it the outcome of economic causes forcing the nations of the world to the combat for limited food and material supplies? I wish we would attribute it to the latter source, for then we could eradicate the spirit of violence by changing environmental conditions. But if the spirit of violence be innate in man, if there be times when he not only sees red but rejoices in it ... then outbreaks of violence will not cease till troglodyte mentality is bred out of man.⁵⁶

Pearson referred to ‘breeding out’ the instincts of the troglodyte here, reflecting his interest in eugenics. For human beings so conceived, reform of the social environment would have to be joined to a much longer-term project of eugenic reform. Others like Tansley maintained that the instincts were innate and in themselves unchangeable,⁵⁷ one could only modify the means by which they were satisfied by reform of the environment. The project remained, for political elites and the scientists who would advise them, for the herd to be ‘taught to follow the results of reasoning if it cannot be taught to reason for itself’⁵⁸ – a role tailor-made for the collectivist state of the Fabian imagination, and for a respectable Labour Party governing a continuing capitalist system for the foreseeable future, conscious of the national and imperial interest.

⁵⁶ Karl Pearson, *The Science of Man, Its Needs and Prospects* (London, 1920), p. 7.

⁵⁷ Tansley, *New Psychology*, p. 293.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 294.

Bertrand Russell: The Passions of War and Revolution

The attitude of ordinary men and women during the first months [of the war] amazed me, particularly the fact that they found a kind of pleasure in the excitement, as well as their readiness to believe all kinds of myths. It became obvious that I had lived in a fool's paradise. Human nature, even among those who had thought themselves civilised, had dark depths I had not suspected. Civilisation, which I had thought secure, showed itself capable of generating destructive forces which threatened a disaster comparable to the fall of Rome. Everything that I had valued was jeopardised, and only an infinitesimal minority seemed to mind.

- Bertrand Russell, 1927.⁵⁹

Bertrand Russell was one socialist who, more perhaps than any other in the post-war period, thought deeply about the problems of the instincts, the passions, and their interaction with the social environment. He linked these concerns explicitly to the Russian Revolution. As a recent convert to socialism and the ILP from the Liberal Party, Russell joined the 1920 Labour delegation to revolutionary Russia and published a book about his experiences, *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism* (1920). His narrative of the Russian Revolution was an attempt to apply a particularly theory about politics in which emotional forces were central. Here I will show how Russell came to be interested in issues of emotion, passion, and instinct in the years of the war, and how this interest influenced his analysis of Bolshevism. This combined research programme analysing emotion and revolution defined his own approach to socialism and his understanding of the Labour Party's historical mission.

The starting point for Russell's concern with instinct and emotion came in 1914. He noticed with horror that the great mass of people seemed to be enjoying the war, including his fellow intellectuals and many of those Liberal spirits with whom he had previously felt to be in accord. People were 'happier, more alive' than in times of peace.⁶⁰ He concluded that the state of war was somehow meeting 'atavistic instincts ... transmitted from savage and half-animal ancestors',⁶¹ which he previously assumed had been long bred out of

⁵⁹ Bertrand Russell, 'Things That Have Moulded Me' in *Collected Papers vol. X: A Fresh Look at Empiricism, 1927-42* edited by John G. Slater (London, 1996), p. 6.

⁶⁰ Bertrand Russell, 'Why Nations Love War (November 1914)' in *Collected Papers vol. XIII: Prophecy and Dissent 1914-16* edited by Richard A. Rempel et al. (London, 1988), p. 33.

⁶¹ Bertrand Russell, 'The Rights of the War (15 August 1914)' in *Collected Papers vol. XIII*, p. 7.

humanity. These instincts were now revealed to Russell beneath the veneer of civilisation, saturating human culture all levels – in its politics, in its literature, in its economic system, and in the relations between nations.

Russell's early work on the emotions of the war was, however, often superficial and tautological. In a pamphlet for the UDC he wrote of how international relations were based on fear, and would require a new international organisation to regulate relations rather than a balance of power.⁶² He argued that national greed and hatred were promoted by the privileged of each nation in order to offset domestic conflict and to provide the makers of armaments with war-profits, and for simple reasons of national pride.⁶³ In these early texts, there seems little reason to specifically interpose such emotions as fear, greed, and pride between the circumstance and the results; Russell could have easily made his argument without introducing these mediating psychological terms or giving them such prominence. Nevertheless, it was a move towards a different world of explanation than that of his earlier liberalism, indicating the direction in which his subsequent studies would travel. These new concerns were joined by a definite left-wing shift in Russell's thinking. He even tentatively expected (if not overtly supported) a European revolution of working-class despair to end the conflict, 'an overwhelming popular upheaval in Germany, France, and England, brought about, not by reason or humanity, or any of the temporarily extinct ideas of Liberalism, but by hunger, the one force for peace which is strong enough to cope with the forces for war'.⁶⁴ Russell very quickly came to advocate a 'new party ... formed by the cooperation of Radicalism and Labour',⁶⁵ and began to think of politics as the art of navigating and utilising the instinctive forces of the masses rather than as the ideal of informed dialogue within the walls of the Palace of Westminster.

From this initial intuition, Russell was spurred to an in-depth study of the psychological literature to understand the emotions driving mass politics of all kinds, from total war to revolution – a project springing from his experience of

⁶² Bertrand Russell, *War: The Offspring of Fear* (London, 1914).

⁶³ Russell, 'The Rights of the War', pp. 7-8.

⁶⁴ Bertrand Russell, 'Will This War End War? Not Unless the Democracy of Europe Awakens (10 September 1914)' in *Collected Papers vol. XIII*, p. 12.

⁶⁵ Bertrand Russell, 'Friends of Progress Betrayed (4 August 1914)' in *Collected Papers vol. XIII*, p. 4.

the first days of the war.⁶⁶ Following Ernest Jones, he argued that most human behaviour was driven by the need to satisfy impulses arising internally and unconsciously, which human beings habitually rationalised into meaningful activity. Russell thought that explanations for behaviour resting on such ideas as economic self-interest or morality were little more than our logical faculties finding ways to explain to ourselves the actions to which our instincts had driven us, and whose ultimate cause remained inaccessible to consciousness. The feeling of thrill Russell sensed among his fellows at the beginning of the war *was* the primary meaning of the war, and not simply a side-effect. All the moral and geopolitical arguments for the war arose as a kind of superstructure above this subterranean world of instinct, which was rather drawn to conflict for its own sake:

... when war is coming there is a liberation of a whole set of instinctive activities normally repressed. This brings with it an exhilaration comparable to that of falling in love. Instead of being oppressed by the prospect of the horrors of war – friends and relations killed or maimed, countries ravaged, civilisation bleeding in the mire – most men, in the first days, were excited and happy, feeling an unusual freedom, and inventing, with unconscious hypocrisy, all sorts of humane reasons to excuse their joy. In this mood there is no great hatred of the enemy: he has his uses, since without him there could be no fighting.⁶⁷

Russell struggled to work out a coherent response to this analysis that might enable reformers either to tame the passions or re-direct them. The need not only to oppose war, but to imagine a viable alternative outlet, was a central concern for Russell as a prominent organiser and activist for the UDC and the NCF during the Great War.⁶⁸

This was Russell's frame of mind when he began his encounter with D.H. Lawrence in 1915.⁶⁹ Initially promising for both of them, their collaboration ended acrimoniously over irreconcilable differences. These were chiefly about the necessity of sublimating the instincts and over the fate of political

⁶⁶ Bertrand Russell, 'How I Came By My Creed (September 1929)' in *Collected Papers vol. X*, pp. 13-4.

⁶⁷ Bertrand Russell, 'On Justice in War-Time: An Appeal to the Intellectuals of Europe (August-September 1915)' in *Collected Papers vol. XIII*, pp. 178-9.

⁶⁸ See: Jo Vellacott, *Bertrand Russell and the Pacifists in the First World War* (New York, 1981).

⁶⁹ See: Ray Monk, 'The Tiger and the Machine: D.H. Lawrence and Bertrand Russell', *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 26, 2 (June, 2006), 205-46.

democracy. Ray Monk, in his study of this fraught encounter, wrote that Russell remained deeply conflicted about the place of the passions:

Whether it was better to be tame, well-behaved, and civilised, and to live on the smooth surface or to be passionate, perhaps even mad, and to penetrate the surface to the ‘fiery depths below’ was a point on which Russell’s view swung, pendulum-like, from one extreme to the other. His life is characterised by a series of advances toward and retreats from ‘the flame’, sometimes craving its heat and passion and at other times fearing the ‘madness’ it represented.⁷⁰

In 1916 Russell published the lectures that were the positive fruits of this collaboration as *Principles of Reconstruction*, to Lawrence’s disgust. He outlined a theory which divided impulses or instincts (the two terms were often interchangeable for Russell, as well as passions and emotions) into ‘possessive’ and ‘creative’ kinds defined by the end towards which they aimed and the kinds of behaviour which they impelled. In his 1917 pamphlet *Political Ideals* Russell described these impulses in more depth, defining possessive impulses as those which were exclusive and egoistic, aimed at realising positive results which could not be shared, while creative impulses aimed at creating goods which could be shared without restriction.⁷¹ The former he saw as almost wholly anti-social beyond a certain minimum level required for self-preservation and the latter almost entirely positive for a harmonious social life: ‘I consider the best life that which is most built on creative impulses, and the worst that which is most inspired by love of possession’.⁷² Unwittingly echoing many of Marx’s thoughts on the passions, as relationships defined by their object as much as their own nature, Russell argued that these instincts were to a great extent modified by ‘beliefs, by material circumstances, by social circumstances, and by institutions’. Consequently:

Almost any instinct is capable of many different forms according to the nature of the outlets which it finds. The same instinct which leads to artistic or intellectual creativeness may, under other circumstances, lead to love of war.⁷³

⁷⁰ Ibid., 207-8.

⁷¹ Bertrand Russell, *Political Ideals* (London, 1917), p. 4. For the influence of John Stuart Mill’s distinction between self-regarding and other-regarding desires, known as Mill’s Principle, on this division into possessive and creative impulses, see: Richard Wollheim, ‘Bertrand Russell and the Liberal Tradition’ in *Bertrand Russell’s Philosophy* edited by George Nakhnikian (London, 1974), pp. 209-20.

⁷² Bertrand Russell, *Principles of Social Reconstruction* (London, 1916), p. 5.

⁷³ Ibid., pp. 39-40.

Any truly scientific analysis of social and political institutions, he argued, must discover first and foremost ‘the impulses and passions for which they afford a vehicle’.⁷⁴

Russell’s focus, then, was drawn to a critique of the various existing institutions which gave form to the instincts. In this category, he included the state, war and the ‘balance of power’, private property, marriage and patriarchy, the church and education. All had been transmitted in their present form by the needs of human instinctive life in former conditions, though outlasting ‘the circumstances which made them a fit garment for instinct’.⁷⁵ The institutions of capitalism and the modern state tended to promote the instincts he grouped under the category of ‘possessive’ (like avarice, envy, aggression, fear, and pride). Possessive impulses were those appropriate for conditions of scarcity and the struggle for private possession, fitted for bare animal survival rather than human flourishing. They were promoted by the institutions developed in conditions lacking both security and liberty, in which force ultimately reigned in relations between people. Moreover, within such an institutional framework he argued that every creative impulse (the thirst for knowledge, for artistic expression, and so on) was ‘shadowed’ by possessive impulses, perverting even them.⁷⁶ Russell saw the coming post-war reconstruction of society as an opportunity to reform these institutions so that they would encourage ‘creative’ instincts and help to transform the possessive into the creative, rather than allowing the possessive impulses to fester and eventually explode into conflict.

This particularly modern way of seeing the world was alien to Russell’s inherited liberalism, the joint rule of ‘self-interest to rule and reason to restrain’, as he wrote:

English liberalism, as we have known it, is dead ... The philosophy which encouraged [the Liberals], and the outlook on the world which made them seem important, have been swept away by the discovery that quite other forces govern the course of events.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Bertrand Russell, ‘The Nature of the State in View of its External Relations’ in *Collected Papers vol. XIII*, p. 363.

⁷⁵ Russell, *Principles of Social Reconstruction*, p. 42.

⁷⁶ Russell, *Political Ideals*, pp. 4-5.

⁷⁷ Bertrand Russell, ‘Disintegration and the Principle of Growth’ in *Collected Papers vol. XIII*, p. 307.

Russell instead advocated Guild Socialism as the organisation of society which could supply the negative conditions of a good life, removing the basis for overpowering possessive impulses by providing economic security, while spurring the creative impulses by its emphasis on self-government and decentralisation.

By the beginning of 1917, as the time for 'post-war reconstruction' seemed to have been deferred indefinitely, Russell had grown pessimistic and misanthropic, despairing impotently that 'the great majority live like the beasts, by instinct'.⁷⁸ As for many others in the socialist and pacifist movements, the Russian Revolution signified a reversal of fortune all the more important because it came at a time of such despondency. It seemed to embody all of what he had included under the category of the creative impulse. 1917 heralded a new world in which envy did not rule in the relations between people, and by its global impact marked the emergence of a truly international and classless feeling of fraternity, knowing no artificial boundaries. After the Albert Hall meeting held to welcome the revolution, his outlook was transformed into one of intense optimism:

Now, while men's imaginations are stirred, almost anything can be achieved by a generous outlook and a stout heart. The world is moving, and there is hope at last of a real peace by a fraternal reconciliation of the awakening peoples.⁷⁹

He remained full of this optimism as he wrote *Roads to Freedom*, just before his imprisonment as a conscientious objector in April 1918. This work concluded with an earnest statement of belief that the world of disharmonious passions would, having shaken itself apart, make way for a new world of all that was best in human emotionality:

The world that we must seek is a world in which the creative spirit is alive, in which life is an adventure full of joy and hope, based rather upon the impulse to construct than upon the desire to retain what we possess or to seize what is possessed by others. It must be a world in which affection has free play, in which love is purged of the instinct for domination, in which cruelty and envy have been dispelled by happiness and the unfettered development of all the instincts that build up life and fill it with mental delights. Such a world is possible; it waits only for men to wish to create it.

Meantime the world in which we exist has other aims. But it will pass away, burnt up in the fire of its own hot passions; and from its ashes will spring a new and younger world, full of fresh hope, with the light of morning in its eyes.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Bertrand Russell, 'Why Do Men Persist in Living?' in *Collected Papers vol. XIV*, p. 26.

⁷⁹ Bertrand Russell, 'The New Hope' in *Collected Papers vol. XIV*, pp. 127-8.

⁸⁰ Bertrand Russell, *Roads to Freedom: Socialism, Anarchism, and Syndicalism* (London, 1920), p. 210.

Russell urged pacifists to involve themselves in the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils movement formed after the Leeds Convention, with the aim of keeping it on the path of creative reconstruction and away from violence and class hatred.⁸¹ Distaste for class envy and hatred, he argued, were no longer suitable excuses for pacifists remaining aloof from the socialist movement. These emotions were only secondary in the revolution, the 'homage of the slave to the spirit of dominion which his master's example has encouraged'.⁸² They were the possessive 'shadow' of the creative impulses truly driving the revolutionary movement. He argued that pacifists should work with the revolutionaries to prevent these possessive impulses from overpowering the creativity of the movement, which was a constant danger. A forcible interruption of a pacifist meeting by workers, whipped up by the press, led Russell to dwell on the 'bad passions' of the masses and their potential to pervert the coming European revolution:

... whoever has seen the passions of the mob let loose, and has realised how easily the brute in Man can be aroused, must feel, if he has any power of reflection, that the spirit of violence is not one to rouse for no matter what end. It may be that, before very long, the violence which is now directed against the pacifists will turn against those who prolong the war. If that day comes, the pacifist will have as little reason for rejoicing as he has now. It is the brutal passions themselves that he wishes to eradicate, not this or that accidental manifestation of them.⁸³

Nevertheless, Russell did not yet associate the Bolsheviks with these 'brutal passions'. In the months immediately after the October Revolution he saw the Bolsheviks as the strongest hope for a reasonable peace settlement. A pro-Bolshevik article written in January 1918 landed him in prison. He wrote of the peace talks between the Bolsheviks and Germany as an attempt to grasp the only alternative to a 'universal revolution ... in which all that is best in Western civilisation is bound to perish', which he feared would be the consequence of any further continuation of the war.⁸⁴ Russell's ardour for the Russian

⁸¹ Bertrand Russell, 'Pacifism and Economic Revolution' in *Collected Papers vol. XIV*, p. 197.

⁸² Bertrand Russell, 'Pacifism and Revolution (19 July 1917)' in *Collected Papers vol. XIV*, p. 204.

⁸³ Bertrand Russell, "'Crucify Him! Crucify Him!'" (2 August 1917)' in *Collected Papers vol. XIV*, p. 286.

⁸⁴ Bertrand Russell, 'The German Peace Offer (3rd January 1918)' in *Collected Papers vol. XIV*, pp. 398-9.

Revolution was cooled by Brest-Litovsk, not the Bolshevik coup. The peace treaty marked the end of any prospect of organised labour forcing a general negotiated end to the war. It had even potentially extended the conflict by strengthening the Central Powers. This failure to end the war sent Russell into one of his recurring depressions, and led to a retreat from his intensive political involvement in the peace movement. As he wrote:

Despair in regard to the world is difficult to ward off in these days ... I believe that since Brest Litovsk our duty to preach has ceased, because our chance of success has ceased. The end will come – might come tomorrow – but not through us.⁸⁵

The Science of Emotions and the Instincts of Bolshevism

After the war, Russell increasingly emphasised the need to study collective passions scientifically and at a distance. In 1919 he began work on the lectures making up *The Analysis of Mind* (1921), and published reviews of psychological work widely. He sympathised with the behaviourists as well as the psychoanalysts, and adapted his thoughts about passion and impulse to the prevailing scientific literature – if not always with the same conceptual rigour or precision as in his work in logical philosophy.⁸⁶ The emotions continued to be a lynch-pin of Russell's thought using various terms, a central concept both for what he called the 'sociological study of history' as the 'conflicts of collective passions',⁸⁷ and in his metaphysical and psychological studies. Russell defined the basic problem as the quest to 'treat' those impulses previously termed 'possessive' ('anger, cruelty, envy, etc. '), while accounting for the problems that would ensue when such natural instincts were simply repressed or thwarted, later breaking 'out with a violence all the greater'.⁸⁸ He saw great potential in the sublimation of these instincts for higher purposes, but argued that this sublimation could only ever be a partial accomplishment fraught with the danger

⁸⁵ Bertrand Russell, 'Despair in Regard to the World' in *Collected Papers vol. XIV*, pp. 426-7.

⁸⁶ Despite imprecision in his language, Russell claimed to have adopted the James-Lange theory, understanding emotions as the conscious reflection of prior physiological changes stemming from fundamental instincts. 'We feel sorry because we cry', instead of 'we cry because we feel sorry'. See: 'Chapter 3. Listening the Cries and Whispers of the Articulate Body' in Randolph R. Cornelius, *The Science of Emotions: Research and Tradition in the Psychology of Emotions* (New Jersey, 1996).

⁸⁷ Bertrand Russell, 'The Seamy Side of Revolution (September, 1919)' in *Collected Papers vol. XV*, p. 87.

⁸⁸ Bertrand Russell, 'On "Bad Passions"', *Cambridge Magazine* 8, 1st February 1919, 359.

of emasculation, stripping the vigour, drama, and artistry from life supplied by unmediated ‘crude impulses’.

Where his previous work focused on the role of institutions in channelling impulse, Russell’s adoption of the James-Lange theory led him to ponder more direct solutions by which ‘the impulsive life [could] be utterly transformed by physiological means’, such as castration or the modification of various glands and other elements of the viscera associated with emotion then being discovered by researchers like Walter Cannon.⁸⁹ In a characteristic way, he proposed biological modification as an expectation that he personally found distasteful but which was potentially necessary. Such intervention might enable the survival of civilisation, even if in a more impoverished and authoritarian form. As he wrote:

It is very probable that the ultimate solution of all moral problems is to be sought in facts of this kind [i.e., modification of the physiological basis of emotion]. The education authority will decide what form of character is most virtuous, and the medical officers will produce this type of character. One of its distinguishing features will be, of course, respect for public bodies and acquiescence in the *status quo*. Therefore at that point human progress will cease.⁹⁰

Russell was characteristically ambivalent about this prospect – progress would cease, but so also would social strife. William Morris’ ‘epoch of rest’ would arrive, albeit in a form the Romantic revolutionary would have found entirely abhorrent. These psychological speculations deeply coloured Russell’s analysis of current affairs, and with especial force when he turned to the consolidation of the Bolshevik Revolution and the development of the Soviet state.

Russell showed great interest and sympathy in his observations of Soviet Russia between the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and early 1920, but remained non-committal about the broader meaning of the revolution. His journey to Russia with the Labour and trade union delegation in 1920 was crucial for clarifying his thoughts. As the *New Statesman* commented approvingly, ‘five weeks of Russia have changed him from a revolutionary – if, indeed, he ever really was one – into a reformist of the reformists’.⁹¹ The book he published on his return from Russia, *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism* (1920), has been counted

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ ‘The Bolshevik Contra Mundum’, *New Statesman* 18 December 1920, 344.

among the most incisive of British commentaries on the young regime.⁹² It combined an engaging travelogue with a critique of Bolshevik politics and the theories about human nature Russell saw as underpinning the revolutionary experiment. It joined chapters on his impressions of the personalities of famous revolutionary leaders with highly abstract sections on political theory. One chapter seems oddly out of place, at first glance, describing a model of political behaviour based around the interactions of four passions without reference to any current affairs. The theory of the passions Russell outlined, however, lay implicitly behind the whole narrative of the Russian Revolution given in the book and provided its unifying thread.

Russell's chief target for criticism was Marxism, which in Russell's mind was still the Marxism he depicted in his early study on German Social Democracy. This was the kind of common representation in which the 'iron law of wages' was a central plank of the Marxist theory and in which Marx simply 'accepted in their crudest form the tenets of orthodox English economists'.⁹³ Russell never seems to have deviated from this early study, repeating all of the same objections to Marxism in works over the following seven decades.⁹⁴ He saw Marxism, and therefore Bolshevism, as a hard and 'mechanical' Hegelianism rooted in nineteenth-century thought, which had been superseded among other thinkers by more advanced 'organic' theories. Marxism was both pre-Darwinian and therefore unable to grasp biological processes, and found psychology an impossible subject to comprehend 'since it attributes everything in politics to purely material causes'.⁹⁵ According to Russell, Marxism could acknowledge the existence of only one passion or desire in politics, that of material acquisitiveness or 'love of money',⁹⁶ stemming from the influence of

⁹² For example, by Stephen Richards Graubard, 'Review: Andrew J. Williams, *Labour and Russia*', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 23, 1 (Spring, 1991), 174.

⁹³ Bertrand Russell, *German Social Democracy: Six Lectures* (London, 1896), p. 8. For a particularly egregious example from the time of Russell's visit to Russia, see: Harold Laski, *Karl Marx: An Essay* (1921).

⁹⁴ Royden Harrison wrote that Russell never understood the purpose of Marx's intellectual project, but saw him as 'all one with Benthamite hedonism'. Royden Harrison, 'Bertrand Russell: from liberalism to socialism?', *Russell: The Journal of Bertrand Russell Studies* 6 (1986), 9.

⁹⁵ Bertrand Russell, *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism* (London, 1920), p. 38.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 136. In a review of Bukharin and Preobrazhensky's *ABC of Communism* (1922), he wrote: 'Marxian psychology maintains that men only love money, whereas they love power

the classical school of political economy. He ignored both the subtleties of the writing on the passions and sentiments in philosophers like Adam Smith, the strong influence of Hegel and Fourier on Marx regarding the passions, and Marx's critique of the 'vulgar economists' who did seem to take such a simplified view. Russell wrote:

All politics are governed by human desires. The materialist theory of history, in the last analysis, requires the assumption that every politically conscious person is governed by one single desire – the desire to increase his own share of commodities, and, further, that his method of achieving this desire will usually be to seek to increase the share of his class, not only his own individual share.⁹⁷

The only form taken by the herd-instinct that Marx could account for was therefore that of economic class united by common self-interest – the desire for ever more commodities, a fixed standard by which the rationality of behaviour could be calculated and counted upon.

Russell argued that modern psychology exploded this simplified model, diving 'much deeper into the ocean of insanity upon which the little barque of human reason insecurely floats'.⁹⁸ In place of the impoverished model of human emotionality he attributed to Marxism, Russell offered an alternative. Psychoanalysis had managed to dredge up from the 'ocean of insanity' not one, but 'four passions – acquisitiveness, vanity, rivalry, and love of power – [which] are, after the basic instincts, the prime movers of almost all that happens in politics', each operating through the mechanisms of suggestion and contagion described by the herd psychology of Wilfred Trotter.⁹⁹

As Marx had only understood the first of these four passions, his followers were left open to grave miscalculations in their political activity. For Russell, Bolshevik weaknesses in relation to the unaccounted for 'non-economic' passions explained their disastrous blunders and the degeneration of the revolution. Russell saw the lack of an adequate theory of the passions corrupting both sides of the key relationship he identified in revolutionary Russia, the masses and the leaders. Firstly, he argued that the malignant 'non-economic' passions and visceral basic instincts had been allowed to infect and modify the

quite as much. And in this respect Bolshevik politicians are not unlike the rest'. Bertrand Russell, 'Communism by Stages' in *Collected Papers vol. XV*, pp. 365-7.

⁹⁷ Russell, *Practice and Theory of Bolshevism*, p. 126.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

acquisitive goals of the revolutionary movement in Russia and across the world, compromising its rationality even on its own terms. The method of violent revolution, he wrote, ‘lets loose the wild beast, and gives a free rein to the primitive lusts and egoisms which civilisation in some degree curbs’.¹⁰⁰ The revolution for a better standard of living had been infused with hatred, despair, and a new form of religious dogmatism arising from the unchecked interaction of vanity, rivalry and love of power in Russian conditions. Bolshevism, as it appeared to Russell, combined the ‘characteristics of the French Revolution with those of the rise of Islam’.¹⁰¹ It had caused a ferocious descent into an intoxicating and de-individualising medieval collectivism based on intensified herd-instinct among the masses. This was a mass which could only be ruled by charismatic Bolshevik agitators, channelling the collective passions by intuition. Following from his earlier comments on biological modification, Russell feared that the growth of scientific knowledge about the emotions might transform this kind of rule from something like a religion into a definite science, as he wrote:

The larger events in the political life of the world are determined by the interaction of material conditions and human passions. The operation of the passions on the material conditions is modified by intelligence. The passions themselves may be modified by alien intelligence guided by alien passions. So far, such modification has been wholly unscientific, but it may in time become as precise as engineering.¹⁰²

‘It will then’, he argued, ‘depend upon the passions of the ruler how this power is used’.¹⁰³ Nothing could make certain that rulers would use this power for progress, rather than amplifying their power for satisfying their own unconscious ‘bad passions’.

This was especially troubling, because he thought that the Bolsheviks’ misunderstanding of the passions left them unprepared for the effects of power on their own psychology. Their theory forewarned and prepared them only for the corrupting effect of personal acquisitiveness, which they countered by becoming dogmatic and Puritanical on the Cromwellian model.¹⁰⁴ In a report to the cabinet on his return from Russia he described Lenin as ‘a fanatical visionary with the temperament of a Byzantine Monk, laborious, abstemious, inhuman,

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 128.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

not of any exceptional ability'.¹⁰⁵ They were entirely unprepared, however, for how the passions of vanity, rivalry, and love of power could pervert their revolutionary purity under the conscious guise of advancing the revolution. It was 'sheer nonsense to pretend that the rulers of a great empire such as Soviet Russia, when they have become accustomed to power, retain the proletarian psychology, and feel that their class interest is the same as that of the ordinary working man'.¹⁰⁶ Imperialistic, martial, and nationalistic emotions therefore crept into Bolshevism, disguised as pride in Russia's revolutionary achievements and the desire to spread revolution abroad.

Russell was not entirely negative about the impact of the Bolshevik Revolution even now, however. Even though it had already ossified in the country of its birth, strangled by adverse material conditions and a faulty understanding of human nature, he argued that the propaganda and example of Bolshevism taught the proletariat of the developed industrial countries how to hope once more, and had given them a spur towards translating their hope into action. For a short time, he began to call himself a communist, sharing their fundamental goal of abolishing class society in order to reduce the 'divisions and limitations of sympathy' created by such social barriers, though without adopting the method of class war and remaining deeply hostile to revolution.¹⁰⁷ In 1922, as a parliamentary candidate for the Labour Party, Russell's first pledge was, '1. To avert revolution', echoing the Labour manifesto.¹⁰⁸ He hoped that the Labour Party programme of opening up diplomatic and trade relations with Russia would force communism to lose its 'fiery quality' and mature into a creed which could 'appeal to men's reason and not only to their emotions and to their desperate need of hope'.¹⁰⁹

This ambivalence was compounded by the pro-Bolshevik attitude of Russell's key collaborator at this time. Dora Black, who would become Dora Russell in 1921, contributed a chapter in *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism*

¹⁰⁵ Bertrand Russell, 'Cabinet Report' in *Collected Papers vol. XV*, p. 423.

¹⁰⁶ Russell, *Practice and Theory of Bolshevism*, p. 155.

¹⁰⁷ Bertrand Russell, 'Communist Ideals (October 1921)' in *Collected Papers vol. XV*, p. 239.

¹⁰⁸ Bertrand Russell, 'Two Election Leaflets' in *Collected Papers vol. XV*, p. 395.

¹⁰⁹ Bertrand Russell, 'The Prospects of Bolshevik Russia (February 1921)' in *Collected Papers vol. XV*, p. 229.

on 'Art and Education'.¹¹⁰ The socialist and sexual reformer visited Russia independently of Bertrand Russell in summer 1920, and was far less negative about many of the same elements of the Soviet experience which Bertrand Russell despised. Dora Black saw the Bolshevik Revolution as an ambiguous struggle with the objective need to industrialise, given the fact that 'industry in its early stages seems everywhere doomed to be the enemy of beauty and instinctive life'.¹¹¹ The Bolsheviks too often seemed to support industrialisation as an end in itself, and she feared that 'the machine will ultimately conquer the Communist faith and grind out the human impulses'.¹¹² However, she also discerned a more promising spirit in the mass art of the revolution, which struck her as a creative fusion of the modern and medieval. She was particularly taken by the 1920 mass festival 'In Favour of a World Commune'. Dora Black described it as a Communist mystery-play, leading spectators through the rise of capitalism and the travails of the proletarian revolution:

... the effects obtained by the movement in the mass were almost intoxicating. The first entrance of the masses gave a sense of dumb and patient force that was moving in the extreme, and the frenzied delight of the dancing crowd at the victory of the French *communards* stirred one to ecstasy. The pageant lasted for five hours or more, and was exhausting emotionally as the Passion Play is said to be. I had the vision of a great period of Communist art...¹¹³

She hoped this tendency within the revolution would develop into a new all-embracing cultural form, suitable for organising the emotions and satisfying the instincts in the age of industrial mass society. It would thus contribute to solving the tense misalignment of inherited psychological instincts and industrial-scale organisation, which both Dora Black and Bertrand Russell saw as an important challenge for the whole of the modern world.

In 1923, drawing on their experiences of Soviet Russia and of a lecturing visit to China that followed, the Russells co-authored a work on the broader problem of industrial society and its attempts to resolve conflicts with the instincts. They outlined their belief that the basic antagonism of the modern world, driving its wars and revolutions, was not between capitalism and

¹¹⁰ See: Stephen Brooke, 'The Body and Socialism: Dora Russell in the 1920s', *Past & Present* 189 (November, 2005), 147-77.

¹¹¹ Dora Black in Russell, *Practice and Theory of Bolshevism*, p. 51.

¹¹² Black in *ibid.*, p. 54.

¹¹³ Black in *ibid.*, p. 64.

socialism. It was rather between the new needs of industrial civilisation, and its human material continuing to bear the instincts of herd-life beyond the circumstances that made these instincts useful. Far from seeing Trotter's herd-instinct as providing the emotional basis for socialism, they saw as it as the central problem:

Herd instinct – relic of a more barbaric phase – has to be diminished and herd complexes [i.e., class and nation] dissolved without dissolving the organisation of life that has been the means of increasing comfort and intelligence.¹¹⁴

In their framework, capitalism, revolutionary socialism, imperialism and anti-colonial nationalism were each to be seen as responses to this basic problem of modern social disharmony – much like the neurotic symptoms treated by Freud were attempts to resolve unconscious contradictions in individual life. The Bolshevik Revolution, they feared, was a historical warning of how civilisation might disintegrate in the conflicts of what Trotter called 'partial herds', if this problem was not addressed by a deep and global social reformation:

Industrialism, if we have been right in our previous analysis, requires for its harmonious working two things which do not exist at present, namely socialism and internationalism. In the absence of these two, the conflicting passions which it arouses are so fierce, and the means which it puts at our disposal for their gratification are so powerful, that it may be expected within the next hundred years to destroy both itself and our civilisation.¹¹⁵

Controlling, Reforming, and Removing the Emotions

Russell's encounter with psychology, war, and revolution gave rise to a number of enduring themes in his work, which have been hinted at in the preceding chronological discussion but which bear highlighting. Firstly, Russell often depicted revolution as a particular stage in a process of cyclical development driven by an oscillation between the primacy of calm reason and intense emotion. In *Prospects of Industrial Civilisation*, he and Dora Russell wrote that:

... human society, viewed throughout the period known to history, is partly cyclic, partly progressive; it resembles a tune played over and over again, but each time louder and with a fuller orchestra than before. In this tune there are quiet passages and passionate passages; there is a terrific climax, and then a time of silence until the tune begins again. Such a climax is exemplified by the period through which we are now passing or about to pass. If we think only of the one tune, it seems to end in nothingness; if we think only of the cycle, it seems that the whole process is futile. It is only by fixing our attention upon what is progressive, upon what distinguishes one

¹¹⁴ Bertrand & Dora Russell, *The Prospects of Industrial Civilisation* (London, 1923), p. 9.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

cycle from the next, that we become aware of the advance made from age to age, and the steady movement underlying the back-and-forth eddies of the surface.¹¹⁶

In his later, more famous *History of Western Philosophy* (1945) Russell depicted the development of thought in similar terms, stemming from an original opposition between civilised Greek classicism and the primitivistic, irrational cults of Dionysus, Bacchus, and Orpheus – a basic opposition repeated on a higher plane throughout the history of philosophy.¹¹⁷ In his own philosophical work, Russell was attracted to the eternal, rather than the fleeting and historically positioned - to mathematical logic most of all. He firmly took up a partisan stance against the Romanticisms and subjectivisms he encountered throughout the history of Western philosophy on behalf of eternal reason.

Of the passion-driven cycles of history, the periods of lull and periods of explosion, Russell was not always even so optimistic as in *Prospects of Industrial Civilisation*, in which each cycle was thought to recur on a higher level than previously. Russell commonly depicted historical cycles as a mere directionless repetition. Humanity would develop on the path of civilisation and technological development only until the point that the passions would impose a natural barrier and drag the race back to primitive conditions, a return to the beginning of the cycle without any accumulated gain:

If men's passions remain as destructive and terrible as they have shown themselves since the war began, every additional power which they acquire over the forces of nature will only increase the opportunities for mutual destruction. In that case, the progress of science will be a loss to mankind, from which nothing can save them except the utter barbarism into which their hatreds must ultimately plunge them. In that case, civilisation will have been a mistake, an evil dream, from which, through continually increasing horrors, men may at last revert into some primitive pastoral state out of which they may slowly climb to another cataclysm.¹¹⁸

Secondly, Russell placed heavy emphasis on the damaging results of the passions, rather than their positive worth as a social adhesive. Russell appeared to be most willing to write of positive emotions, the creative impulses, during the periods in which his political engagement was most intense, in particular during his time propagandising and organising for the NCF and the UDC. As Royden Harrison wrote, in 1916 and 1917 'there was no other period in his life

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 15.

¹¹⁷ Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy and its Connection with Political and Social Circumstances from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (New York, 1945).

¹¹⁸ Bertrand Russell, 'What Is Wanted' in *Collected Papers vol. XIII*, p. 317.

in which he rejoiced so much in the sense of comradeship'.¹¹⁹ His overwhelming concern with the dangers of the 'bad passions' followed his withdrawal from this activity after Brest-Litovsk, though throughout his life he at times revived his belief in the power of variously defined 'good' passions.

The positive appraisal of the 'creative' impulses clearly faded away by the time of Russell's work on Bolshevism and the problem of industrialised societies. In the former, the four passions he highlighted as moving forces in politics all fitted under his former category of 'possessive' impulses. Emotional relationships at the level of society, for Russell, were not seen as potentially mutually affirming and egalitarian, but were imagined only on the model of the master and the masses, the Bolshevik demagogue and the crowd, which presented dangers of corruption and degeneration. Russell praised Freud for showing 'what we are to think of the heart, which is ... the inspirer of atrocities against negroes, the late war, and the starvation of Russia'.¹²⁰ As he wrote:

I regard the whole romantic movement, beginning with Rousseau and Kant, and culminating in pragmatism and futurism, as a regrettable aberration. I should take 'back to the eighteenth century' as a battle-cry, if I could entertain any hope that others would rally to it.¹²¹

Russell's hatred of emotion was here intertwined with his hatred of the revolutionary and Romantic long nineteenth century. In Russell's mind, in the shadow of the Great War, the nineteenth century stood for the birth of irrationalism in philosophy and revolution in politics, rather than enduring Victorian stability and the triumph of liberalism that had been its ideological appearance before 1914. In wishing away this century, Russell was wishing away social conflict, mass politics, and strong transgressive passions, all the elements that for Hegel and Marx drove historical development.

This distrust of the emotions is reflected in the third theme: the need to observe and analyse political emotion scientifically, but not to share in it. Russell later claimed he had been able to remain aloof from the herd-passions of the war by his study of emotion, writing: 'what kept me from war fever was a desire for

¹¹⁹ Harrison, 'Bertrand Russell', 16.

¹²⁰ Bertrand Russell, 'Dr. Schiller's Analysis of *The Analysis of Mind* (November, 1922)' in *Collected Papers vol. IX: Essays on Language, Mind and Matter, 1919-1926* edited by Richard A. Rempel et al. (London, 1988), 39.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

intellectual sobriety, for viewing matters involving passionate emotion as if they were elements in a formula of symbolic logic'.¹²² This desire to maintain a distance from the forces of national conflict extended also to class conflict. Russell was usually not one to analyse the contending passions in order to throw himself into the balance on one side or another, but one who sought to stand above the fray devising schemes of reform allegedly unpolluted by emotion. For most of the time Russell was an outsider to political movements, critiquing pacifism and socialism as a distant friend rather than engaging in them deeply. As he had written in 1923, on the problems of the social forces shaping the modern world: 'I wish to consider these questions dispassionately, not as one of the fighters, but as a scientific investigator'.¹²³ This is entirely unlike the Marxists of the revolutionary socialist parties, as I shall examine in the fifth chapter. For them it was important to maintain contact with the workers by plunging into the stream of their passions, developing a meaningful emotional bond with the class and remaining open to its influence. From the later vantage point of 1935, Russell observed that their desire for passionate class conflict had led not to the victory of the proletariat. Class conflict had torn apart the social bonds that were the very fabric of civilisation and pushed the bourgeoisie towards tyranny through fear of revolution.¹²⁴ Far from facing a decadent, effete, and passionless bourgeoisie divorced from its original socio-economic function, which could easily and painlessly be swept away by social revolution, the strong passions of Communism were more than met by the equally strong passions of fascism and Nazism.

Finally, out of this period of war, revolution, and the New Psychology, Russell emerged convinced that the future progress of humanity depended on the scientifically-guided modification of human physiology so as to transform the emotions. In *Icarus* (1924), his contribution to the *To-day and To-morrow* series of short futurological books,¹²⁵ Russell highlighted both the need to

¹²² Bertrand Russell, 'Some Psychological Difficulties of Pacifism in War-Time' in *Collected Papers vol. XXI: How to Keep the Peace: The Pacifist Dilemma, 1935-38* edited by Andrew G. Bone et al. (London, 2008), p. 66.

¹²³ B. & D. Russell, *Prospects of Industrial Civilisation*, p. 19.

¹²⁴ Bertrand Russell, 'The Revolt Against Reason (1935)' in *Collected Papers vol. X*, p. 432.

¹²⁵ See: Max Saunders & Brian Hurwitz, 'The To-day and To-morrow Series and the Popularisation of Science: An Introduction', *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews* 34, 1 (2009), 3-8.

intervene in human passionate life to avoid mankind's final catastrophe and the authoritarian implications of such a development. If the latest theories were correct, the emotions were tied to the 'secretions of the ductless glands' and could be controlled by modifying such chemical secretions, but the details of the theory were less important than the idea that emotion had a physiological basis which would sooner or later be mapped:

All that is essential in our hypothesis is the belief that physiology will in time find ways of controlling emotion, which it is scarcely possible to doubt. When that day comes, we shall have the emotions desired by our rulers, and the chief business of elementary education will be to produce the desired disposition, no longer by punishment or moral precept, but by the far surer method of injection or diet. The men who will administer this system will have a power beyond the dreams of the Jesuits, but there is no reason to suppose they will have more sense than the men who control education to-day.¹²⁶

Russell saw a long age of oligarchical government characterised by the capricious and authoritarian use of this power by a new class of scientifically-guided masters of men, of whom Russia's new Bolshevik masters were but a faint intimation. After centuries of this enforced passivity, Russell argued, it might then be possible to release the hold of government on its transformed population. Only by this method could the historical cycle be broken and a harmonious socialist society become possible. Humanity would be engineered to feel the correct emotions attached to the correct objects in their environment, such that disharmony and social conflict would become impossible.

Otherwise, the growing power afforded by technology to act, combined with the growing disharmony between industrial society and the primitive emotions, would cause great destruction. Russell pithily defined the problem facing humanity: 'Will machines destroy emotions, or will emotions destroy machines?'.¹²⁷ His position was an utter rejection of Fourier's idea, the foundation of Fourier's passionate utopian socialism, that 'God made no bad passions'. As has been seen, Russell dwelt on the 'bad passions' at length. For him, the continued existence of civilisation, let alone its perfection in a libertarian socialist society, required men of science to use their advancing knowledge to correct God's careless mistake. They would suppress and remove the bad passions, which had retarded social development and created such evil,

¹²⁶ Bertrand Russell, *Icarus, or the Future of Science* (London, 1924), pp. 53-5.

¹²⁷ Bertrand Russell, 'Machines and the Emotions' in *Sceptical Essays* (London, 1928), p. 80.

and unnecessary, consequences for humanity as wars and revolutions. If an authoritarian world-government acting in often brutal ways was necessary to achieve this it was unfortunate but unavoidable, if humanity was to have a future at all.

Russell's often vehement hatred of emotion in the early 1920s was concerning for some theorists in the Labour Party. In 1923, C. Delisle Burns, who collaborated with Russell and G.D.H. Cole on a symposium concerning the state and the passions at the height of Russell's rhapsodizing about the creative impulses in 1916, attacked Russell for his 'alarming assumptions' that 'the deeper one digs into motives and impulses the more vile they appear'.¹²⁸ For Burns, the findings of psychoanalysis that Russell utilised had been unduly skewed by its medicalised focus on unhealthy individuals. Its proponents had produced 'superficial scratchings of the surface in the minds of abnormal "cranks"', which could only discredit the human race when generalised in the manner of Russell's social theory.¹²⁹ Russell was indeed prone to despair about humanity, writing in a private letter once that one should not blame Lloyd George for the brutalities of the war, for 'it is the human race that is vile. It is a disgrace to belong to it'.¹³⁰ Burns thought that this attitude would make the project of socialism entirely unsalvageable. It was instead necessary to reassert the fundamental decency of human beings and the positive aspects of the emotions making for sociability, and which therefore enabled the operation of reason in the first place:

... the implied assumption of socialism is not that men are beasts, but that they are men. Service of the community is not an unnatural effort of a fundamentally egoistic and snarling beast, but the universal and natural characteristic of men. Existing society, whatever its defects, is held together by natural forces and mental tendencies which are in the main good.¹³¹

While Burns thought it necessary to insist on this point in his review of Russell, his argument applied more generally to the Labour Party. Labour increasingly seemed to be losing its belief in the potentialities of the passions, sentiments, and emotions, which had been a fundamental underpinning to the socialist faith

¹²⁸ C.D.B., 'The Book of the Month', *Labour Magazine* 2, 7 (November, 1923), 316-7.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 317.

¹³⁰ Bertrand Russell quoted in Vellacott, *Conscientious Objection*, p. 136.

¹³¹ C.D.B., 'The Book of the Month', 317.

in the era of the socialist revival. While many like Russell, though not usually so explicit or extreme, who held a position on this question closer to the liberal ideal of restraint were drawn to the Labour Party and to socialism during the war, other thinkers who retained a more positive position regarding strong emotions were pushed away from one or both – to the strong passions of revolutionary Bolshevism, as we shall see in the following chapter, to eccentric spiritualism and Theosophy, or to fascism.

Conclusions

The Webb conception of the relative spheres of intellect and emotion on the one hand, and, on the other, of the right relation of the leaders to the average sensual man, is vehemently objected to by all the “A’s”, by the artist, the anarchist and the aristocrat ... The propertied class look upon us as their most insidious enemies; the revolutionary Socialist or fanatical sentimentalist see in us, and our philosophy, the main obstacle to what they call enthusiasm and we call hysteria. Our one comfort is that both sets of opponents can hardly be right.

- From the diary of
Beatrice Webb, 8
December 1913.¹³²

The previous chapter began with a quotation from Beatrice Webb’s diary in which she defined one of the leading issues of the age as working out the relation between emotion and reason most conducive to a constructive and democratic socialist politics. For the British Left throughout this decade, these questions were raised with most insight, and with most reference to the prevailing sociological, biological, and psychological literature, by members of the Fabian Society and others who associated closely with their conception of socialism. It is therefore fitting that this chapter should conclude with the answer she gave: of distrusting the emotions, seeking to subordinate them to the intellect by the accumulation of scientific knowledge, and of pathologising working-class or, rather, ‘mass’ unrest imagined to be driven by emotional ‘hysteria’, not self-interest, reason or sympathetic social emotions. As chapter six will show, Labour’s socialism was increasingly defined by the need to discipline and police

¹³² Webb in *Beatrice Webb’s Diaries*, pp. 15-6.

the pathological emotions of the working class as Labour, and its trade union base, were further integrated in the burgeoning corporatist state.

In his 1908 work, *Human Nature in Politics*, Wallas had criticised the ‘intellectualist fallacy’, seeing himself as an isolated voice striking against the tendency for political and social thinkers to overestimate human rationality, neglecting the insights of Darwinism and instinct psychology. By the book’s third edition in 1920 he was convinced that this criticism no longer applied.¹³³ On the contrary, after such events as the ‘anti-parliamentary and anti-intellectualist revolution in Russia’ the problem had become precisely its opposite: progressive thinkers were now in danger of over-emphasising the irrational to the point that, Wallas feared, they may become too disillusioned and hopeless to undertake a systematic political analysis of it.¹³⁴ *The New Statesman* similarly picked up on a widespread note of despair about human nature after the war, as great faiths raised among progressives by the Russian Revolution soured: Russia (much like the body extolled by Carpenter) had turned out to be ‘not a Sleeping Beauty but a Sleeping Beast’.¹³⁵ They tellingly wrote no longer of ‘The Spirit of Man’ (as was the title of an early article about the Russian Revolution, cited in the previous chapter), but of ‘The Animal Called Man’. Ernest Jones had written of the war as revealing ‘all the latent potentialities of man’:¹³⁶ by the war’s end it had disclosed to British socialists a baffling thing, containing within itself at one and the same time national chauvinism, democratic idealism, and terroristic Bolshevism.

However, their solution was not the combination of restraint and self-interest favoured by thinkers in the liberal tradition. By capturing the passions and emotions in the concept of biological instinct or psychoanalytical ‘affect’ and bringing them into the domain of positive scientific knowledge, there remained the possibility that advances in the human sciences or in political theory would provide tools with which to deal with the emotions more intelligently.

¹³³ Graham Wallas, *Human Nature in Politics* (Edinburgh, 1929), pp. vii-viii.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. viii.

¹³⁵ ‘The Animal Called Man’, *New Statesman* 11 January 1919, 293.

¹³⁶ Ernest Jones, ‘War and Individual Psychology’, *Sociological Review* 8, 3 (1915), 180.

Yet, socialism as such is nowhere recorded among the points of cultural contact for early British psychoanalysis by historians.¹³⁷ The encounter between socialist ideology and psychology has commonly been pushed further into the future, associated especially with the context of the rise of Fascism and Nazism in the 1930s and the construction of the welfare state from the 1940s onwards.¹³⁸ I have argued here that long before this, the socialism of important psychological figures was crucial to their scientific thought. Psychological thinking in turn influenced socialist thought far more extensively than has previously been acknowledged, governed by the desire to understand the emotions scientifically, for emotions were the motivating forces of great catastrophes: labour unrest, war, revolution, and the disintegration of empires. There had been an ongoing and mutual encounter between socialism and psychology beginning before the First World War. A similarly strong interest in psychoanalysis and the New Psychology was an extension of this engagement.

The links between the New Psychology and British Leninism have been explored even less. The fifth chapter will take as its focus Cedar and Eden Paul, two ‘psychological Bolsheviks’ who were influential in the Communist movement in the immediate post-war years, engaging with the questions of instinct and emotion as passionate believers in the world proletarian revolution.

¹³⁷ With the caveat that studies with a tight focus on individuals more often develop the links between their psychoanalytical and socialist ideas, for instance: John Forrester, ‘The psychoanalytic passion of J.D. Bernal in 1920s Cambridge’, *British Journal of Psychotherapy* 26, 4 (2010), 397-404; Mathew Thomson, “‘The Solution to his Own Enigma’: Connecting the Life of Montague David Eder (1865-1936), Socialist, Psychoanalyst, Zionist and Modern Saint’, *Medical History* 55, 1 (2011), 61-84.

¹³⁸ For instance, Jeremy Nuttall seemed to make the late 1930s the key moment in which socialists gravitated to psychology, from a previous overwhelming focus on the economic interpretation of politics. He wrote that John Strachey’s movement towards psychology from Marxism and, especially, Evan Durbin’s revisionist social democracy, provided ‘the most extended exploration of the relationship between psychology and politics’. Nuttall, *Psychological Socialism*, p. 49. On an international level, the stories of the Frankfurt School and Wilhelm Reich as opponents of fascism are each well-known examples of the encounter between Marxism and psychoanalysis.

**Chapter Five. Cedar and Eden Paul: British Bolshevism and
'Revolutionary Mass Psychology'.**

We live in an era which is revolutionising outlooks more fundamentally than they were revolutionised even by Copernican astronomy, Newtonian physics, Darwinian biology, or Marxist economics. The New Psychology provides the philosophical justification of bolshevism [sic], and supplies a theoretical guide for our efforts in the field of proletarian culture.

- Cedar and Eden Paul, 1921.¹

In the previous chapter, I showed how the ideas of the New Psychology were used to explain and critique Bolshevism by socialists and progressives. In this chapter I will show how early British supporters of the October Revolution engaged with this body of writing, and used New Psychological ideas about the nature and centrality of emotion to justify the Bolshevik seizure of power and the revolutionary project of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB). The two central figures of this chapter are the singer Gertrude Mary Davenport (1880-1972), known as Cedar Paul, and the physician Maurice Eden Paul (1865-1944), the son of the publisher Kegan Paul. Although they have often been overlooked by historians, I will suggest in this chapter that the Pauls and their New Psychological justification for Bolshevism not only played an important role among early British Communists, but had an impact on the international Communist movement. They were characteristic of a fascinating transitional period between earlier socialist cultures and the creation of a recognisably Marxist-Leninist party in Britain.

First, I will outline the historical and historiographical context of the British Marxist movement's response to the Russian Revolution, and of the emergence of the CPGB in 1920. Following this, I will introduce Cedar and Eden Paul, showing how they have been interpreted in the historiography of British Communism. I will then provide an overview of their ideas and activity, before discussing in depth their heterodox fusion of Marxism and the New Psychology inspired by the Bolshevik Revolution. I will then show how the

¹ Eden & Cedar Paul, *Proletcult* (London, 1921), p. 126.

themes of the New Psychology were more broadly present in the early British Communist movement. In the section after this exposition of their ideas, I will show their significance by discussing their crucial influence on Li Dazhao, the ‘first Chinese Marxist’, which has not previously been recognised. Having established the content and significance of the Pauls’ ideas, I will finally show the reaction against them from within the CPGB, which became intertwined with the Soviet campaign against ‘Trotskyism’ and ultimately led the pair to rescind their support for the party in the late 1920s.

British Marxism and the Russian Revolution

Though Marxism remained a weak force in British politics, by the beginning of 1917 the revolutionary Left had begun to recover the ground lost after the shock of the war and the disintegration of the Socialist International. The SDF, the largest Marxist group of the pre-war era, merged into the newly formed BSP in 1912 and shook off its militantly pro-war leadership of H.M. Hyndman and his allies in 1916. From 1916 its anti-war left-wing dominated the party. The BSP was granted affiliation to the Labour Party, providing it with a potentially larger working class audience for its socialist propaganda than any British Marxist group had before achieved. The environment for socialist agitation was also becoming less fraught than in the patriotic opening years of the war. At the grass-roots of the trade union movement the pre-war syndicalist impulse began to revive. Concentrated especially in the important engineering industries, a network of militant shop stewards arose in opposition to the more moderate trade union leaders who stuck solidly to the war-time policy of industrial peace.

The Russian Revolution was strongly supported by the far-left in Britain, who saw great promise in the Soviets and the Bolshevik Party. The BSP’s newspaper, *The Call*, articulated the common, triumphant sentiment in its immediate response to the February Revolution:

... whatever is in store for Russia herself, her revolution will have a most profound and far-reaching effect throughout the world. The Russian Revolution announces with mighty clarion calls the re-birth of the International – an International bleeding from a thousand wounds, almost expiring, but now redeemed by the daring and victorious proletariat of Russia. For can anyone imagine that its thundering echoes will not set the blood coursing quicker in the veins of the suffering proletariat in other countries, will not recall old, almost forgotten, but still slumbering and glorious

memories in the minds of Socialists all the world over, will not reveal to them, as by a flash of vivifying lightning, the way out of the tragic impasse into which they have allowed themselves to be driven by the sinister forces of capitalist society, will not awaken their international consciousness, will not instil in their breasts a new courage, will not break the mesmeric spell in which they have been held by the terrors and by the false ideas of the last two years and half?²

After the war-time industrial truce came to an end in 1918, the new courage of Britain's 'suffering proletariat' was soon in evidence. The Triple Alliance, created in 1915 to coordinate the activities of the mining, railway, and transport trade unions, spearheaded a wave of strikes.³ An estimated 2.4 million British workers were involved in industrial disputes in 1919, more than ten times the comparable number for 1916.⁴ Additionally, the unrest of 1918-1921 spread beyond the industries represented by the Triple Alliance, taking in traditionally supplicant groups including soldiers and even the police.⁵ 'Red Clydeside' was the most famous episode of this wave of unrest, exhibiting near insurrectionary levels of popular militancy and support for Bolshevism.⁶

This was the golden age of 'direct action' in Britain, and labour unrest took on threateningly political overtones: for nationalisation of the mines, for workers' involvement in the management of industries, against the British occupation of Ireland and for 'Hands Off Russia'. The Labour movement united against the intervention in the Russian civil wars,⁷ and even the most moderate trade union leaders supported the threat of a general strike, over British support for Poland in the Russo-Polish war of 1920. Councils of Action were formed across the country in preparation for such an unprecedented show of industrial strength. Although these councils were driven more by pacifistic than revolutionary sentiment, it was a situation which the far-left saw as having the potential to develop into a contest for state power.⁸ Recognised to be highly

² 'Long Live the Revolution!', *The Call* 22nd March 1917, 1.

³ See: P.S. Bagwell, 'The Triple Industrial Alliance, 1913-1922' in *Essays in Labour History vol. II: 1886-1923* edited by Asa Briggs & John Saville (London, 1971), pp. 96-128.

⁴ James E. Cronin, 'Labour Insurgency and Class Formation: Comparative Perspectives on the Crisis of 1917-1920 in Europe', *Social Science History* 4, 1: The Skilled Worker and Working-Class Protest (Winter, 1980), 128.

⁵ Owen Jones, 'The "Spirit of Petrograd"? The 1918 and 1919 Police Strikes', *What Next?* 31 (2007), 67-77.

⁶ John Foster, 'Working-class mobilisation on the Clyde 1917-20' in *Challenges of Labour: Central and Western Europe, 1917-1920* edited by Chris Wrigley (London, 1993), pp. 149-75.

⁷ A minority, including leading figures like Hyndman and the Webbs, supported the British intervention against Soviet Russia.

⁸ White, 'Council of Action'.

unlikely in historical retrospect,⁹ Lloyd George's Cabinet prepared the state to meet a British revolution. They saw it as a serious possibility during these years – especially given the possibility that further Soviet governments might succeed in central and eastern Europe, which might intensify the threat to Britain.¹⁰

The formation of the Communist International (Comintern) in Moscow in March 1919 put the creation of a British Communist Party on the agenda. According to the CPGB's official historian James Klugmann, 'history it seemed was shouting aloud for a Communist Party',¹¹ but in the event directives from Lenin and other leading Bolsheviks, and material support from the Comintern, had much to do with its creation.¹² As Eric Hobsbawm wrote, the marriage of the 'national left and the October Revolution ... was based both on love and convenience'.¹³ Unity talks were held even between revolutionary socialists and the ILP, as the ILP grassroots voted to leave the Socialist International and explore the possibility of working with the Comintern.

A long series of discussions between the leaders of the ILP and representatives of the Comintern led to mutual acrimony and a permanent rift, however, rather than anti-capitalist unity. Even among committed supporters of Bolshevism, the attempt to form a single Communist Party was a fractious process. At one time there existed three separate parties, each claiming to be the official British section of the Comintern. The most intractable disputes were over whether Communists should participate in parliament or reject bourgeois politics altogether, and whether the new party should affiliate to the Labour

⁹ See: Chris Wrigley, 'The state and the challenge of labour in Britain 1917-20' in *Challenges of Labour: Central and Western Europe, 1917-1920* edited by Chris Wrigley (London, 1993), pp. 262-88.

¹⁰ See: Keith Jeffery & Peter Hennessy, *States of Emergency: British Governments and Strikebreaking since 1919* (London, 1983).

¹¹ Klugmann, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain*, p. 13.

¹² Henry Pelling, Walter Kendall, and Raymond Challinor each argued that the CPGB was an alien imposition, distorting the British Left in different ways – though characteristically, they disagreed fundamentally on how the Left would have developed otherwise. As Andrew Thorpe wrote, 'Desire for socialist unity, internationalism and positive enthusiasm for Bolshevik Russia were all more important than the machinations of Russian emissaries. Without such factors, no amount of Russian cash could have swung the British far left'. See: Pelling, *British Communist Party*; Kendall, *Revolutionary Movement in Britain*; Challinor, *British Bolshevism*; Andrew Thorpe, 'The Communist International and the British Communist Party' in *International Communism and the Communist International, 1919-43* edited by Tim Rees & Andrew Thorpe (Manchester, 1998), p. 68.

¹³ Eric Hobsbawm, 'Problems of Communist History', *New Left Review* 1, 54 (March-April, 1969), 86.

Party. These issues pitted most of the BSP against the Socialist Labour Party (SLP), Sylvia Pankhurst's Workers' Socialist Federation (WSF), and other small groups who sought a more purist revolutionary position – Lenin's direct intervention in *Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder* (1920) helped to settle these questions in favour of the BSP. The CPGB was officially founded in the summer of 1920, to coincide with the Second Congress of the Comintern. Pankhurst and others on the ultra-left initially remained aloof from the CPGB, forming the Communist Party (British Section of the Third International) (CP[BSTI]). In January 1921, however, the CP(BSTI) merged into the CPGB. Until 1926 the CPGB membership hovered between c.3,000 and c.5,000 members.¹⁴ The party never did manage to affiliate to Labour, despite repeated attempts.

British Communists believed that the Bolshevik Revolution marked the beginning of the epoch in which capitalism would be overthrown across the world. The opening editorial of the CPGB's journal, the *Communist Review*, argued that Britain was on the cusp of a period of great mass movements and industrial unrest, as opposed to the sectional and partial struggles of the labour movement previously, which had formed the character of the ILP and the Labour Party.¹⁵ From their perspective, 'mass-solidarity', the moral and emotional conditions necessary for a successful 'mass-strike' as a precursor to a working-class revolution, had become a living reality with the foundation of the Triple Alliance and the rapid growth of trade unionism after the war. A relatively strong Marxist culture arose, centred around the 'autodidact' working-class intellectuals of the Labour Colleges and CPGB.¹⁶ The Communists felt the time was ripe to replace the outdated leadership of the workers' movement with an organisation comfortable in the use of this weapon for revolutionary purposes.

However, the CPGB was formed as the post-war unrest reached its height. The party struggled to win over the workers' movement in a context of trade union retrenchment, the defence of living standards under capitalism, and

¹⁴ See: Andrew Thorpe, 'The Membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1920-1945', *Historical Journal* 43, 3 (September, 2000), 777-800.

¹⁵ 'Review of the Month', *Communist Review* 1, 1 (May, 1921), 1-2. The journal was then edited by William Paul, no relation to Cedar and Eden Paul.

¹⁶ Macintyre, *A Proletarian Science*.

a weakening will to fight for anything more. The change of atmosphere became particularly marked after ‘Black Friday’ in April 1921, when the transport and rail unions declined to support the miners and the Triple Alliance broke down. Communists felt their analysis of the trade union and Labour Party leaders vindicated, but even so, their own inability to effectively replace these leaders was exposed.

In these conditions, critical voices rose to the fore within the party, urging a more thorough break with earlier socialist traditions towards the Bolshevik ideal of a disciplined vanguard party. In 1922, a Party Commission made up of Rajani Palme Dutt, Harry Pollitt, and Harry Inkpin produced a report on organisation with the aim of reforming the party’s structures and working practices, to bring the CPGB into line with the Comintern’s theses.¹⁷ This marked the start of the ‘Bolshevisation’ of the party, a process which culminated in what some historians have called ‘Stalinisation’ after the disappointment of the General Strike in 1926: the attempt to create a tightly-controlled and disciplined party, dominated by functionaries whose first loyalty was to Moscow, following a shifting political line in the interests of the Soviet state.¹⁸

¹⁷ *Report on Organisation: Presented by the Party Commission to the Annual Conference of the Communist Party of Great Britain* (1922).

¹⁸ Historians continue to debate the nature of the relationship between the Comintern and its national sections – including the extent and nature of the CPGB’s subordination to the Comintern, and the ways this relationship changed over time. For the argument that Comintern control of the CPGB has been over-exaggerated, see: Fishman, *British Communist Party*; Thorpe, ‘Comintern “Control”’; Matthew Worley, ‘Reflections on Recent British Communist Party History’, *Historical Materialism* 4 (1999), 241-61; Thorpe, *British Communist Party*. For the counter-argument, see work by John McIlroy and Alan Campbell, such as John McIlroy, ‘Critical Reflections on Recent British Communist Party History’, *Historical Materialism* 12 (2003), 127-53; McIlroy & Campbell, ‘A Peripheral Vision’. See also: Keith Laybourn, ‘A Comment on the Historiography of Communism in Britain’, *American Communist History* 4, 2 (2005), 159-66; Newsinger, ‘Recent Controversies’; Kevin Morgan, ‘The Trouble with Revisionism: Communist History with the History Left In’, *Labour / Le Travail* 63 (Spring, 2009), 131-55.

Interpretations of Cedar and Eden Paul in the Historiography

Cedar and Eden Paul appear commonly but fleetingly in the historiography of British Communism. They were so prolific, and involved so broadly in the international labour movement and avant-garde circles, that historians have interpreted them in ways that differ greatly depending on the chief focus of the study. The unifying threads of their thought have thus been somewhat lost. The scale of the impact which they had on their contemporaries in the international Communist movement has also gone unrecognised.

Klugmann's 'official' Communist Party history of this period contains no mention of them, nor any indication that the party's early theoretical works contained anything but a fully-formed Marxism-Leninism, apart from the practical anti-parliamentary and Labour Party questions, which were soon settled by Lenin's direct intervention.¹⁹ In his study of British socialist attitudes towards democracy in relation to the Russian Revolution, Ian Bullock referred to them as supporters of the Bolshevik dictatorship without acknowledging their psychologically-grounded critique of parliamentary democracy.²⁰ For Edwin Roberts, the Pauls were unimportant and quickly dismissed:

Among the first wave of middle-class intellectuals who joined the Communist cause were enthusiasts for social engineering such as Raymond Postgate and Eden and Cedar Paul, who quickly tried to establish reputations as experts on the new Soviet science of social revolution. They and many like them soon became estranged from the organisational structure of the CPGB. More important were the internationalists and popularisers, such as R. Palme Dutt and Ralph Fox...²¹

Stuart Macintyre also depicted them as middle-class interlopers:

In the labour colleges, for example, there was considerable resentment against the middle-class intellectuals who came into the Plebs League during and immediately after the war. Two books written by Eden and Cedar Paul, *Creative Revolution* (1920) and *Proletcult* (1921), attracted criticism for their obscure vocabulary – they coined words like 'ergatocracy' to replace the ugly 'dictatorship of the proletariat' – and generally schoolmarmish tone.²²

¹⁹ Klugmann, *Communist Party of Great Britain vol. I*.

²⁰ Bullock, *Romancing the Revolution*, pp. 180, 310.

²¹ Roberts, *Anglo-Marxists*, p. 60.

²² Macintyre, *A Proletarian Science*, pp. 99-100.

The Pauls did provoke such critical responses. The equally middle-class Raymond Postgate expressed some of the frustration felt by many of their readers, albeit in a generally positive review:

There rush out in a stream the names of all the psychologists and psychoanalists [sic] they can think of. Exactly the same effect as this chapter gives can be produced by throwing a stone suddenly into a populated duckpond, or more easily by just listening to rooks settling down for the night. You can hear them caw: 'Freud! Freud! Jung! Baudouin! Trotter! MacDougall! [sic] ... New Psychology! New Pedagogy! Ego-Complex! Herd-Complex! Sex-Complex! We translated it! Caw! Caw!'²³

However, they also had staunch defenders, and even in those critical letters cited by Macintyre praise for their project generally outweighed criticism of their language. As will be shown, many Marxists were influenced by their attempt to introduce the New Psychology into the Communist movement.

James Young criticised the Pauls for an article they wrote in reply to the French anarchist Augustin Hamon,²⁴ disputing the idea that particularly Scottish national characteristics drove 'Red Clydeside':

... he [Hamon] upset such English Leninists as Eden and Cedar Paul by attributing the much greater intensity of the class struggle in Scotland than in England to 'racial differences'. From the Pauls' Leninist perspective ... they could not concede that it might have been a combination of both local industrial conditions and national temperament.²⁵

For Young, they thus represented 'authoritarian-socialism-from-above and the heresy-hunting Leninist orientation', committed to an 'abstract proletarian universalism'.²⁶ The source he cited is from 1918, before any British socialist could meaningfully be called a Leninist, and at least two years before the Pauls joined the CPGB as two of its most openly heterodox members. In a recent article on Bogdanov's attempt to create a Proletcult International (Kultintern) independent of the CPSU and the Comintern, John Biggart presented the Pauls

²³ R.W. Postgate, 'Book Reviews: A Most Excellent Book', *The Communist* 22.10.1921, 10.

²⁴ With whom, their diary records, they regularly corresponded during the years of the war.

²⁵ James D. Young, 'Marxism and the Scottish National Question', *Journal of Contemporary History* 18, 1 (January, 1983), 145. See also: Tony Dickson, 'Marxism, Nationalism and Scottish History', *Journal of Contemporary History* 20, 2: Working-Class and Left-Wing Politics (April, 1985), 323-36; James D. Young, 'Nationalism, "Marxism" and Scottish History', *Journal of Contemporary History* 20, 2. Working-Class and Left-Wing Politics (April, 1985), 337-55.

²⁶ Young, 'Nationalism', 339.

in an entirely opposite light to Young. He described them as ‘amongst the most enthusiastic supporters of the Proletkult idea outside of Russia’, advocating an ‘open Marxist’ approach contrary to the centralising tendencies of the Communist Party.²⁷

Sue Bruley’s work has gone the furthest to highlight how the Pauls grounded their communist beliefs in psychological ideas.²⁸ In her study of the gender politics of the CPGB she emphasised their campaigns in favour of birth-control as members of the Malthusian League, their activities for women’s emancipation, and their promotion of sexual freedom and frankness,²⁹ including around homosexuality.³⁰ Hall wrote of socialist feminist Stella Browne’s friendship with the Pauls and appreciation of their work as part of the movement for sexual freedom.³¹ Linehan, in his study of ‘the communist experience’ of life, the leisure activities and cultural norms around which life in the interwar CPGB was structured, wrote of Cedar Paul’s contributions regarding communist child-rearing and of the pair’s commitment to Proletkult.³²

Other than Bruley, Morgan has provided the most extensive treatment of the pair in his study of Beatrice and Sidney Webb. Cedar and Eden Paul were used to ‘help illustrate the path to *Soviet Communism*’, the famous apologia for Stalin’s USSR first published in 1935.³³ Inevitably given this project, Morgan assimilated the Pauls to the Webbs, writing of Eden Paul that ‘though not conspicuously identified with the Fabian Society, his political philosophy was a quintessentially Fabian one’.³⁴ For Morgan, their work in the 1920s anticipated

²⁷ John Biggart, ‘Alexander Bogdanov and the short history of the *Kultintern*’ (August, 2016) [online] <https://bogdanovlibrary.org/current-research/> [accessed 21.4.2017], 11-2.

²⁸ Bruley, *Leninism, Stalinism, and the Women’s Movement*, pp. 72-6.

²⁹ Eden Paul contributed to the futurological *To-day and To-morrow* series with *Chronos; or, the Future of the Family* (London, 1930). He imagined the disintegration of the family, the end of patriarchy and monogamy, and the emergence of sexual freedom as love and reproduction became decoupled. These arguments were restated more effectively by the ‘Bolshevik eugenicist’ H.J. Muller in *Out of the Night: A Biologist’s View of the Future* (London, 1936).

³⁰ Eden Paul even discussed his own youthful homosexual tendencies. As Bruley wrote, ‘It would have been interesting to know what party headquarters made of such revelations!’

³¹ Lesley A. Hall, *The Life and Times of Stella Browne: Feminist and Free Spirit* (London, 2011), pp. 64, 81, 86.

³² See: Linehan, *Communism in Britain*, pp. 16, 21, 165-7.

³³ Morgan, *Bolshevism and the British Left vol. II*, p. 17.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

the ‘two aged mortals, both nearing their ninth decade’³⁵ who discovered a new civilisation in the Soviet Union:

Paul’s instantaneous conversion to communism thus seems to exemplify the correspondence stressed by [Royden] Harrison ‘between the value system of certain late-Victorian professional people and the “strange syndrome of Soviet Marxism under Stalin”’. Indeed, the Pauls’ book *Creative Revolution* (1920) might be taken as the first major document of that ‘correspondence’, were it not that Stalin was all but unheard of...³⁶

I would contest this characterisation of the Pauls. The fact that they chose to translate Seibert’s *Red Russia* in 1932,³⁷ which reads like the antithesis of the Webbs’ study of Soviet Communism, raises questions about whether they can best be seen as precursors of the later Webbs. Rather, I argue that they were central figures of a specific moment on the British far-left, between the Bolshevik Revolution and the codification of a rigid Marxist-Leninist ideology in the mid-1920s campaign against Trotskyism. As Kendall wrote:

The Communist parties have become a part of the political establishment and this has led their histories to be interpreted largely at their face value, commencing at their formation, or shortly beforehand, and then supplying a ‘Communist’ history from this point forward, for all the world as if the parties had been, like Venus, born whole out of the foam.³⁸

During this early period of the British Communist movement, however, the meaning of the Russian Revolution remained open to a variety of Marxist interpretations, including that of the Pauls. As the final section will show, it was only in the course of the factional struggles of the 1920s that such heterodoxy was pushed out of the movement, and only in retrospect that it seems entirely alien to the British Communist tradition.

³⁵ Sidney & Beatrice Webb, *Soviet Communism: A New Civilisation? Vol. I* (London, 1936), p. xii.

³⁶ Morgan, *Bolshevism and the British Left vol. II*, p. 156. Harrison makes this argument in Royden Harrison, ‘Sidney and Beatrice Webb’ in *Socialism and the Intelligentsia*, pp. 35-89.

³⁷ Theodor Seibert was a member of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party, though seems to have joined after he had written *Red Russia*, which has the flavour of heterodox Marxism rather than Nazism.

³⁸ Kendall, *Revolutionary Movement*, p. ix.

Cedar and Eden Paul: From Rationalism to Bolshevism

Birth-control, eugenics, socialism, and the endowment of motherhood, are but fresh extensions of the principle of man's control over nature, that nature of which man himself, and man's social environment, are parts. The control of inanimate nature is of very old date. It began as soon as man became man; it marked his emergence from the status of merely instinctive animality. But the application of conscious purpose and deliberate will to man's own nature, and to the social milieu wherein 'human nature' is so largely fashioned, are of comparatively recent growth, and are full of hope for the future.

- Eden and Cedar Paul,
1917.³⁹

Cedar and Eden Paul represented a trend within early British Communism which sought to link the concerns of the New Psychology to the project of socialist revolution. They appear frequently in the historiography, but schizophrenically: sometimes as Fabians or 'English Leninists', psychoanalysts or sexual reformers, pedagogues or eugenicists. The lack of deep historical attention given to their work represents a gap in our knowledge of the socialist culture of this period, especially concerning how British socialists assimilated the lessons of the Russian Revolution. Here I will provide an overview of their political and intellectual activities, demonstrating the profound impact which the Great War, the Bolshevik Revolution, and the New Psychology had on them.

Eden Paul trained and worked as a physician, taking patients at least until the mid-1930s. As a medical student in the 1880s he worked alongside Beatrice Webb on Charles Booth's famous inquiry into poverty in London.⁴⁰ Paul's medical work took him to Japan in the 1890s, where he became a correspondent for *The Times* covering the China-Japan War in 1895, and then practiced medicine in China, Malaysia, and Singapore. In 1897 he founded the *Nagasaki Press*, and served as its editor until 1899. Gertrude Mary Davenport or Cedar Paul was musically-trained, deriving an income from singing and entertaining. She performed a show of Hebridean folk-songs and stories in 1922 commercially, as well as singing for labour movement events. She was active in

³⁹ 'Editorial Summary and Conclusions' in *Population and Birth-Control: A Symposium* edited by Eden & Cedar Paul (New York, 1917), p. 296.

⁴⁰ Beatrice Webb, *My Apprenticeship* (London, 1926), p. 268; *The Letters of Sidney and Beatrice Webb vol. III: Pilgrimage 1912-1947* edited by Norman Mackenzie (London, 1978), pp. 441-2.

the women's organisations of the labour movement especially. Cedar took Eden Paul's name very quickly after the start of their collaboration in 1912, though they were only married in 1936 – his second marriage. In the *Labour Who's Who* (1927), their chief recreation was listed as 'tramping'.⁴¹

The Pauls were active in the international socialist movement before the war. Eden Paul joined the ILP in 1907, and Cedar Paul in 1912, while both maintained memberships of the French Socialist Party between 1912 and 1914. Eden Paul enjoyed friendships with the Fabian Society's leading figures, having worked with Beatrice Webb on Charles Booth's famous inquiry in the 1880s.⁴² Their meticulously maintained diary for the years 1914 to 1917, which they mostly spent translating literature, learning Russian, and growing parsnips in France, records correspondence with many of the leading figures of European and American socialism.⁴³

After the war, the Pauls moved towards the Left. They became involved in the Plebs' League, an organisation which promoted Marxist working-class education. John McIlroy has written of their efforts to broaden the curriculum of the Independent Working-Class Education (IWCE) movement, supporting education which was holistic rather than narrowly focused on developing practical labour movement skills.⁴⁴ Hoping to broaden the scope of what working-class emancipation implied, they attempted to introduce the ideas of Alexander Bogdanov's 'Proletcult' into the British socialist movement and encourage an 'alternative cultural formation'.⁴⁵ This was linked to their interest in psychoanalysis and sexual reform. Both were active members of the British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology (BSSSP), the group which haunted the

⁴¹ *The Labour Who's Who 1927* (London, 1927), p. 165.

⁴² Webb, *My Apprenticeship*, p. 268; *Letters of Sidney and Beatrice Webb vol. III*, pp. 441-2.

⁴³ Including notables from the ILP such as Ramsay MacDonald, Philip Snowden, and John Bruce Glasier, revolutionaries like Noah Ablett and Sylvia Pankhurst, Russian socialists like Ivan Maisky, the French anarchist Augustin Hamon, the future American Trotskyist Max Eastman, and the Swiss historian Wilhelm Oechsli, among many other notable figures too numerous to name. See: Eden & Cedar Paul Diary, August 1914 to June 1917, Bodleian Libraries Oxford, MS.Eng.e.3086.

⁴⁴ John McIlroy, 'Independent Working Class Education and Trade Union Education and Training' in *A History of Modern British Adult Education* edited by Roger Fieldhouse (Leicester, 1996), pp. 271-5.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 272. Proletcult sought for the working class to develop 'its own *socialist forms of thought, feeling, and daily life*, independent of alliances or combinations of political forces'. See: Lynn Mally, *Culture of the Future: The Proletcult Movement in Revolutionary Russia* (Oxford, 1990), p. 38.

1917 Club, and Eden Paul presented original papers on psychoanalysis there.⁴⁶ Graham Richards' comment on their role in disseminating psychoanalytic literature nicely encapsulates both their importance for British psychoanalysis and their relative neglect by its historians: '... the omnipresent Eden and Cedar Paul are ever on hand to translate ... relevant German works (I know nothing about this pair except that they were brother and sister and also translated works in a wide variety of other academic genres)'.⁴⁷

Spurred by the Russian Revolution, they left the ILP in 1919 in search of a more revolutionary form of politics. Between 1919 and 1921 they made contacts with various revolutionary groups, attracted especially to the 'ultra-left' anti-parliamentary Communists like the SLP and Pankhurst's WSF. Eden Paul chaired the second day of the conference which established the CP(BSTI) before ultimately joining the CPGB, probably in January 1921 when the two Communist parties merged. In August 1922 they attended the fourth Comintern congress in Moscow as translators.⁴⁸ During the 1920s they contributed to the publications of the Plebs' League and the CPGB, and produced their own original theoretical works. The Pauls published widely in journals across the socialist spectrum even after joining the CPGB, from translations of philosophy for the *New Age* to writing and reviewing literature for the *Socialist Review*.⁴⁹ Beatrice Webb records that the pair left the CPGB in the late 1920s, concerned that the Comintern had begun 'taking its orders from the Central Committee [of the CPSU]'.⁵⁰ Though maintaining 'friendly relations' with the CPGB, they returned to the Labour Party. There is no evidence to suggest they renounced their Marxism, however: their surviving diary for 1928-9 shows that they cultivated connections with the anti-Bolshevik ultra-left, including with the Council Communist Otto Rühle.⁵¹

⁴⁶ *Labour Who's Who*, p. 165.

⁴⁷ Richards, 'Britain on the Couch', 198.

⁴⁸ Sue Bruley, *Leninism, Stalinism, and the Women's Movement in Britain, 1920-1939* (London, 1986), p. 73.

⁴⁹ Otto Weininger, 'Metaphysics - I', *New Age* 30, 11, 12 January 1922, 131-3; Cedar Paul, 'Wandering Hearths', *Socialist Review* 15 (January-March, 1918), 34-7; Eden & Cedar Paul, 'The Appreciation of Comic Verse', *Socialist Review* 18 (April-June, 1921), 171-82.

⁵⁰ *Letters of Sidney and Beatrice Webb vol. III*, p. 442.

⁵¹ See: Eden & Cedar Paul Diary 'Winter Abroad', 1928-1929, Bodleian Libraries Oxford, MS.Eng.e.3087.

By 1917, the Pauls were professional translators working in a variety of genres and languages, including German, French, Italian, and Russian. They were especially notable for their translations of the cosmopolitan writer and pacifist Stefan Zweig, and for psychoanalytical works in German and French. Though there are duplicates, the British Library catalogue lists nearly two hundred translations credited to Eden and Cedar Paul. Among these are works of such importance for the Communist movement as Marx's *Capital* (1930),⁵² Nikolai Bukharin and Yevgeny Preobrazhensky's *The ABC of Communism* (1922), and Joseph Stalin's *Leninism* (1928-1933). They also saw fit to translate important works critical of socialism and Bolshevism, even during their period of intense commitment to the Communist movement, such as Aurel Kolnai's *Psychoanalysis and Sociology* (London, 1921), Henrik de Man's *The Psychology of Socialism* (London, 1928), and Theodor Seibert's *Red Russia* (London, 1932) – a fact which raised the ire of some of their comrades.

The Pauls also contributed original works of socialist theory in books and articles. In 1909, Eden Paul defined socialism as the creation of an 'orderly and co-operative organic community', out of the anarchy of capitalism, in which people had come to share 'common ideas and aims'.⁵³ Even before the war, Paul was unusually attentive to the debates in continental Marxism for a British socialist.⁵⁴ He sympathised with the 'revisionist' German Social Democrat Eduard Bernstein, who advocated a non-dialectical form of Marxism which left little room for the passions of class struggle and revolution. In a 1910 pamphlet, Paul justified Bernstein's approach as a fusion of Darwin and Marx, an ideology for an age which could 'no longer anticipate the salvation of society by means of revolutionary changes [but only] as the outcome of organic growth'.⁵⁵ As well as Bernstein, Paul was strongly influenced by Ramsay MacDonald's depiction of society as an organism evolving gradually and seamlessly towards socialism,

⁵² This seems to have followed from their friendship and appreciation of David Riazanov, the Marxist archivist who was implicated (along with Isaac Rubin) in a supposed Menshevik plot in the early 1930s, and was ultimately executed in 1938. Their diary records numerous letters to and from Riazanov.

⁵³ Eden Paul, *Socialism and Science* (Keighley, 1909), p. 2.

⁵⁴ Scholars have challenged the stereotypical image of the British socialist movement as parochial and cut-off from continental trends. Even given this revision, however, the Pauls' deep interest in continental socialism is striking.

⁵⁵ Eden Paul, *Karl Marx and Modern Socialism* (Manchester, 1910), pp. 15-6.

and by the vision of an achieved scientific society depicted in Wells' *Modern Utopia*.

For Eden Paul at this time, Marx's preoccupation with class struggle and revolution was a pre-Darwinian error, inherited from Jacobinism and Hegelian philosophy. Scientific socialism meant simply removing impediments to inevitable organic development, as he wrote:

We have learned that human society is subject to an orderly development, to an evolutionary process; scientific thought teaches us that the next stage in that evolution is to be the transition from competition to co-operation. And where man is concerned, it is no longer necessary that evolution should be blind; we can accelerate our progress by the deliberate shaping of our own destinies.⁵⁶

Such an organic community, once achieved, would be able to apply scientific principles in a way impossible under the capitalist mode of production. This would not be the undemocratic imposition of an elite of scientific specialists, but would come through democratic methods of gradual reform and education, as Enlightenment ideals infused the broader culture.

Cedar and Eden Paul were self-consciously 'rationalist'. This was especially clear in their unpublished study of the Stoic philosopher Epictetus. Epictetus based his ethical philosophy on the familiar dualism of mind and body: the mind was a spark of 'divine reason', while the body was an animal and earthly element 'exposed to hindrance'.⁵⁷ Stoic philosophy insisted on the need to subordinate the latter to the former. Eden Paul denied this ontological dualism, but believed that Epictetus' argument could be restated in the language of psychology without losing its fundamental meaning. 'Experience and simple reasoning' showed that man possessed 'certain passions and instincts in common with the brutes, and that he possesses also a rational faculty or power of judgement by means of which those passions and instincts may be controlled and guided, and (in suitable cases) resisted and annulled'.⁵⁸ As Eden Paul wrote:

The mainspring of action is as much emotion as reason – perhaps even more the former than the latter; but as I showed in my essay on Rationalism, while emotion is the driving force, we should as far as may be make reason the guide – and for this

⁵⁶ Paul, *Socialism and Science*, p. 4.

⁵⁷ Eden & Cedar Paul, 'Epictetus Notebook', 1911-2, Bodleian Libraries Oxford, MS.Eng.e.3088, p. 7. See the discussion in Chapter One, on the place of the passions as qualities of 'moved movers'. Being associated with the body, and with 'hindrance', it was the passions which denied human agents radical freedom and placed them within a deterministic scheme (though Eden Paul was careful to distinguish 'determinism' from 'fatalism').

⁵⁸ E. & C. Paul, 'Epictetus Notebook', pp. 19-20.

we require the trained and disciplined reason, and the reasoned control & self-discipline of a well-understood emotional nature.⁵⁹

Thankfully for the project of a socialist and scientific society, humanity was defined above all by the faculty of reason. This was a shared and universal rationality, unaffected by racial, sexual, or sociological difference. Differences of opinion primarily signified different degrees of rationality, rather than different interests or underlying emotional drives: ‘Different persons judge differently, because the rational faculty of one is better trained than that of another ... not to be carried away by gusts of passions’.⁶⁰ ‘Ethical self-discipline’, the training of this rational faculty, was therefore the key to individual development:

By discipline, by the cultivation of right habits, that is, a man may to a large extent acquire the power of thinking or judging as he chooses about all that he feels or perceives. The man thus ‘disciplined’, ‘trained’, or ‘educated’, then ceases to be a dismasted, rudderless bark, tossed, as it were, on the stormy ocean of circumstance, at the mercy of the waves of feeling and the winds of perception; he can steer any course he pleases – within limits – and provided no storm arises so great as to overwhelm his powers. And the more disciplined, the more truly educated he is, the less likelihood is there of his being thus overwhelmed. Herein lies the essential difference between the grown man and the child, between the civilised man and the savage; the grown man and the civilised man have acquired by discipline and training a control of feeling and emotion which the child and the savage lack.⁶¹

This universal receptivity to rational conditioning provided the basis for ‘Scientific Socialism’.⁶² Eden Paul imagined socialist society to be made up of scientifically-trained citizens working for consciously social aims:

I am not proposing that humanity should be subjected to the dominion of a new ‘scientific priestcraft’. In a socialised community the average man will have far more scope for the exercise of his individual taste and judgment than he has to-day. But I look forward to a time when every citizen will have received a sufficient measure of scientific training, and when, with matured judgment, he will voluntarily avail himself of the data of a scientific knowledge as far in advance of ours as ours is in advance of that of the Dark Ages.⁶³

Socialism was one part of the broader project of man coming to control his environment and his own nature – the victory of mind over body, and freedom over material determination. For Eden Paul, socialism would necessarily be supplemented by eugenics, as humanity would consciously

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 60-1.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 16.

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 5-6.

⁶² Ibid., pp. 36-7.

⁶³ Paul, *Socialism and Science*, p. 6.

shape both ‘the environmental [and] the selective factor’ which determined the development of civilisations.⁶⁴ He attacked capitalism for its dysgenic effects, losing the best ‘stock’ in imperialist wars, encouraging irrational competitive instincts and poor reproductive choices. His published work on eugenics has often been noted in the literature as an early example of the encounter between socialism and the science of human breeding, but it should not be imagined that his ideas were racist or even markedly statist.⁶⁵ In the future socialist society, scientifically-trained individuals would naturally make eugenic choices of their own volition.

During the years after 1917, the Pauls subjected these ideas to fundamental critique. They sought to clarify the nature of the ideological break signified by the Bolshevik Revolution, and found that it was comparable to the scientific break achieved by the New Psychology. In the absence of a Marxist-Leninist canon during the very early years of the CPGB, the Pauls reached for the New Psychology to explain Lenin’s insistence on the need for a proletarian revolution and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, and to understand the role of a Communist Party.⁶⁶ Moreover, they were not alone in doing so: many of the CPGB’s early members were relaxed about such heterodoxy, and the Pauls’ work engaged with themes that were present more broadly in the literature of the CPGB.

⁶⁴ Eden Paul, ‘Eugenics, Birth-Control and Socialism’ in *Population and Birth-Control*, p. 146.

⁶⁵ L.J. Ray, ‘Eugenics, Mental Deficiency and Fabian Socialism between the Wars’, *Oxford Review of Education* 9, 3: Mental Handicap and Education (1983), 216-7. For a broad overview of the encounter between socialism and eugenics, focusing on the 1930s, see: Diane Paul, ‘Eugenics and the Left’, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 45, 4 (Oct.-Dec., 1984), 567-90; for the common themes shared by socialist and eugenic thought, see: Michael Freeden, ‘Eugenics and Progressive Thought: A Study in Ideological Affinity’, *Historical Journal* 22, 3 (September, 1979), 645-71.

⁶⁶ Henry Pelling interpreted the Communist Party and its support for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat as a wholly artificial development, alien to British socialist traditions. In the case of Cedar and Eden Paul at least, however, the Dictatorship of the Proletariat was justified by drawing on an intellectual discourse in no way alien to British thought. The New Psychology cannot be interpreted as a Russian imposition. See: Pelling, *British Communist Party*.

Reading Lenin in the Age of the New Psychology

Proletcult does its utmost to foster communism within the partial herd of the proletariat. It works upon an impulse, an unconscious urge, which (it cannot be too often repeated) is primitive and universal.

- Cedar and Eden Paul, 1921.⁶⁷

If, as Carl Levy argued, the New Unionists, syndicalists, and radical shop stewards of the pre-CPGB labour movement were ‘self-educated crowd psychologists’,⁶⁸ Cedar and Eden Paul hoped to contribute to socialist philosophy by explicitly theorising Bolshevik practice in such terms. Soffer argued that the theorists of the New Psychology raised a number of fundamental political questions: how to imagine a rational elite apart from the emotionally-driven masses; how this elite could gain influence over the masses without thereby compromising its rationality; and ultimately, how the irrational majority could be reformed.⁶⁹ For the Pauls, these were exactly the problems which the Leninist vanguard party model and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat provided an answer to.

The irrationality of the war and the ‘mass’ emotional response to it led the Pauls to think about instinct and emotion more deeply than previously.⁷⁰ With hindsight, the neglect of such emotional forces had produced a Marxism which the Pauls saw as sterile and fatalistic. The Socialist International had been unable to prevent the war, and even unable to prevent socialists themselves from being swept up by its emotions. If they could not achieve even that, the Social Democratic parties were certainly impotent to lead the masses through a successful revolution.

The Bolshevik Revolution helped the Pauls to clarify their views, which they developed firstly in articles and books for the Plebs’ League. The first public hint of a move away from their previous ‘rationalism’ came in March

⁶⁷ E. & C. Paul, *Proletcult*, p. 130. By ‘partial herd’, the Pauls were referring to Wilfred Trotter’s theory of the ‘herd-instinct’, and the disintegration of the human herd into national and class herds: ‘partial herds’.

⁶⁸ Carl Levy, ‘Education and self-education: staffing the early ILP’ in *Socialism and the Intelligentsia 1880-1914* edited by Carl Levy (London, 1987), p. 169.

⁶⁹ See: Soffer, ‘New Elitism’.

⁷⁰ Eden & Cedar Paul, ‘Short Cuts in Social Evolution?’, *Plebs Magazine* 10, 2 (March, 1918), 33.

1918. They translated a defence of Bolshevism by an anonymous German writer, believed to be Clara Zetkin. This writer made a virtue out of the absence of a ‘civilising school’ (such as the guilds and trade unions) in the history of the Russian working class. She celebrated the fact that ‘Russia is not hampered with the bourgeois traditions and shackles whereby among us the masses’ native hue of resolution is sicklied o’er with the pale cast of thought’.⁷¹ Zetkin, if it was she, depicted socialist revolution resting on the feelings and desires of the ‘masses’ and not their conscious understanding:

... we must remember that things and men are ripe for revolution whenever broad masses of the population feel that certain conditions are intolerable ... Among the rank and file of those who were Cromwell’s chief supporters, a large proportion, doubtless, were psalm-singing illiterates; and few, probably, of those who took part in the storming of the Bastille were competent to read the revolutionary journals which became current after its fall. The Russian proletarians and peasants are ripe for revolution, are ripe for the seizure of the powers of the state, because they desire revolution, because they desire to seize the powers of the state, and because they do not fear the struggle.⁷²

This struck a chord with the Pauls, who had become inspired by the ‘philosopher of intuition’ Henri Bergson. Bergson emphasised the non-rational ‘vital impetus’, which the Pauls described as the ‘obverse of the materialist conception of history’:

This idea of human conation, of human impulse and desire, acting and reacting on the material conditions of production, operating throughout history as the instrument of creative evolution, and manifesting itself in times of crisis as the quasi-omnipotent force of creative revolution ... have we not here a truth which is the supplement and logical development of Marxism?⁷³

In the Pauls’ study of Epictetus, ‘Reason’ was the chief ‘mediator’ through which the material environment determined human activity.⁷⁴ Given such a framework, the mass reaction to the outbreak of war seemed simply irrational, undetermined by the environment. In their later works the Pauls introduced emotional forces, such as impulse, desire, feeling, and instinct alongside the intellect to account for this.

⁷¹ Clara Zetkin quoted in *ibid.*, 32.

⁷² Zetkin quoted in *ibid.*

⁷³ Eden & Cedar Paul, *Creative Revolution: A Study of Communist Ergatocracy* (London, 1920), p. 197.

⁷⁴ ‘... in modern psychological terminology, when the determinist thinks that a man’s actions are determined by the play between character and circumstance, he does not mean that circumstance determines our actions “by moving our hands and feet”, but “by filling our minds with thoughts and ideas” etc.’ C. & E. Paul, ‘Epictetus Notebook’, p. 14.

The essence of the New Psychology was that it dethroned rationality and the Benthamite ‘calculation of pleasures and pains’. Its advocates saw the mind as a complicated network of mental elements associated into complexes which could come into conflict, of which three were fundamental: the ego complex, the herd complex, and the sex complex.⁷⁵ Materialist determinism still held true, the Pauls argued, but the process of translating environmental influences into consciousness and activity was much more complicated and obscure than they previously imagined. The New Psychology of Freud, McDougall, Trotter, Tansley, Charles Baudouin, and others, was precisely the new science which could interrogate the emotions, unwittingly supplementing Marxism and placing revolutionary practice on a firmer scientific basis.

In 1912, Eden Paul wrote that ‘no one can refuse assent to a logical demonstration he really understands’, because it was human nature to attempt to be rational.⁷⁶ In 1920, they described this same idea as a fallacy of bourgeois ideology:

Democracy, in so far as it is a real philosophy, and not a deliberately assumed mask for bourgeois oligarchy, is based upon the belief that reason is the main motive force of human action, and that men in the mass are, if properly educated, always prepared to accept programmes by reason of their justice, rationality, and wisdom. It is a captivating theory, so captivating that it dominated progressive political thought for nearly a century, and the only serious objection to it is that it is not true.⁷⁷

Unlike many British supporters of the Soviets,⁷⁸ Cedar and Eden Paul were unabashedly anti-democratic, writing that opposing the Bolsheviks’ dissolution of the Constituent Assembly would make one ‘a good democrat, but ... certainly a bad socialist’.⁷⁹ They even criticised Lenin for confusing the issue by using the nonsensical hybrid term ‘proletarian democracy’.⁸⁰ Instead, the Pauls linked democracy tightly to capitalism in a modified form of the Marxist theory of

⁷⁵ Like other early British psychoanalysts, the Pauls felt that Freud placed too much stress on sex at the expense of the problems of the ego and the herd. In *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (London, 1922) Freud made Trotter’s ‘herd instinct’ secondary, deriving ultimately from the sex instinct defined in broad terms.

⁷⁶ E. & C. Paul, ‘Epictetus Notebook’, p. 18.

⁷⁷ E. & C. Paul, *Creative Revolution*, p. 36.

⁷⁸ See: Bullock, *Romancing the Revolution*.

⁷⁹ Eden & Cedar Paul, ‘New Tactics for the Social Revolution’, *Plebs Magazine* 10, 9 (October, 1918), p. 213. They referred often to Robert Michels’ ‘iron law of oligarchy’. See: Robert Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy* translated by Eden & Cedar Paul (London, 1915).

⁸⁰ E. & C. Paul, *Creative Revolution*, p. 16.

stages. They depicted society passing by social revolution from ‘theocratic aristocracy’ to ‘capitalist democracy’. The social revolution begun in Russia would lead to what they called ‘communist ergatocracy’, the ‘administration of things’ by the workers.

The Pauls argued that democracy failed ‘for no more and no less abstruse a reason than this, that man as an individual is not built that way, and human society does not work along the suggested lines’.⁸¹ They identified two key components to the psychological underpinning for democracy which were not true. Firstly, the belief that ‘man is an essentially rational being’, calculating pleasures and pains or otherwise appraising his own behaviour by some rational standard as he navigated his course through life.⁸² Only this kind of unitary, self-controlled figure could adequately express its will through the ballot box. Secondly, the belief in social solidarity under capitalism, that the will of these individuals sharing a single standard of rationality could cohere into ‘the will of the people’. Marx and Trotter had between them demonstrated the impossibility of the subject of democracy, the ‘demos’ or ‘the people’, by splitting it into economic classes and ‘partial herds’. Between these ‘partial herds’ no truly instinctive sympathy was possible, only relations of domination, exploitation, and struggle, at times disguised and at times overt.

Mass democracy had proved in practice the inadequacy of rationalist ideas. ‘Emotional appeals masquerading as arguments ... skilfully directed towards the ostensibly conflicting interests of the unclass-conscious proletarians’ lay behind the fiction, of rational consideration in a responsible public sphere set above the class struggle.⁸³ Democracy masked a sort of coalition between the ‘ochlos’, the ‘unthinking crowd ... the mob’, and the plutocracy. The social institutions of capitalist democracy enabled the latter to dominate the former by ensuring the hold of bourgeois ideology at a subconscious level.

The rationalistic theories of mind which the Pauls associated with capitalist democracy had once been progressive, as a means of expunging elements of theocratic psychology: ‘to exorcise the legion of demons, to rid the

⁸¹ E. & C. Paul, *Creative Revolution*, p. 140.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 142.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

human mind of the plethora of imaginary “causes” which still lingered on into the eighteenth century as relics of medievalism’.⁸⁴ However, it was no less necessary to ‘overthrow the new superstition which came to replace the spooks of demoniacal possession, to uproot the conviction that man is a thoroughly rational being and that the dynamic of social progress is a purely rational affair’.⁸⁵

For the Pauls, capitalist democracy in practice involved a complicated, anarchical clash of opposing instincts. It was an orchestra without a score. Its institutions pitted the individualistic ego against the herd instinct, while also pitting the ‘partial herd’ of one’s nation against other nations – a conflict internal to the herd-complex. The capitalist state struggled to repress conflicts between class-based ‘partial herds’, without being able to reconcile the clashing interests that fuelled the class complex. These multiple levels of conflict and repression of instincts were not just felt at the social level, in the conflict between classes. These conflicts were reproduced within the psychology of each individual person, creating a mass of unstable human beings afflicted with ‘profound mental conflicts in the realm of the unconscious, and to consequent disorder of the affective life’.⁸⁶ The human material created by capitalist democracy was thus kindling for the fires of unrest, conflict, and revolution.

However, the human unconscious reflected a deep history of primitive communism as well as its millennia of violence and egoism. Cedar and Eden Paul argued that the ‘herd complex was the basis of primitive communism ... the basis of the impulse towards communism which has asserted itself again and again throughout history’.⁸⁷ The emotional life of the working class was thus a crucial field of struggle for the Pauls, who aimed to ‘foster and accentuate the proletarian herd instinct’. The working class was the only ‘partial herd’ which could possibly provide the foundation for a modern global communism, due to its crucial place in the production process.⁸⁸

The Communist Party form and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat were necessary to complete this project, however. Lenin argued that:

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 185.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 185.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 215.

⁸⁷ E. & C. Paul, *Proletcult*, p. 128.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 129.

... the working masses are raised to a high pitch of excitement by the social evils in Russian life, but are unable to gather, if one may put it, and concentrate all these drops and streamlets of popular resentment ... [they] must be combined into a *single* gigantic torrent.⁸⁹

For the Pauls, following the ‘iron law of oligarchy’, only a small minority from among the proletariat would become fit to act as leaders.⁹⁰ ‘Class consciousness’ for the leadership meant having a clear understanding of the goals of the socialist revolution and the ability to translate it into practice. The great majority would continue to be guided by ‘obscure feeling’ and ‘obscure desire’.⁹¹ For most of the proletariat, ‘class consciousness’ would instead ‘reveal itself as a revolutionary mass psychology [creating] conditions amid which swiftly moving forces can give to minorities majority power’.⁹²

This was not a relationship of domination, with rational Communists simply taking the emotional masses for their raw material. Cedar and Eden Paul saw these as two complementary forms of proletarian ‘class consciousness’, each a necessary component of a successful revolution. Outside of the conditions of a ‘revolutionary mass psychology’, with the emotions of the mass movement to drive conscious Communists towards an irreversible plunge into the dangerous and unknown, no ‘creative revolution’ could be achieved. Educated and stable people would naturally shrink from revolution whether reasoned Marxists or not, it took an explosion of passionate revolt to break bourgeois ideology at the subconscious level and force the Marxists to act like Marxists. It was necessary for Marxists to identify with the working class completely, to immerse themselves in the passions of the proletariat and be open to the influence of emotional contagion. They would thereby gain an *intuitive* understanding of the needs of the proletarian class struggle.⁹³

⁸⁹ V.I. Lenin quoted in John Ehrenberg, ‘Communists and Proletarians: Lenin on Consciousness and Spontaneity’, *Studies in Soviet Thought* 25, 4 (May, 1983), 295

⁹⁰ E. & C. Paul, *Creative Revolution*, p. 40.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Wilhelm Reich made this same distinction in 1934, and raised many of the same points as the Pauls with much greater urgency – ‘there are *two kinds* of class consciousness, *that of the leadership and that of the masses...*’. In Reich’s interpretation, the emotional anti-capitalism of millions of Germans carried Nazism into power, while to his frustration the German Communists focused on trying to teach them specialised knowledge of scientific socialism. See: Wilhelm Reich, *What is Class Consciousness?* (New York, 1972).

⁹³ As Bergson had argued, in what must have been read by the Pauls as a justification for Proletcult and class partisanship:

The Marxists would, in turn, provide a dictatorship able to satisfy the passions of the masses with a political programme; the dictatorship of ‘those who, like the bolsheviks [sic] in Red Russia, will ride in the whirlwind and direct the storm’.⁹⁴ Without a ruthless and authoritative revolutionary leadership, responding to the instinctive urgings of the masses and able to translate mass passion into action, the Pauls believed that the ‘revolutionary mass psychology’ would either dissipate uncreatively as riots, or be diverted into harmful channels. Where the ‘revolutionary mass psychology’ in the 1640s and 1790s had called up Cromwell and Robespierre as their necessary complement, and the Paris Commune had faltered through its lack of a Blanqui, they thought that the 1910s and 1920s would call up the dictatorship of the Communist Party as its corresponding form. Its authority would not be based in its legality, but in its emotional link with the proletariat:

... it must harmonise with instinctively felt proletarian needs; and it must in large measure be a spontaneous outgrowth of creative evolution or creative revolution, which in this cycle of human history is operating through the conation, through the impulses and the desires, of the class-conscious proletariat.⁹⁵

Where the *political* revolution could be successful without a detailed knowledge of the New Psychology, as in 1917, psychological science would be crucial for the period after the capture of the state. The Pauls argued that a cultural revolution must follow the political revolution, channelling the aroused instincts of the revolutionary masses into the creation of new social institutions fitted to those instincts. The ‘ergatocrats’ would navigate the chaos of the revolutionary period and hold power while ‘the remoulding of social institutions is producing a quasi-universal communist mentality’:⁹⁶

Gradually, as popular ideology is modified by the new conditions, the stringency of the dictatorship will relax, and the coordination of the workers will come more and more to resemble the harmonious self-discipline of an orchestra or a choir; while the

... an absolute could only be given in an *intuition*, whilst everything else falls within the province of *analysis*. By intuition is meant the kind of *intellectual sympathy* by which one places oneself within an object in order to coincide with what is unique in it and consequently inexpressible.

Henri Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* translated by T.E. Hulme (London, 1912), p. 7.

⁹⁴ E. & C. Paul, *Proletcult*, p. 139.

⁹⁵ E. & C. Paul, *Creative Revolution*, pp. 134-5.

⁹⁶ Eden & Cedar Paul, *Communism* (London, 1921), p. 15.

dictatorship in its turn will become more like the guiding will and inspiration of a competent orchestral conductor or choirmaster.⁹⁷

The outdated institutions which created unnecessary instinctive conflicts would be removed, so human psychology would stabilise and mature. Unavoidable instinctive conflicts would be intelligently treated, sublimated for higher ends, or provided with outlets that would not lead to conflict and harm. Informed by the sciences of Darwin, Marx, Bergson, and Freud, positive freedom would be achieved by the construction of a social form suited for human psychology in all its complexity. 'Ethical self-discipline', the 'reasoned control of a well-understood emotional nature' championed by Epictetus, would now become possible.

The New Psychology and the British Communist Movement

Since November, 1918, history has been travelling on the top gear. The true historian never judges history by years, decades, generations, or even centuries. Such a conception of history is mere chronology – a fool's idea of history, as Balzac said ... History moves more rapidly in great tempestuous and seminal moments than it does during centuries of hum-drum evolution. There are times when society automatically reproduces a given environment and when it seems scarcely to move either one way or another, as though history were simply marking time. Revolutions are the germinal periods of social development. Forces which have been dammed up are then liberated, and in escaping, sweep everything before them. In one intense pulsating day of revolution more decisions, of a far-reaching historical importance, are made and acted upon than in generations of 'nominal' time.

- *Communist Review*, 1921.⁹⁸

Although Cedar and Eden Paul's campaign to integrate the New Psychology into Marxism could often seem like a personal crusade, they were not alone in the early CPGB. Communists and socialists engaged with the themes they raised, and often showed familiarity with the most modern psychological literature. Chris Wrigley wrote of the strong influence they exerted on the young A.J.P. Taylor,⁹⁹ and according to Morgan they 'provided an introduction to communist ideas for that most Wellsian of communists', the scientist J.D. Bernal.¹⁰⁰ In his 1939 memoirs, the journalist Ernest Lane complained that his 'long, eulogistic'

⁹⁷ E. & C. Paul, *Creative Revolution*, p. 135.

⁹⁸ 'Review of the Month: Hail, Red Russia!', *Communist Review* 2, 1 (November, 1921), 1.

⁹⁹ Chris Wrigley, *A.J.P. Taylor: Radical Historian of Europe* (London, 2006), pp. 37-8.

¹⁰⁰ Morgan, *Bolshevism and the British Left vol. II*, p. 158.

review of their ‘cutting indictment of parliamentarism’, under his pen-name ‘Jack Cade’ in the ILP journal the *Socialist Review*, had been substantially censored and toned down by MacDonald. Hoping to set the record straight nearly twenty years later, he described their book as a ‘blazing beacon of working class development [which] remains a classic’.¹⁰¹

Additionally, the Pauls were widely regarded as typical British Communist theoreticians by anti-Communists in the early 1920s. The American racial theorist and Klansman Lothrop Stoddard described the Pauls as ‘twin pillars of British Bolshevism and acknowledged as heralds of the Communist cause by Bolshevik circles in both England and America’,¹⁰² while the British naval officer Henry Somerville cited them as ‘accredited to speak for the Communist Party’ while outlining the different positions developing within the socialist movement after the October Revolution.¹⁰³ An American scholar, Lewis Rockow, critiqued them from a democratic standpoint as leading English-language representatives of Communist thought.¹⁰⁴ The two leading elder statesmen of British Marxism, Henry Hyndman and E. Belfort Bax, who both opposed Bolshevism as vigorously as they supported the Allied war effort, referred to the Pauls’ work as the defence of Bolshevism most worth reading.¹⁰⁵ Even MacDonald, Lane’s accusations notwithstanding, wrote what Morgan called a ‘surprisingly friendly’ review of *Creative Revolution*.¹⁰⁶

The veteran syndicalist leader Tom Mann, who was revered in the Communist Party,¹⁰⁷ was struck by their ideas, concluding his 1923 memoirs by exhorting his readers to get hold of their work. For Mann, their explanation of what he called the ‘elemental urge of the working class towards real freedom’

¹⁰¹ Ernest Lane, *Dawn to Dusk: Reminiscences of a Rebel* (Brisbane, 1939) [online] at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lane-ernest/1939/dawn-dusk/index.htm> [Accessed 8.3.17], chapter 6.

¹⁰² Lothrop Stoddard, *The Revolt Against Civilisation: The Menace of the Under-Man* (London, 1922), p. 192.

¹⁰³ Henry Somerville, ‘Recent Developments of Socialism’, *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 12, 48 (December, 1923), 572.

¹⁰⁴ Lewis Rockow, *Contemporary Political Thought in England* (London, 1925), chapter VIII. ‘The Communists: William Paul and E. and C. Paul’.

¹⁰⁵ E. Belfort Bax, ‘Two Bolshevik Intellectuals’, *Justice* 26 August 1920, 7; Henry M. Hyndman, *The Evolution of Revolution* (London, 1920), p. 392 – alongside Raymond Postgate’s *The Bolshevik Theory* (London, 1920).

¹⁰⁶ Morgan, *Bolshevism and the British Left vol. II*, p. 156.

¹⁰⁷ See: Antony Howe, ‘“Our only ornament”: Tom Mann and British communist “hagiography”’, *Twentieth-Century Communism* 1, 1 (2009), 91-109.

was the link between his earlier syndicalism and his later acceptance of Bolshevism. He wrote:

In my judgment, if this volume could be broadcast amongst the workers, it would do inestimable service. Such a book could not have been written a dozen years ago, when I was an enthusiastic advocate of Syndicalism. The experiences of the World War, and the Russian Revolution, were essential to the clarification of our ideas. As a result of that clarification, we have drawn much nearer to the real thing than was possible before. No longer do we 'see men as trees walking', for now we 'see every man clearly'.¹⁰⁸

The Pauls attributed the success of the Bolsheviks to their intuitive understanding of the instincts and emotions of the masses, leading them to act effectively during Russia's period of revolutionary crisis. However, they claimed that 'it is in Britain that are manifest the first signs of awareness that the New Psychology is of fundamental importance to the revolutionary movement'.¹⁰⁹ They thought that the Russians had not fully grasped the theoretical implications of their own successful practice, and were emboldened to critique Bolshevik theory on that basis.

The Pauls read Lenin's well-known theory of 'consciousness and spontaneity' in *What Is to Be Done?* (1902), that the workers were drawn by their immediate experience into a narrow economic 'trade union consciousness', while 'socialist consciousness' would have to be introduced from without by the intellectuals of the revolutionary party. As Lenin wrote, the 'instinctive is that unconsciousness (spontaneity) to whose aid the Socialists must come'.¹¹⁰ This was often interpreted as justifying an elite of Communists who would drag the unconscious masses through revolution, in the words of John Ehrenberg consigning 'the working class to the role of blind instrument to be used, tutored, and betrayed by its ostensible leaders'.¹¹¹

Anna Krylova recently criticised this interpretation of Lenin, and showed that there were strong elements of his thought which could be read to justify a New Psychological interpretation. She argued that the Bolshevik leader revised his understanding of spontaneity and consciousness after the 1905 Revolution,

¹⁰⁸ Tom Mann, *Tom Mann's Memoirs* (London, 1923), p. 325.

¹⁰⁹ E. & C. Paul, *Proletcult*, p. 102.

¹¹⁰ V.I. Lenin, *What Is to Be Done? Burning Questions of Our Movement* (London, 1930), p. 44.

¹¹¹ Ehrenberg, 'Communists and Proletarians', 285-6. Ehrenberg himself contested this interpretation.

when the proletariat was drawn spontaneously into revolt before their would-be leaders understood the situation:

The defining feature of a revolutionary worker ceased to reside exclusively in a worker's mind. The Bolshevik leader discovered a whole universe of working-class instincts, urges, and emotions in addition to class consciousness ... The 'true nature' of the working class that Lenin discovered in the 1905 revolution revealed itself to him not through workers' conscious revolutionary initiative, as had been expected, but through an 'instinctive urge' (*instinktivno rvetsia*) that the workers 'felt' (*pochuvstvovali*) for open revolutionary action.¹¹²

Krylova argued that 1905 spurred Lenin to reimagine what it meant to be a revolutionary worker in terms very similar to the Pauls, combining 'populist notions of self and the biologist undercurrents in late nineteenth-century European philosophy [to] expand the ideal image of a conscious worker into the realm of the emotional and instinctual'.¹¹³

Bolshevik propaganda directed at the British intervention forces, brought back by the Labour Delegation in 1920, demonstrates well this emphasis on class feeling as the germ of class consciousness. In their leaflet 'The Shame of Being a Scab', the Bolsheviks sought to evoke the soldiers' spontaneous emotional experiences of strikes and class division at home, writing that 'even if you did not think it out, you felt that he [the employer] was of a different kind to you'.¹¹⁴ It continued:

Times came when your patience gave out, and you came out on strike together with your fellow workers. Then you knew that it was open war between you and the employers. Then there were no ties of blood, or calls of nationality. You experienced only the bitter hatred of the class antagonism. You knew that your security and that of your wife and children depended on the loyalty of the workers to each other.

It happened on some such occasions that some sponieles [sic – spineless] creatures did not stick it out, and went sneaking back to work. What were your feelings then?

Rage, contempt, disgust. ... You are scabbing now! Are you not ashamed?¹¹⁵

British Communists took note of the Bolshevik affinities with psychological thinking about instinct and emotion. In the barrage of commemorative articles and essays after his death, Lenin was widely hailed as the model revolutionary

¹¹² Anna Krylova, 'Beyond the Spontaneity-Consciousness Paradigm: "Class Instinct" as a Promising Category of Historical Analysis', *Slavic Review* 62, 1 (Spring, 2003), 15-6. See also: Igal Halfin, 'Between Instinct and Mind: The Bolshevik View of the Proletarian Self', *Slavic Review* 62, 1 (Spring, 2003), 34-40.

¹¹³ Krylova, 'Beyond the Spontaneity-Consciousness Paradigm', 15.

¹¹⁴ Executive Committee of the Communist International, 'The Shame of Being a Scab', LSE Archive, British Labour Delegation to Russia, Box Three.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

for his ability to commune with the instincts and unconscious drives of the contending social forces.¹¹⁶ One review of a collection of Lenin's writings from 1917, translated from French for the CPGB, described him as a 'psychological genius':

... who has studied deeply the soul of the masses, and who saw some forces there, hidden to ordinary eyes, forces asleep for dozens, hundreds of years, that only needed waking up to be utilised for the proletarian revolution. Lenin dared to provoke that commotion...¹¹⁷

This was nowhere more clear than in the translations of Leon Trotsky's comments on Lenin, reproduced in the CPGB's journal: 'All that was elemental, primitive, that remained outside the workings of the mind, outside conscious aims, was dear to him'.¹¹⁸ For Trotsky, Lenin's greatness was that he had seen beyond superficial appearance, achieving an intuition of the mass unconscious where 'underneath everything was bubbling and boiling, and the old anger was coming to the top'.¹¹⁹

Even so, Leninist theory was more often interpreted as a justification for the intelligentsia injecting a socialist consciousness into the working class from outside. Cedar and Eden Paul were not shy of critiquing this aspect of Lenin:

We have no Lenin here, nor need of one. Russian conditions are peculiar, and perchance an ex-aristocratic intellectual such as yourself, an ex-bourgeois intellectual such as Trotsky, may have been indispensable factors in the bolshevik revolution. Here the working-class movement is fashioning its own intellectuals in the labour colleges and the Marxist classes; is turning them out by hundreds at a time.¹²⁰

For the Pauls, the movement for workers' power was the 'spontaneous outcome' of working-class conditions interacting with universal instincts, and 'no mere theory imposed upon the working-class movement from above by a group of bourgeois intellectuals'.¹²¹ Here there was a continuity with Eden Paul's

¹¹⁶ For interesting recent work on this, see: Eelco Runia, 'Into Cleanness Leaping: The Vertiginous Urge to Commit History', *History and Theory* 49, 1 (2010), 1-20; Eelco Runia, 'Crossing the Wires in the Pleasure Machine: Lenin and the Emergence of Historical Discontinuity', *History and Theory* 49, 4 (2010), 47-63.

¹¹⁷ 'Lenin ... On Insurrection', *Communist Review* 5, 5 (September, 1924), 250.

¹¹⁸ 'Gorki on Lenin – Trotsky on Gorki', *Communist Review* 5, 8 (December, 1924), 382.

¹¹⁹ Leon Trotsky, *On Lenin: Notes Towards a Biography* translated by Tamara Deutsch (London, 1971), p. 79

¹²⁰ E. & C. Paul, *Creative Revolution*, p. 74.

¹²¹ Eden & Cedar Paul, 'Ergatocracy and the Shop Stewards' Movement', *Plebs Magazine* 11, 8 (September, 1919), 117.

Socialism and Science. The Pauls insisted that working-class people were capable of understanding the New Psychology, and dedicated much of their activity in the Plebs' League to teaching it. By fashioning a revolutionary leadership out of the working class, the shared proletarian 'herd instinct' would help to ensure the dictatorship never broke its link with the instincts of the masses. As Maurice Dobb wrote, in a long article summarising Communist theory which leant heavily on the Pauls' interpretation:

... the leaders have no power except that which they derive from the proletariat ... Their psychology is proletarian, and therefore is not likely to produce anti-proletarian desires in the mass of them; for as we have already seen, the 'herd complex' is strong...¹²²

In the interests of producing leaders from among the working class, the Plebs' League intended to produce a 'Workers' Encyclopaedia', following the example of the bourgeois 'Encyclopaedists' in eighteenth-century France. Owing partly to the Pauls' efforts, its first volume was an *Outline of Psychology* (1922) written by the zoologist Henry Lyster Jameson.¹²³ It presented the New Psychology broadly, from explaining the Freudian theory of the unconscious to mapping the physiology of the brain. For T.A. Jackson, reviewing the book for the CPGB's newspaper, it provided not only an introduction to a crucial and neglected field of knowledge but also pointed the way to new readings of Marx:

On the field of psychology for the better part of a century the forces of reaction have mobilised their hosts and established their headquarters. But the end is at hand. It is seldom noted either by friend or foe that the Marxist 'Materialist Conception of History' is essentially a concept of social psychology. It will be clearer to many after this text book has been read and assimilated that in that master generalisation Marx tore away a whole side of the four-square citadel of reaction and laid its garrison naked to the swords of the avenger.¹²⁴

Communists insisted that the field of psychology must become a site of struggle. E.T. Whitehead argued that an understanding of mass psychology was essential, to combat the institutions built up as fortifications of capitalism by repressing class struggle and to draw that repressed emotional energy behind the Communist Party:

¹²² Maurice H. Dobb, 'Communism or Reformism: Which?', *Communist Review* 4, 2 (February, 1922), 294.

¹²³ Henry Lyster Jameson, *An Outline of Psychology: Plebs Textbooks Number One* (London, 1922).

¹²⁴ T.A. Jackson, 'Book Review: The Mechanics of the Mind', *Communist* 7.1.1922, 6.

... we see the bourgeoisie successfully using all the latest advances in scientific psychology in directing their advertising campaigns, their press campaigns to dope the workers, usually by the aid of the counter attractiveness of sport and plenty of pictures of murders, divorce cases, bathing girls, etc. ... A Communist Party can be well likened to a steam engine in that it is a machine constructed to utilise energy to produce results. We have got the machine beautifully built, we have got illimitable steam in the shape of the smouldering sense of social injustice and social robbery. But we haven't yet solved the problem in Britain of getting this steam into our machine.¹²⁵

Jackson's interest in the instincts and emotions described by the New Psychology informed how he expected the socialist revolution to come about. In his pre-war writing,¹²⁶ Jackson wrote of the socialist revolution as the conscious act of the great majority of the working class, organised in the Socialist Party. Not so after the Bolshevik Revolution. Jackson asked his readers to imagine London in the grip of an economic crisis:

... Who, think you, would under those circumstances be the first to smash a shop-window? The Bolshevik, the Revolutionist, the Communist will be at his club, union or branch meeting – considering what to do. He is trained to mass action, and for mass action he will be preparing.

But the respectable go-to-chapel-on-Sunday, spend-my-money-on-my-home young father of a family who has shunned Bolshevism as a blasphemy and Communism as a damnation – such a one caught in the toils of an utterly unexpected crisis with his savings at the bank, and that shut, with all credit stopped and his needs great upon him – it is such as he that will cast the first stone and make the smash that will set all nerves jumping. And everybody being on the point of frenzy, the passion will spread.¹²⁷

With the capital descending into chaos and the government losing control, 'what could possibly emerge as a guiding, directing and controlling force but the authority of the only undiscredited thing left – the local revolutionary agitators, the local trade union stalwarts, shop stewards and the like?'¹²⁸ It was a Communist Party fitted for this task that the young J.D. Bernal described as the 'psychoanalyst of the working class'.¹²⁹ Only this revolutionary minority could exercise authority in such a moment, harnessing the violent energy of the

¹²⁵ E.T. Whitehead, 'Political Apathy and the Class Struggle', *Communist Review* 3, 6 (October, 1922), 291-2.

¹²⁶ See chapter two.

¹²⁷ T.A. Jackson, 'The Commune of London', *Communist* 19 March 1921, 7.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* It is worth highlighting that Jackson does not give the Communist Party a special role here. He seems to have a much looser notion of 'Communist Party' than the monolithic, disciplined organisation the term now implies, including all who were able to hold the loyalty of the working class in such a moment of dissolution.

¹²⁹ See: Forrester, 'Psychoanalytic Passion of J.D. Bernal', 400.

enflamed masses for constructive purposes, as for the Pauls: ‘riding in the whirlwind and directing the storm’. Communists celebrated these moments of ‘revolutionary mass psychology’ as spaces of emotional intensity, transgression, and creativity, outside of the regular rhythms of social life and breaking the entropic reproduction of a given social environment. Raymond Postgate wrote of the Paris Commune, the closest predecessor of twentieth-century Petrograd, Budapest, and Berlin as a particular emotional space corresponding to what the Pauls called ‘revolutionary mass psychology’:

... a great wave of happiness and relief swept over Paris ... The delirious enthusiasm spread even to the bourgeoisie. Worker and employer rejoiced together. Old men who had seen '48 were weeping silently. Young men, women and children – all were radiant. The flowers scattered, the red flags dipping and waving, the singing crowds, the maddening pulse of the ‘Marseillaise’, – there was something in all this that gave the feeling of a great freedom, a new life. Spies reported to Versailles that Paris was ‘mad with the Commune’. It was true. Paris felt that an old oppressing tyranny had been broken; she felt that rare joy of a revolutionary moment, when the old and evil weight is cast aside, and for a moment all is possible when there is a vision or a feeling of the future which compensates for past and coming sufferings and intoxicates like wine. Such a moment comes to few, and rarely.¹³⁰

Jackson’s identification of the revolutionary subject as a Christian and anti-Bolshevik outside of this ‘revolutionary mass psychology’ shows the importance of New Psychological ideas about the fragility of the personality. According to Soffer, the social psychologists discovered that ‘the savage was not “without” in darkest Africa, but within every twentieth-century Englishman’.¹³¹ For Communists similarly, the revolutionary was not ‘without’ in darkest Russia, but existed within the unconscious of even the most superficially conservative British worker.

The Communists awaited the conditions which would, with potentially very little warning, bring this set of revolutionary instincts to the fore. ‘We remember’, one Communist wrote, ‘tales about the pious Russian moujik, devoted to his “Little Father” the Tsar’.¹³² It was only the fruits of imperialism that allowed the bourgeois state to suppress class struggle so effectively in the Englishman as compared with the Russian, and with the colonial world in revolt sooner or later this psychological stability would be lost.

¹³⁰ R.W. Postgate, ‘The Fall of the Commune of Paris’, *Communist Review* 3, 2 (June, 1922), 81.

¹³¹ Soffer, ‘New Elitism’, 117.

¹³² John Langland, ‘Our Imperial Responsibilities’, *Communist Review* 1, 2 (June, 1921), 4-8.

The International Impact of *Creative Revolution*: Li Dazhao and the Politics of Emotion

Your note about the slackening of revolutionary spirit among the working class of England is 'not it', and 'off the mark'. [...] It is necessary to help the English Communists; of course, strictly conspiratorially. They must be taught how the Bolsheviks have worked (always). They should be given the most practical directives – print them (or better, find an intermediary and publish through him, in his name, while correcting the texts of his articles).

Have you seen Cedar & Eden Paul? Couldn't it be done through them?

- V.I. Lenin, 1921.¹³³

The Bolsheviks thought that ideological and practical clarification was crucial for re-founding the international socialist movement as a revolutionary force, after the collapse of the Second International in 1914. They strenuously attempted to create a regularised Marxist political culture, and to secure international support for their own doctrines, including the ideas of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the Soviet system. Lenin was aware of the work of Cedar and Eden Paul, and seems to have seen them as influential and potentially useful figures in 'English Communism' around the time of its birth. There is no evidence that the scheme outlined by Lenin, intended to bring the CPGB up to the standards of the Bolshevik party, was ever enacted using the Pauls as an 'intermediary'. It is possible that Lenin's suggestion led to their translations of the *ABC of Communism* and other Russian works, and of their work translating at the 1922 Comintern congress.

However, there is evidence that their own work might have been used for such a scheme, published in the name of an intermediary in the Chinese Communist movement. At least one entire article and long extracts in others were taken from the Pauls, translated and published in the journal *New Youth* in 1922 and 1923 as original work of Li Dazhao, a leading theorist of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in the early 1920s.¹³⁴ Compare, for example, these two

¹³³ V.I. Lenin to Eduard Berzin, 'Document 76' 8 September 1921 in *The Unknown Lenin: From the Secret Archive* edited by Richard Pipes & David Brandenberger, translated by Catherine A. Fitzpatrick (London, 1998), p. 134. Underlining in original.

¹³⁴ Li Dazhao, '(Democracy and Ergatocracy)', *New Youth* 1 July 1922 [online] available at <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/lidazhao/marxist.org-chinese-lee-19220701.htm> [accessed 19.4.2017]. There is a partial English translation of this in Huang Sung-K'ang, *Li Ta-Chao and the Impact of Marxism on Modern Chinese Thinking* (Paris, 1965), pp. 62-3. See also Li's

extracts, the first from the Pauls' *Creative Revolution* (1920) and the second in an article by Edward Gu, describing the same passage found in Li:

Now democracy (like ergatocracy) is a temperament, a habit of mind, an outlook on life, quite as much as an abstract political philosophy; it is no mere product of pure understanding, but is deeply tinged with feeling, impulse, and desire; consequently, we are unjust to the concept 'democracy' if we attempt to confine its soaring pinions within the cage of a narrow intellectualist formula...¹³⁵

'Pingmin zhuyi', as Li Dazhao clarified, 'is not only a concrete political system, but also an abstract philosophy on life; it is not only an outcome of pure reason, but is also dyed with the lustre of deep emotion, impulse, and desire' ... To avoid ossifying its spiritual vigour, Li argued that 'we should call it "pingmin zhuyi", and call the embodiment of the spirit in politics "pingmin zhengzhi" (politics of common people)'.¹³⁶

Li was a leader of the New Culture Movement which arose after the failure of the 1912 Xinhai Revolution, and of the May Fourth movement of progressive intellectuals in 1919. Li cofounded the CCP with Chen Duxiu in 1921.¹³⁷ Of the pair, he is the first in terms of symbolic importance for Chinese Communists. Chen left the CCP and became a Trotskyist in the 1930s, while Li was executed by a warlord in 1927, with his reputation intact.¹³⁸ Moreover, as the Head Librarian of Peking University in the early 1920s Li organised a study group of Marxist texts, which were attended by his employee Mao Zedong. Li is remembered today as 'the first Marxist in China', the founder of the ruling party, and the mentor of Mao.

The true origin of these works has not previously been recognised. They have always been regarded as entirely original theoretical works of Li,

Democracy (1923) [online] available at <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/lidazhao/marxist.org-chinese-lee-192301.htm> [accessed 25.4.2017], which contains long passages culled from *Creative Revolution* supplemented by original material related to Chinese history.

¹³⁵ E. & C. Paul, *Creative Revolution*, p. 12.

¹³⁶ Edward X. Gu, 'Who Was Mr Democracy? The May Fourth Discourse of Populist Democracy and the Radicalisation of Chinese Intellectuals (1915-1922)', *Modern Asian Studies* 35, 3 (July, 2001), 604-5.

¹³⁷ See: Michael Y.L. Luk, *The Origins of Chinese Bolshevism: An Ideology in the Making, 1920-1928* (Oxford, 1990).

¹³⁸ See: Chang-tai Hung, 'The Cult of the Red Martyr: Politics of Commemoration in China', *Journal of Contemporary History* 43, 2 (April, 2008), 279-304. For a discussion of the Chinese historiography on Li Dazhao, his shifting place in the estimations of the CCP, and the difficulties in presenting his thought as a potential rival to Mao as well as a precursor, see: Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, 'What is Wrong with Li Dazhao?' in *New Perspectives on the Chinese Communist Revolution* edited by Tony Saich & Hans van de Ven (London, 1995), pp. 56-74.

signifying his acceptance of class struggle and the dictatorship of the proletariat.¹³⁹ In Huang Sung-K'ang's assessment of Li's role in the origins of Chinese Marxism, the chapter on 'The Problem of Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat' relied heavily on the writing Li had taken from the Pauls.¹⁴⁰ Huang depicted these articles in particular as a crucial turning point in Li's shift from Populism to a 'valuable synthesis' of Confucianism and Marxism.

It is known that Soviet agents passed material to Li for dissemination, as part of the efforts to create the CCP.¹⁴¹ Given Lenin's knowledge of the Pauls, it is plausible that the Comintern representative for China Grigory Voitinsky, or another Soviet agent, brought works in English, knowing that Li could not read Russian. Recently, Ishikawa Yoshihiro has written of the immense importance of Japanese and English-language texts in the propagation of Marxism in China during the years after the October Revolution. Yoshihiro showed that translating such texts, including the newspapers and journals of the CPGB, was a key element of Chinese revolutionary practice at this time. However, this recognition does not extend to works for which Li claimed original authorship. Yoshihiro wrote that 'after his acceptance of Marxism in the 1919-1920 period, the writings of Li Dazhao ... often called the father of Chinese Marxism, escaped from the conceptual speculative thinking that is often now difficult to comprehend and gained clarity in one fell swoop'.¹⁴²

Seen as Li's original work, the Pauls' articles had much more of a long-term impact on Chinese Marxism than in Britain. As Robert Scalapino wrote:

Li Dazhao's writings constituted a primary source for the young Hunanese. Under the stimulus of Li, Mao became excited by and attracted to the Bolshevik Revolution.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ See: Edward X. Gu, 'Populistic Themes in May Fourth Radical Thinking: A Reappraisal of the Intellectual Origins of Chinese Marxism', *East Asian History* 10 (December, 1995), 108; Gu, 'Who Was Mr Democracy?'; Li Dazhao, 'Women's Liberation and Democracy', *Readings in Later Chinese Philosophy: Han to the 20th Century* edited by Justin Tiwald & Bryan W. Van Norden (Cambridge, 2014), p. 360: Translator's footnote 6.

¹⁴⁰ See: Huang, *Li Ta-Chao*, chapter five.

¹⁴¹ See: Liu Jianyi, 'The Origins of the Chinese Communist Party and the Role Played by Soviet Russia and the Comintern' (2000) PhD Thesis: University of York, pp. 124-9.

¹⁴² Ishikawa Yoshihiro, *The Formation of the Chinese Communist Party* translated by Joshua A. Fogel (New York, 2013), p. 17.

¹⁴³ Robert A. Scalapino, 'The Evolution of a Young Revolutionary – Mao Zedong in 1919-1921', *Journal of Asian Studies* 42, 1 (November, 1982), 38.

It is difficult also to say how these works were read in the very different context of the Chinese New Culture Movement, the founding of the CCP, and the First United Front with the Kuomintang. C. Martin Wilbur emphasised how the early CCP was forced to adapt its Marxism to particularly Chinese conditions, producing an ideology unique to the movement.¹⁴⁴ However, historians have read Chinese Populist, Daoist and Confucian themes into works claimed by Li that were in reality unembellished translations of the Pauls. For one scholar, ‘Li’s Marxism (which became Chinese Marxism) is simply the [Confucian] doctrine of the Great Harmony wedded to a commitment to state ownership and regulation of the economy’.¹⁴⁵ Possibly, affinities between traditional Chinese philosophy and the New Psychology as understood by the Pauls allowed their work to strike a chord with Li, easing his conversion to Bolshevism and aiding the adaptation of Marxism to Chinese conditions.

Maurice Meisner referred to an article, taken from the Pauls, to illustrate Li’s particular stress on the emotions and the will.¹⁴⁶ It is difficult to say how far the particular articles taken from the Pauls, read avidly by Mao and other pioneers of Chinese Marxism,¹⁴⁷ helped to shape the political style of the CCP in these early years. Of all the national sections of the Comintern, the CCP has become most associated with the politics of emotion, and for theorising the way that a Communist Party should harness mass instinct. According to Elizabeth Perry, the CCP’s engagement in ‘emotion work’ was a key factor in their successful contest for power.¹⁴⁸ From rituals such as ‘speaking bitterness’, to so-called ‘emotion-raising’ campaigns, the CCP practiced a consciously emotional style of politics. Yu Liu similarly saw the CCP’s techniques for ‘emotion

¹⁴⁴ C. Martin Wilbur, ‘The Influence of the Past: How the Early Years Helped to Shape the Future of the Chinese Communist Party’, *China Quarterly* 36 (Oct.-Dec., 1968), 23-44.

¹⁴⁵ Xiufen Lu, ‘The Confucian Ideal of Great Harmony (Datong 大同), the Daoist Account of Change, and the Theory of Socialism in the Work of Li Dazhao’, *Asian Philosophy* 21, 2 (2011), 171-92.

¹⁴⁶ Maurice Meisner, *Li Ta-Chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), p. 149.

¹⁴⁷ Mao himself wrote: ‘Under Li Ta-chao as assistant librarian at Peking National University, I had rapidly developed towards Marxism’. Quoted in: Liu, ‘Origins of the Chinese Communist Party’, p. 246.

¹⁴⁸ Elizabeth J. Perry, ‘Moving the Masses: Emotion Work in the Chinese Revolution’, *Mobilization: An International Journal* 7, 2 (2002), 111-28.

mobilisation' as crucial for the Maoist style of politics, driving the 'mass campaigns' of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution.¹⁴⁹

The Pauls' writing about the instincts and emotions of revolution, then, was more broadly influential than historians have recognised. Further research into the impact of the Pauls work on Chinese Marxists, and to ascertain whether other works might have been used in the same way in China or other countries, would help to shed more light on the early culture of international Communism.

Iron Proletarian Discipline and the Ebb of Revolution: The Reaction Against the Pauls

A weeping Bolshevik!
If this sight were on show in a museum
All day long gapers would come to gape,
For such a thing is rare.
Yet the twenty-second of January it was seen
In the Soviet Congress packed from floor to roof.
Row upon row, seat upon seat,
Bolshevik hearts of steel, spirits of iron,
Melted to tears.

- Vladimir
Mayakovsky.¹⁵⁰

Cedar and Eden Paul's attempt to define Bolshevism as a fusion of Marxism and the New Psychology met opposition from within the British Communist movement. Many Communists saw the discussions of instinct and emotion as distasteful, introducing an unsettlingly subjective factor which disrupted the objectivity of Marxist economic science. In a review of William Paul's *Communism and Society* (no relation), one Communist pointedly insisted that the author was no 'emotional visionary seeking to rouse the passions of the masses and to goad them on to an indulgence in useless violence and bloodshed'.¹⁵¹ They disliked the popular image of the 'Bolshevik demagogue', which too much discussion of emotion and the 'herd instinct' could provoke. The reviewer argued for a more rationalist view, seeing class consciousness as an 'understanding of social relations ... which the most advanced section of the

¹⁴⁹ Yu Liu, 'Maoist Discourse and the Mobilisation of Emotions in Revolutionary China', *Modern China* 36, 3 (2010), 329-62.

¹⁵⁰ Vladimir Mayakovsky, 'The Death of Lenin', *Communist Review* 6, 9 (January, 1926), 412.

¹⁵¹ H. Wynn Cuthbert, 'A "Red" Book to be Read', *Communist Review* 3, 1 (May, 1922), 43.

workers has attained and ... which the great masses must inevitably reach as well'.¹⁵²

The Pauls' appreciation of 'bourgeois' psychology seems to have displeased Rajani Palme Dutt especially. Dutt was one of the driving forces of 'Bolshevisation', and the CPGB's most important theoretician during the 'Stalin years'. His review of the Plebs' textbook on psychology was scathing, arguing that its writers had followed with 'sheeplike fidelity in the barren individualist footsteps of the bourgeois psychologists' and failed to develop a properly Marxian psychology.¹⁵³ According to Dutt, the Plebs had produced 'a psychological interpretation of society, instead of a social interpretation of psychology', starting from an ahistorical human nature, including 'all that vicious nonsense about the psychology of the crowd and the herd instinct', rather than deducing individuals from society. The *Plebs* journal was full of controversy about the textbook on psychology. A number of Communist reviewers argued that any concession to the New Psychology must mean a move away from 'the Marxism of Marx'. Many saw it as too distant from the immediate needs of the movement. Arthur Tansley's defence of the academic merits of the textbook can hardly have helped Communists see its relevance for achieving the proletarian revolution, 'Botanical Bolshevik' or not.¹⁵⁴ The Pauls and others continued trying to prove its worth throughout the 1920s, putting British imperialism on the psychoanalyst's couch for instance, but with diminishing impact.¹⁵⁵

With the ebbing of the revolutionary wave across Europe and the retreat to the New Economic Policy in the Soviet Union, Communists faced the problem of the 'temporary stabilisation of capitalism'. The link made by the Pauls, Jackson, and others between a destabilised environment and the class instinct it would stimulate became increasingly problematic, as the period of crises passed and the possibility of meaningful intervention by the Communist Party dwindled. In 1922 William Paul wrote that 'the crushing defeat of the

¹⁵² Ibid., 42.

¹⁵³ R.P.D., 'Book Reviews: The British School of Marxism', *Labour Monthly* 2, 5 (June, 1922), 430.

¹⁵⁴ A.G. Tansley, 'An "Outside" Verdict on the Textbook', *Plebs Magazine* 14, 3 (March, 1922), 84-5.

¹⁵⁵ Eden & Cedar Paul, 'The Workers and Wembley: The Psychology of Imperialist Propaganda', *Plebs Magazine* 16, 5 (May, 1924), 182-5.

masses, the repeated monotony of disasters, the knowledge that the leaders were capable of everything and anything except courage, has resulted in an alarming spread of despondency and apathy' in the labour movement.¹⁵⁶

As the psychological atmosphere of advance and building momentum receded, the theme of steadiness and a stoic 'iron proletarian discipline' came to the fore. Assessing the unsettling tactical 'zig-zags' of the Bolsheviks and the broader retreat of the world revolution, Tom Bell argued that the times required a renewed discipline and a close watch on the psychology of Communist Party members, lest 'loyalty and faith' should falter.¹⁵⁷ Some party members, particularly those on the anti-parliamentary wing, argued that the CPGB had begun to ossify and bureaucratise as a defence against the 'ebb' of the revolution, despite its constant attempts to break through and become a 'mass party' organically connected to the working class. Party members increasingly complained that they had too little time to consider Comintern theses critically and also fulfil their practical obligations, and that the member who sold the most newspapers was becoming more prized than the one who sought to understand the meaning of the Comintern 'line'.

Communists contrasted their own 'iron proletarian discipline' to the emotionality of anarchists, the ultra-left, and Trotskyists.¹⁵⁸ In a collection of essays which introduced the British Communist movement to the contest within the Central Committee, J.T. Murphy compared the discipline of Lenin to the emotionality of Trotsky:

Lenin impressed us different from Trotsky – although it was difficult to think in those days of one apart from the other. Lenin certainly stood supreme, like a giant rock upon which all the storms of abuse, all the lies, all the gathering forces of international capitalism beat themselves in vain, while Trotsky seemed the embodiment of the drama of revolution, storming the heights, plunging to the depths, expressing all its moods.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ 'Review of the Month', *Communist Review* 4, 2 (February, 1922), 263.

¹⁵⁷ Tom Bell, 'Implications of the Transitional Period', *Communist Review* 3, 3 (July, 1922), 148-52.

¹⁵⁸ As did James Klugmann later, in his 'official' history of the early years of the CPGB. Klugmann depicted the process of Bolshevisation pushing out those 'sentimental socialists' from the ILP who had 'an instinctive spontaneous feeling rather than a scientific outlook', and those 'boiling with indignation' from the ultra-left, leaving behind a disciplined core. See: Klugmann, *Communist Party of Great Britain vol. I*. R.F. Jones, a historian of the anti-parliamentary Left, has also highlighted how those who opposed the majority line were often denounced as 'emotional'. See: Jones, 'Anti-Parliamentarism and Communism'.

¹⁵⁹ J.T. Murphy in *The Errors of Trotskyism* (London, 1925), p. 6. W.H. Auden once wrote: 'I don't know if it is a universal habit of children, but everybody whom I have asked about the

The virtues of emotional sensitivity during the years of revolution, however, became vices in the period of retreat and retrenchment. Trotsky was the Romantic hero of the civil war, but he was also a wavering and over-emotional petit-bourgeois who would lead the movement astray given half the chance. As Stalin wrote in the same volume:

A true revolutionary is one who not only shows courage in the period of victorious insurrection, but who at the same time shows courage at a moment of retreat of the revolution, in a period of defeat of the proletariat; who does not lose his head nor fall out, if the revolution fails and the enemy succeeds; who, in the period of the retreat of the revolution, does not fall a victim to panic and despair.¹⁶⁰

John McIlroy characterised the period from 1924 as a shift from a process of Bolshevisation to ‘Stalinisation’.¹⁶¹ During this period, many of the intellectuals who had been initially attracted to the party were pushed out.¹⁶² Most of the figures who contributed to the psychological discourse in the early CPGB ended up either outside of the party by the late 1920s (like the Pauls and Postgate) or pushed to its margins (like Jackson, who himself protested at the growing organisational fetishism of the party).¹⁶³ In the Soviet Union, a debate over the compatibility of psychoanalysis and Marxism was settled in the late 1920s as its leading advocates were denounced as Trotskyists.¹⁶⁴

Andy Miles has written of the fractious dispute between the CPGB and the Plebs’ League during Bolshevisation. The CPGB sought both to bring the League under party control and to reorient its educational activity towards

matter tells me that he classified his parents as I did: one parent stood for stability, common sense, reality, the other for surprise, eccentricity and fantasy’.

¹⁶⁰ Joseph Stalin in *The Errors of Trotskyism* (London, 1925), p. 212. Even as late as 1991, one British Communist wrote in remarkably similar terms:

One major problem is that the intellectual, middle sections have an alarming tendency to vacillate. At one time reaching the dizzy heights when the class enemy suffers setbacks and defeats, and then plunging into the depths of despair and despondency when the reverse takes place ... The working class, like the front line troops in war, have no place to retreat to when the going gets tough. They stand and fight.

Jim Arnison, *Decades* (Salford, 1991), p. 94.

¹⁶¹ See: John McIlroy, ‘Restoring Stalinism to Communist History’, *Critique: Journal of Socialist Theory* 41, 4 (2013), 599-622.

¹⁶² McIlroy, ‘Establishment of Intellectual Orthodoxy’, 188-9.

¹⁶³ T.A. Jackson, ‘The Party Conference’, *Communist Review* 4, 12 (April, 1924), 538-41.

¹⁶⁴ See: Martin A. Miller, *Freud and the Bolsheviks: Psychoanalysis in Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union* (New Haven, 1998).

practical revolutionary training, before abandoning the League entirely.¹⁶⁵ As Dutt wrote, ‘the Marxism that the Plebs teaches is a *non-party* Marxism. Could there be a simpler contradiction of Marxism?’¹⁶⁶ Willie Gallacher attacked the Pauls in particular as exponents of this ‘non-party Marxism’, for their translation of an article by the French syndicalist Robert Louzon.¹⁶⁷ Louzon argued not only that Trotsky had been right to go into opposition in the CPSU, but that he had been correct to oppose the Bolshevik Party model in the years before 1917. For Louzon, the vanguard party form was a tool uniquely suited for insurrection and civil war, and entirely unsuited to the long periods when insurrection was not on the agenda. During these times of preparation and the gestation of a mass revolutionary will, he argued, the free and spontaneous creativity of the working class must be the developing force. Supporting this required different forms of organisation and activity.

Gallacher met this challenge with invective, as an example of the ‘confusion and trickery’ of ‘liquidationists’ who had lined up with international financiers and ‘Social Democratic lackeys’ to undermine Communist Party discipline.¹⁶⁸ For Louzon the Communist Party was a specialised tool among others, just as the trade unions, educational societies, and more ‘supple forms of organisation’ like the First International were irreplaceable tools adapted to particular purposes. For Gallacher, the Communist Party was rather the overall ‘director’ of tools. It could not shuffle out of the way until called into being by insurrection, but must lead working-class struggle in all circumstances, adapting itself flexibly to all new situations, following the shifting Comintern ‘line’ with military discipline.

The *Plebs* introduction to Louzon’s article had been coy, judging only that it ‘raises a question which seems to us to deserve serious consideration and discussion’.¹⁶⁹ The argument it presented, however, had clear affinities with the Pauls’ ideas and their desire for a ‘Kultintern’ free from interference by the Comintern and Profintern. The Pauls championed the necessity of authoritarian

¹⁶⁵ Andy Miles, ‘Workers’ Education: The Communist Party and the Plebs League in the 1920s’, *History Workshop* 18 (Autumn, 1984), 102-14.

¹⁶⁶ R.P.D., ‘The British School of Marxism’, 430.

¹⁶⁷ Robert Louzon, ‘How shall we Prepare for Revolution? A Problem of Working-Class Organisation’, *Plebs Magazine* 17, 7 (July, 1925), pp. 269-72.

¹⁶⁸ Willie Gallacher, ‘How Not to Prepare for Revolution!’, *Plebs* 17, 8 (August, 1925), 312.

¹⁶⁹ Louzon, ‘How shall we Prepare for Revolution?’, 269.

dictatorship during revolutionary periods, but emphasised the leadership arising among the shop stewards and workers' councils. They imagined the proletarian dictatorship to emerge out of the masses in the heat of the revolution in order to give form to the revolt of their instincts, not from an organised Bolshevik Party which pre-existed the conditions of 'revolutionary mass psychology'. Having chosen to translate Louzon's article during the anti-Trotskyist campaign, the Pauls were surely among the figures Gallacher had in mind when he concluded his article:

There are Louzons in every country, all of them, consciously or unconsciously, doing their work as the hidden wing of the Capitalist offensive against Soviet Russia and the Communist International.¹⁷⁰

The Pauls' subsequent contacts with Otto Rühle and the anti-Bolshevik Council Communist movement was not a result of another fundamental change in their attitudes.¹⁷¹ The extended period of the retreat of the revolution exposed how different the Pauls' conception of a Communist Party had always been from those like Dutt and Gallacher. Influenced by classical models, they saw the CPGB and the Bolshevik dictatorship as temporary and irregular phenomena called into being by a particular psychological moment. Outside of this context the Communist Party could only be maintained by cutting itself off from the emotional links it maintained with the working class, insulating Communist activists from the broader labour movement in periods of despondency by means of 'iron proletarian discipline'. Extending the revolutionary form beyond the context of a 'revolutionary mass psychology' was simply Caesarism, and by the late 1920s the Pauls felt the Comintern had crossed the Rubicon.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have sought to present the ideas of Cedar and Eden Paul, and have argued that their work is far more useful for understanding the ideas of the Communist movement in the early 1920s than has previously been recognised. They were important ideologists for the British revolutionary movement, among the few whose ideas had an international impact.

¹⁷⁰ Gallacher, 'How Not to Prepare for Revolution!', 316.

¹⁷¹ For an overview of Rühle and the Council Communist movement, see: Paul Mattick, *Anti-Bolshevik Communism* (Monmouth, 1978).

Their central theme was that the New Psychology, and especially its focus on the scientific understanding of instincts and emotions, was crucial for supplementing historical materialism and the Marxist theory of revolution. Communist hopes for a British revolution rested on the idea of the people as psychologically unstable, reproducing the irrationality, conflicts, and chaos of the capitalist mode of production within their own unconscious psyches. Conscious Communists might have been a small minority of the working class in the aftermath of the war – nevertheless, the New Psychology described the mechanisms by which the situation might be rapidly transformed. The economic crisis of capitalism, they expected, would become translated into a ‘revolutionary mass psychology’ through the mechanisms of emotional contagion, suggestion, and regression. It would produce a situation in which the Communist minority could, in the words of Cedar and Eden Paul, ‘ride in the whirlwind and direct the storm’ – exercising a vigorous dictatorship, harmonising with the instincts of the proletarian masses, and harnessing the dormant creativity of repressed passions in service of a fundamental social transformation. In the following chapter, I will look at how the Labour Party drew on the same body of ideas to formulate an anti-revolutionary justification for socialist reforms as precisely the means to avoid such a ‘revolutionary mass psychology’.

Chapter Six. Reason, Restraint and Reconstruction: Labour Socialism in the 1920s.

Reason is simply the justice of the mind. It is a sort of ideal Parliament seated in the brain, in which every side of the case gets a fair hearing, and a minority is listened to with inquisitiveness instead of being overwhelmed with abuse. We do not suppose it is possible to keep this Parliament continually in session even for a philosopher ... We need not be greatly alarmed by these occasional defeats of reason provided we keep in mind the necessity for its return.

- *New Statesman*, 1920.¹

In this final chapter, I look at how the parliamentary socialists of the Labour Party in the aftermath of the Great War sought to reassert the primacy of 'reason', fearing that the social institutions which restrained transgressive passions had been left weakened. In the immediate post-war era, it was difficult to judge how far the contagious passions of Bolshevism might reach. At the same time, the end of the war marked the start of the most intense industrial strife Britain had then experienced, dwarfing even that of the pre-war Great Unrest. Labour's theorists turned increasingly towards the necessity of the state to restrain the destructive passions driving mass politics. This was linked to the desire to reform British and international institutions, in order to create a civilisation which would not be so vulnerable to revolution as they felt it to be. In these conditions, strong transgressive emotion was increasingly described in medicalised terms, as symptoms which statesmen must respond to. They hoped that the late 1910s and 1920s would begin the reconstruction of the European community, a 'return' to 'reason' after the heady days of unrest, war, and revolution. This meant taking up, once again, the project of adapting of Labour's socialism to parliamentary norms. In response, many 'sentimental' socialists were disgusted at the manner in which Labour was coming to terms with the narrow economic rationality they had defined themselves against. Some turned away from Labour and from socialism, and even moved to 'irrationalist' philosophies and proto-Fascism.

¹ 'Reason, Reason, and Again Reason', *New Statesman* December 4 1920, 259-60.

The Labour Party after the War

The Representation of the People Act (1918) enfranchised millions of new potential supporters for parliamentary socialism. Having weathered the difficult years of war without a substantial split,² the Labour Party sought to capitalise on this widened electorate. It shed its loose federal structure and began work on building an efficient electoral machine on the model of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD).³ The party adopted a new constitution, including the famous ‘socialist’ Clause IV, and a new programme entitled *Labour and the New Social Order*, which called for the reconstruction of industrial civilisation along different lines than before the war.⁴ They sought a new collectivist social order, ‘based not on fighting but on fraternity’.⁵

Royden Harrison argued that the reform of Labour after the war and its adoption of the new constitution was influenced most strongly by ‘Fabian, and Fabian inspired, thinkers’ as opposed to those pioneer ‘sentimental’ socialists of the Independent Labour Party.⁶ Despite the rise to predominance of ILP members among the leading ranks of the Labour Party in the early 1920s, led by Ramsay MacDonald who became leader of the party in 1922,⁷ the 1918 constitution marked the decline of the ILP as an independent intellectual force within Labour. The ILP remained part of Labour, despite its flirtations with Bolshevism and the Comintern, but became increasingly estranged from the leadership of the party and frustrated with its moderation. This was particularly true at the grass-roots and among the strong Scottish sections of the ILP, which had taken an active part in the unrest during and after the war.

² For the role of the War Emergency Workers’ National Committee in enabling Labour to avoid a substantial split, by prompting all sections of the party to cooperate on pressing issues, see: Royden Harrison, ‘The War Emergency Workers’ National Committee, 1914-1920’ in *Essays in Labour History volume II: 1886-1923* edited by Asa Briggs & John Saville (London, 1971), pp. 211-59.

³ Stefan Berger, ‘“Organising Talent and Disciplined Steadiness”: The German SPD as a Model for the British Labour Party in the 1920s?’, *Contemporary European History* 5, 2 (July, 1996), 171-90.

⁴ Thorpe, *History of the British Labour Party*, pp. 48-9.

⁵ *Labour and the New Social Order* (1918), p. 4.

⁶ Harrison, ‘War Emergency Workers’ National Committee’, p. 257

⁷ For MacDonald’s movements between losing his seat in the House of Commons in 1918 and his rise to leadership in 1922, see: Richard W. Lyman, ‘James Ramsay MacDonald and the Leadership of the Labour Party, 1918-22’, *Journal of British Studies* 2, 1 (November, 1962), 132-60. For MacDonald’s life, see: David Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald* (London, 1977).

Despite its official commitment to collective ownership, Labour's socialist ideology remained, as Matthew Worley remarked, 'a fluid concept ... open to broad interpretation'.⁸ The task of defining this socialism was subordinate to the immediate pragmatic task of securing Labour's ascendancy over the Liberals as the second party in British politics, building towards a secure Labour government. The party became increasingly reliant on the formerly Liberal intellectuals to express the ideas of its movement, who had been attracted to the party during the war through organisations like the UDC.⁹ As Ross McKibbin wrote, 'the result was paradoxical: one of the most highly class-conscious working classes in the world produced [by 1924] a Party whose appeal was specifically intended to be classless'.¹⁰

As has been noted in previous chapters, the end of the war saw episodes of serious industrial unrest, including the first real tests of the Triple Industrial Alliance with a national railway strike in the autumn of 1919 and disputes in the mining industry lasting into the 1920s.¹¹ In this atmosphere, even the most right-wing and conservative among the leadership of the Labour Party supported extra-parliamentary direct action at times, driven by the mood of the movement.¹² At the famous Leeds Convention of June 1917, Labour leaders and thinkers attempted unsuccessfully to spark a mass movement in favour of forming Soviets, as seen in the third chapter.¹³ This pseudo-revolutionary tendency reached its height with the formation of 'Councils of Action' in the summer of 1920, when the movement united in threatening a political general strike against British involvement in the Russo-Polish war.¹⁴

Nevertheless, Labour in the 1920s preferred to imagine the coming of socialism through intelligent reform led by the Parliamentary Labour Party

⁸ Matthew Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate: A History of the British Labour Party Between the Wars* (London, 2005), p. 218.

⁹ See: Marvin Swartz, *The Union of Democratic Control in British Politics During the First World War* (Oxford, 1971).

¹⁰ McKibbin, *Evolution of the Labour Party*, p. 247.

¹¹ See: Bagwell, 'The Triple Industrial Alliance'.

¹² For a discussion of the conflicting 'pull' of parliament and direct action, see Chapter 8, 'The Battle for British Socialism, 1917-1921' in Paul Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack: Englishness, Patriotism and the British Left, 1881-1924* (Suffolk, 1998).

¹³ See: White, 'Soviets in Britain'.

¹⁴ See: Macfarlane, 'Hands Off Russia'; White, 'Council of Action'. These Councils were of lasting importance, seen as a British analogue to the Soviets and revived spontaneously during the General Strike of 1926.

(PLP), taking up its position as an alternative government responsible to British citizens of all classes. Labour and its constituent bodies, with the exception of the BSP as we have seen in chapter five, rejected the overtures of the Comintern. They emerged from the destabilised post-war environment convinced of the inferiority of revolutionary methods compared with their own commitment to ‘the inevitability of gradualism’. During the 1920s Labour was in the forefront of the efforts to re-establish the Socialist International.¹⁵

However, they also led efforts to reintegrate Soviet Russia into the normal system of international relations and overcome the hostility of continental Social Democratic parties towards Bolshevism.¹⁶ British socialists applauded the shifts towards economic normalisation they saw in the period of the New Economic Policy, and hoped it would lead to a corresponding liberalisation of the political state. After the first flush of enthusiasm after 1917, which had decisively cooled by the time of the measured report made by the Labour and trade union delegation to Russia in 1920,¹⁷ Labour saw little to be positively learned from the Soviet experiment until its interest in economic planning was sparked in the late 1920s and early 1930s.¹⁸ This is not to say that there was not still considerable sympathy for the Soviet experiment, among the grassroots especially, but most of those who were sympathetic saw Bolshevism as appropriate for specifically Russian conditions. Stephen Graubard summed up Labour’s generally consistent approach in his study of its relations with the early Soviet state: ‘Friendship for Soviet Russia and its peoples; material and moral aid to Russia when she came under attack from without; hostility towards Moscow’s creations, national and international...’¹⁹ As the prospect of a successful world revolution receded, and the Soviet regime itself shifted into the era of the NEP, Labour set itself the task of reasoned reconstruction and the active avoidance of passionate revolution.

¹⁵ See: Christine Collette, *The International Faith: Labour’s Attitudes to European Socialism, 1918-39* (Aldershot, 1998).

¹⁶ For the shifting relations between the British trade unions and the Communist Party, see: Calhoun, *United Front*.

¹⁷ See: White, ‘British Labour in Soviet Russia’.

¹⁸ See: Davis, ‘Labour’s Political Thought’; Jones, *Russia Complex*; Toye, *Labour Party and the Planned Economy*.

¹⁹ Graubard, *British Labour and the Russian Revolution*, pp. 291-2.

Historians have depicted Labour moving towards ‘corporate socialism’ in the post-war period as it became the second party of government, advocating the state management of crisis-ridden capitalism.²⁰ This was accompanied by a clear shift in emphasis – the emotions were commonly identified as the root cause of conflict and disaster by the party’s leaders, while the discourse of sympathy and the positive meanings attached to such concepts as Trotter’s ‘herd-instinct’ faded from Labour’s discourse. As Lawrence wrote, Labour were ‘determined to portray themselves as the voice of an organised, self-disciplined and ... rational public’.²¹ Many socialists became alienated from the movement, feeling it to have become too enamoured with ‘reason’ defined in terms of narrow economic interest. However, socialist traditions that emphasised the positive worth of the emotions as elements of social life were not easily or cleanly displaced by a more classically liberal emphasis on reason and restraint.

The Passions of the World after the War

Socialists in the Labour Party, surveying the results of years of war and revolution, of intense heights and depths of feeling which characterised their own experiences, commonly wrote of the post-war world as pervaded with destabilising emotion, a ‘vague but irresistible impulse which is driving the world forward along unknown and dangerous ways’.²² Jon Lawrence has written of the suspicion directed by all the major political parties against expressive emotion in the years after the war, arguing that:

The years immediately after the First World War witnessed a dramatic shift in the meanings attached to the political meeting ... from the early 1920s British politicians, Labour no less than Liberal or Conservative, consciously sought to remould popular involvement in the political process by denigrating assertive and irreverent demonstrations of popular feeling and championing an alternative vision of the public as peaceable, rational and above all unassertive.²³

The strikes and riots which afflicted the nation in these years, according to Lawrence, raised fears that the British had been ‘brutalised’ by four years of

²⁰ Foote, *Labour Party’s Political Thought*, p. 83.

²¹ Jon Lawrence, ‘The Transformation of British Public Politics after the First World War’, *Past & Present* 190 (February, 2006), 211.

²² Charles Roden Buxton & Dorothy Francis Buxton, *The World After the War* (London, 1920), p. 11.

²³ Lawrence, ‘Transformation of British Public Politics’, 185.

total war.²⁴ In the words of the Buxtons, two war-time converts to the ILP from the Liberal Party, the post-war era of militant mass movements was the legacy of ‘the suppression of thought, the darkening of counsel, the appeal to the emotions of fear and hatred [which] were deemed to be necessary for the successful prosecution of the War’ and which afflicted all corners of Europe in different forms.²⁵ As Ramsay MacDonald commented,

A mighty conflict carried on with all the resources of a country, with millions of men killing each other, with minds and nerves on the rack of tense emotion, not only upsets mental balance and changes the outlook of people, but develops social and political fears, passions, and sympathies which will not pass away in a day.²⁶

In these conditions, it was the task of socially responsible politicians to delegitimise violence and the strong emotions with which violence was so often equated, and reinforce the parliamentary norms of the British politics.²⁷

J.A. Hobson, the unorthodox economist whose study *Imperialism* (1902) had been a strong influence on Lenin, was one of the generation of Liberal thinkers who became disillusioned with their party, and moved closer to the socialist movement during the war through the UDC. Hobson ultimately joined the ILP in 1919. In 1921 Hobson published an analysis of the global transformative effects of the Great War, arguing for a revolution in political philosophy to understand what the war had revealed about human nature. The substance of his new philosophical underpinning was heavily informed by instinct theory, especially Wallas’ *Human Nature in Politics* (1908), Trotter’s writing on the ‘herd’, and Cedar and Eden Pauls’ *Creative Revolution* (1920), and written entirely in the jargon of the New Psychology. The book can be taken as a reformist’s reply to the Pauls, albeit one which recognised the force of their critique and had come to share much of their Bergsonian and Freudian theoretical framework.

²⁴ Jon Lawrence, ‘Forging a Peaceable Kingdom: War, Violence, and Fear of Brutalisation in Post-First World War Britain’, *Journal of Modern History* 75, 3 (September, 2003), 557-89.

²⁵ C. R. & D. F. Buxton, *World After the War*, pp. 12-3.

²⁶ J. Ramsay MacDonald, *Socialism after the War* (London, 1918), p. 1.

²⁷ However, Richard Toye observed that the inter-war Labour Party’s conception of parliamentary politics often differed from that of their opponents, attempting to make parliament an arena for airing working-class grievances as well as the centre of sober, intelligent reform. See: Richard Toye, ‘“Perfectly Parliamentary”? The Labour Party and the House of Commons in the Inter-War Years’, *Twentieth-Century British History* 25, 1 (2014), 1-29.

Hobson was critical of the post-war government, arguing that the leading statesmen of the aftermath failed to understand the new world opened in 1914 in which all the pillars of nineteenth-century social and economic life had been shaken, because they ‘failed to take account of certain important revelations which the tumultuous events of these years have made regarding that Human Nature which is the operative principle in History’.²⁸ In order for the years of war and revolutionary mass movements to have occurred ‘the whole world and the people in it must have been hugely different from what we all thought them’, and yet the state had not yet shifted from its model of governance which rested on pre-war ideas.²⁹

The material success of the bourgeois revolutionary movements during the nineteenth century, Hobson wrote, had misled thinkers into accepting incorrect notions about the rationality of human relations in a liberal-democratic system. Clearly echoing the Pauls, he argued that these assumptions had even taken hold of the socialist movements nurtured under the wing of the bourgeois, which had been drifting increasingly towards liberalism before the war. However, the falseness of this rationalism and the economic challenges which continually faced the imperial world-system had provoked the beginning of a reaction even before 1914. In politics, class relations, sexual relations, in the arts and in international relations, there arose a broad belief in ‘discontinuous mutations, the creative, the explosive, the unpredictable’, driving Western civilisation towards the abyss of 1914 and beyond.³⁰

As European states were shaken before 1914, and their restraints on the irrational forces of human nature were loosened, whether these restraints were ideological, cultural, or associated with the economic fruits of imperialism, all areas of life were infused with violent heights of passion. Hobson rejected the Pauls’ revolutionary response to this revelation of humanity’s primitive nature beneath the veneer of civilisation, but recognised that evolutionary socialism

²⁸ J.A. Hobson, *Problems of a New World* (London, 1921), p. v.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³⁰ See chapter 2: ‘Down the Rapids’ in *ibid.* His argument strongly aligns with H. Stuart Hughes’ later writing on the philosophy of the period in *Consciousness and Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought* (Cambridge, 1958) and with J.W. Burrow, *The Crisis of Reason: European Thought, 1848-1914* (London, 2000).

would have to change before it could successfully compete with Bolshevism as the creed most in line with the new circumstances.

In such a moment, it was necessary for reformers to disavow the shallow Panglossian optimism of the Victorian bourgeoisie, and reject the tutelage of liberalism. Hobson urged socialists to outline concrete plans which could achieve a reasonable society through conscious effort. Such a socialist programme would necessarily be based on the New Psychology, to create a social environment that could channel emotional forces in a more stable, harmonious, and productive way than liberal-democratic capitalism could achieve. As he wrote:

The sole alternative to a wild upheaval, in which the separate passions and group interests shall scramble for blind satisfaction, is an appeal to reason as the preserver of social sanity and the vindicator of the deeper and enduring purposes of mankind. For reason is not a cold-blooded logic. It is humanity moved by its deepest and broadest current of creative energy, working for the largest human ends.³¹

Taking the perspective of the whole of human society rather than of its working-class ‘partial herd’, socialist rationality could not afford to ignore proletarian mass emotion, but must enlist it and subordinate it to its larger project. Only by becoming intelligent about the emotions could international socialism steer a perilous path through to a ‘revolution by consent’ and avoid a complete dissolution of civilisation into resurgent animal instinct.

These fears about a heightened and excessive degree of contagious emotion flooding the world before and during the war, as articulated by Hobson, were widely shared, and provided themes for dystopian speculation. In *Fear* (2005), Joanna Bourke devoted a chapter to the post-war period and the 1920s as a period pervaded by the middle-class fear of a dissolving class structure. She wrote of one episode in particular, months before the General Strike of 1926. A radio play written by Ronald Knox, a Catholic priest, depicted London in the grip of revolution and sparked a panic:

The twenty-minute programme was scarcely over before listeners all over the country became agitated, besieging local police stations, the BBC’s regional centres, newspapers offices and the Savoy Hotel, demanding ‘how soon the tide of civil war might be expected to sweep in [our] direction’. The manager of the Savoy calculated that in addition to around two hundred local calls, the hotel answered hundreds of trunk calls from Manchester, Newcastle, Hull, Leeds, Scotland and even Ireland, asking if it was advisable to cancel room bookings ... In Newcastle, the Sheriff was

³¹ Hobson, *Problems of a New World*, p. 266.

nervously uncertain about what precautions he should be taking to ensure that anarchy did not spread to his part of the country, while the wife of the Lord Mayor of that city was reported to have been 'greatly upset' at being unable to contact her husband (who was out at dinner) to inform him about the rising 'red tide of revolution'.³²

Such anxieties could be detrimental to Labour, but also provided the party with an opportunity to recast its reformist socialism in respectable, patriotic, and anti-revolutionary terms.

The Russian Revolution provoked many popular novels, of often very poor quality, which demonstrated the broadness of this theme of excessive, contagious emotion. These novels played on the fear of social upheaval, and worked within an already well-worn 'red scare' genre depicting a future British revolution.³³ *Anymoon* (1919) by Horace Bleackley was one such popular anti-socialist novel, reflecting the anxieties of lower-middle-class readers who felt their England, newly secured against the German war-machine, to be under threat from internal disorder driven by Reds, foreigners, and feminists. *Anymoon* is chiefly of interest here insofar as it departed from this genre's norms by making the hero of the novel a moderate Labour leader of the Alexander Kerensky or the Ramsay MacDonald type, and for its depiction of politics during a near-future collapse of civilisation into primitive emotionality.

Bleackley's depiction of the coming 'Great Upheaval' draws strongly on the language and assumptions of Le Bon's crowd psychology. He showed the working classes throwing off the veneer of civilisation and descending to pure animal instinct, their behaviour driven entirely by the immediacy of contagious emotion. The principal character driving the action is not an individual, but rather the massed crowds united into one organism. Bleackley represents this crowd with unstable naturalistic metaphors. In one passage the mass gathered in Trafalgar Square is depicted 'spreading its tentacles', 'ebbing and flowing in restless waves like the swell of a rising sea'; 'a low growl of anger seemed to come booming from the swollen depths ... a tempest of cheering swept fiercely

³² Joanna Bourke, *Fear: A Cultural History* (London, 2005), p. 170.

³³ See: Michael Hughes & Harry Wood, 'Crimson Nightmares: Tales of Invasion and Fears of Revolution in Early Twentieth-Century Britain', *Contemporary British History* 28, 3 (2014), 294-317. See also: Steve Nicholson, *British Theatre and the Red Peril: The Portrayal of Communism, 1917-1945* (Exeter, 1999). In one play, Nicholson wrote, the villain was 'King Discontent, whose servants, Jealousy, Pessimism and Bolshevism, imprison the fair maiden Content in order to secure their power'. (p. 30). This genre was not known for subtlety.

across the surface of the mighty throng', its 'sea of faces was lashed into a storm',³⁴ and 'there was a tumultuous seething, as when a stick is driven into a great ant-heap'.³⁵

The crowd is an infantile Leviathan driven by its passions, forcing a debased style of street politics on those political agents who retained their individuality. Individualised and named characters struggle to guide the masses according to their own political projects by methods of dramatisation and sloganeering. Joseph Anymoon, the moderate Labour Prime Minister, and 'Cohen', the leader of the faction styled after the Bolsheviks, who thrives on the disorder, trade speeches in order to placate, appease, enrage, and otherwise guide the crowd by the emotional impact of their words. The narrative turns around the immediate stimulations that affect the masses and provoke them into sudden changes of orientation: the sound of the Marseillaise to reinforce revolutionary vigour, or the dramatic appearance of a leading figure with a new and striking slogan. Bleackley's description of a speech by Cohen is demonstrative of the place of Bolshevik agitation in the British imagination:

The crowd hung upon his every word with rapture, as the speaker played upon their emotions as a skilful musician plays upon his instrument. He seemed to hold his auditors in the hollow of his hand, arousing them to the highest pitch of anger or plunging them into the lowest depths of gloom. And as they listened to him each person in the vast throng became aware that he was a down-trodden wretch, the victim of a merciless autocracy. The speech was a long one, lasting for an hour and a half, and before its close the mob had been whipped into the wildest frenzy.³⁶

After a dream of the dystopian and hive-like Communist future following the success of this revolution, Anymoon is fully awakened to the evils of socialism. He becomes the leader of the counter-revolution, ending his adventure by reconstituting the Houses of Parliament, inviting the King back from exile, and reinstating free trade in a system of unbridled private ownership. When Cohen is defeated and deported to Palestine, the hold of 'international foreigners' over the British working class is broken and a more civilised mode of life returns.³⁷

³⁴ Horace Bleackley, *Anymoon* (London, 1919), p. 62.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 324.

Labour socialists themselves would have squirmed to be associated with such crude anti-Semitism and John Bull anti-socialism, but the novel does harmonise in key respects with the Labour Party's conception of its role in the post-war world. Revolutionary socialists saw workers' councils, shop stewards, and the Communist Party as the agents which could win the loyalty of the working class and restore civilisation on a higher level in the event of bourgeois society dissolving into the anarchy of pure instinct. Socialists in the Labour Party sought instead to build a coalition of all classes driven by the fear of such a dissolution and committed to maintaining civilisation as an unbroken tradition progressing gradually and organically towards socialism. With the working class widely assumed to be the most vulnerable to a general dissolution into animal instinct, Labour could easily be seen as the force which should prevent them from doing so. This project required the Labour Party to stand above the conflicting passions of the 'partial herds' while retaining the class loyalties on which its support was based. It would take the position of the nation, above class struggle. An editorial for the *Labour Magazine*, a joint venture between the Labour Party and the TUC, affirmed the anti-revolutionary aims of Labour's reformist policy: 'Labour's scheme is against revolution. It proposes a means whereby violent upheaval and a class war can be averted'.³⁸

Transcending the Passions, Reading the Symptoms

Till we have a world of saints, we must have a world of restraints.

- The *New Statesman*, 1920.³⁹

Of all the trends of opinion within the Labour Party, the Fabians were the most sensitive to the New Psychology and its potential uses for a dispassionate and scientific administration of society. Leading members of the Fabian Society had been involved in the Coefficients dining club before the war, which united imperialists and collectivists around a shared belief in imperial 'efficiency'. They were accustomed to viewing collectivist or state socialist institutions as the means through which social scientific knowledge could be applied in order to secure the Empire's health. Of all the publications most associated with the

³⁸ 'Editorial Notes', *Labour Magazine* 1, 7 (November, 1922), 314.

³⁹ 'The Wild Beast Theory', *New Statesman* October 2 1920, 697.

project of Labour socialism after the war, the *New Statesman* most explicitly sought to clarify its attitudes towards emotion as a driving force of revolution. Though by no means simply a Labour or Fabian mouth-piece, and often close to the Asquithian Liberals, the magazine around the end of the war was ‘almost by default a semi-official organ of the Labour Party’.⁴⁰ It was also a strongly anti-Bolshevik paper, cooperating clandestinely with government schemes to counter revolutionary propaganda.⁴¹ For the socialists and liberals running the *New Statesman*, Bolshevism could be beaten most easily by establishing an effective Labour Party, which would secure the faith in parliamentary democracy of those most vulnerable to Communist ideas.⁴²

Pre-empting the post-war wave of unrest, one *New Statesman* article of early 1918 analysed ‘discontent’ in the terms of instinct psychology, outlining how Labour should orient itself towards the building ‘revolutionary passion’.⁴³ Its author argued that the moral injunctions coming from the Left and the Right – to take a side either for or against instances of erupting discontent – was inadequate for a socialist seeking to harmonise the interests of society as a whole. Sharing in the collective emotions of the contending forces was an abrogation of the responsibility to understand the passions driving disorder scientifically, as symptoms of underlying problems.⁴⁴ A socialist must approach society, and appraise its collective passions, as a doctor to his patient:

There is no value in either content or discontent except in so far as they are symptoms of health or disease. To assume contentment when the circumstances do not warrant it is like lying to oneself or to the doctor about an illness.⁴⁵

The passions the author saw sweeping through Europe had their roots in the failure of politics to deliver a world based on ‘equality of contentment’, as successive governments neglected the happiness of the majority in society in pursuit of other political goals.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Smith, *New Statesman*, p. 115.

⁴¹ See Chapter 6: ‘Editor or spy? Clifford Sharp and Bolshevik Russia’ in *ibid.*

⁴² See: ‘The Peril of Bolshevism’, *New Statesman* 7 December 1918, 191-2.

⁴³ ‘Discontent’, *New Statesman* February 9 1918, 445.

⁴⁴ Much as W.H.R. Rivers argued during his election campaign in 1922, as was seen in chapter four.

⁴⁵ ‘Discontent’, *New Statesman*, 444.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 445.

For the Fabians, however, this function of alerting the dispassionate social scientists and statesmen to an underlying problem in the social organism was the extent of the use of the destructive passions. In no way could they, or the outbursts of class conflict they spurred, be progressive in themselves. For Marx and Engels, proletarian discontent would lead to new bonds of sociability among the suffering classes, which would provide the emotional foundation of the coming world civilisation. For the Fabians, however, the discontented passions were not conceived as the germ of a process of development reaching beyond them – far from it. The lower passions of class hatred and struggle were an irremovable taint for every cause animated by them, no matter how mixed with higher passions of justice and sympathy:

... we have all the suspiciousness, the venom, the hatred, the ruthlessness of the discontented man. All these things are, no doubt, ennobled by generosity and pity, but, on the other hand, the generosity and pity are warped by so much suspicion and hatred. That is the tragedy of discontent. It is at once as noble as the love of perfection, and as degrading as envy. We loathe the idea of a class war, because we feel it is bound to be carried on with envy as one of its great motive forces. To foment the envy rather than the idealism of the crowd is what marks a man as a demagogue. He becomes a cheap-jack of hatred rather than a forerunner of the millennium. There is no possibility of building a new society on the baser passions.⁴⁷

Nevertheless, they rebuked statesmen of the old style, who hoped to rule by fear and awe, by the forceful restraint of mass passions alone. For the *New Statesman*, the war had brought a new situation in which the old methods of repression could no longer work, but would only ‘sow the seeds of civil war when we ought to be laying the foundations of an earthly paradise’.⁴⁸ Commenting on the government’s resort to ‘Black-and-Tan methods’ in putting down threats to the state, the *New Statesman* opposed such methods chiefly because of their potential to unsettle the stability of the empire:

To-day Mr. Lloyd George ... is openly instructing all discontented men that there is no vileness of murder or torture which may not be practised by men determined on an end. To teach such a lesson to the world at a time when in every country there are the seeds and the stirrings of a revolutionary element seems to us to be a crime not merely against humanity at large but against the upper and middle classes in particular. We are surprised that these classes do not see the danger that lies in store for them if Lloyd Georgian terrorism is persisted in. If there was ever a period at which it was madness to give lessons in terrorism to the mob it is the present.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 445.

⁴⁹ ‘How the Terror Comes Home’, *New Statesman* November 20 1920, 193.

Fabian commentary on the unfolding Bolshevik Revolution advanced the interpretation that it was a manifestation of discontented passions which had broken their restraints. These passions could only be unproductive and harmful of themselves. Reactionary attempts to isolate and overthrow the regime which had become a lightning rod for these passions, however, only provoked discontent further and deepened the instability of the continent. In the same way, discontent was fuelled at home by Lloyd George's attempts to defeat labour unrest by a mixture of trickery and force rather than constructive reform.

As the disagreements between the Communists and the Labour Party became ever more intense throughout the 1920s, becoming especially marked after the failure of MacDonald's 1924 government, Labour socialists contrasted their own restrained style with the passions of Communism: 'the old spirit of hatred, distrust and destruction, "the devilish spirit of fight" ... [which runs] counter to the [Labour] Party's faith in reason and democracy'.⁵⁰ Restraint and discipline, then, would have to be joined by wise social policies gently spurring a gradual transformation towards the collectivist state, harmonising with spontaneous evolutionary tendencies at work under the surface of social life, or else they would be self-defeating.

Parliament and Revolution: New Statesmen for the New Psychology

Socialist reforms were the necessary answer to the threat of mass Bolshevism, a term which became for many little more than a shorthand for the dammed-up passions of the working-class unconscious, overcoming its repression in bursts of differing strength and content across European populations and beyond. Ramsay MacDonald was the towering figure in the history of the Labour Party in this period and a key formulator of this argument between the Russian Revolution and his rise to party leadership in 1922. As Charles Mowat argued, he became something like a living embodiment of the party's soul after the death of Keir Hardie in 1915. The tensions and contradictions of MacDonald's

⁵⁰ 'Propagandist', 'Memories and Reflections', *Labour Magazine* 4, 8 (December, 1925), 357.

personality, torn between liberalism and socialism, nationalism and internationalism, reflected those of the broader Labour project. As Mowat wrote,

He expressed its hopeful, sentimental, intangible socialism, which means to each member what he wants it to mean. He kept it on the path of moderate and of constitutional method, particularly in the uneasy days of 1919-21.⁵¹

MacDonald was aided by the good-will he had built up among those on the Left, who were most attracted to Bolshevism's stand against the Great War. He had faced slander from their mutual enemies for his own opposition to the war, and his initial responses to the Russian Revolution had chimed with the spirit of enthusiasm shared among the Left.

At first, MacDonald argued with nuance against the lure of Bolshevism, acknowledging the force of its challenge but holding fast to his 'organic' interpretation of social development. He saw the Russian Revolution as one aspect of a broader 'European Revolution' which became manifest in different degrees and with different consequences across the continent, its character defined by the particular circumstances and traditions of each nation.⁵² His response had the benefits of ambiguity. Rather than rejecting the movement outright, he extolled the positive elements of the revolutionary challenge while arguing that, in Britain, they should be embodied in reforms of the kind he had always advocated.

Contrary to his reputation, MacDonald wrote with some urgency of the need for immediate practical reform after the war. He cautioned against seeing the 'herd emotions of unity in defence' raised by the war as an achieved social solidarity, arguing that they could not endure alongside an underlying 'economic and social machinery' which continued to divide citizens by class: 'To decorate a steam engine with flags and ribbons changes its appearance, but does not revolutionise the action of its boilers, its pistons, its wheels, and its driving rods'.⁵³ As he wrote, 'unless good emotion in society finds expression through a new system of economic relationships, that good emotion can have no social result and, indeed, will sink to mere sentimentality'.⁵⁴ To make the revolutionary

⁵¹ C.L. Mowat, 'Ramsay MacDonald and the Labour Party' in *Essays in Labour History vol. II*, p. 151.

⁵² MacDonald, *Socialism after the War*, p. 9.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

emotion of the day into practical politics, he wrote, ‘we return to the programmes outlined in our speeches before the war’.⁵⁵ The revolutionary emotions of the time gave these older programmes a new force, breaking down the barriers to their realisation:

Revolution is not a bloody upturning; it is the change which is made when men long asleep wake up, when society oppressed by the lethargy of its own complexities suddenly finds itself free to move, when a new tide of living energy rushing up into old channels breaks them and overflows in a fertilising flood. The civilised world is in such a state to-day. Let Socialism boldly step out and take the opportunity which presents itself.⁵⁶

If emotions were largely universal across human beings, arising from innate instincts, this was both encouraging and concerning for the socialists of the Labour Party. It implied the possibility of a universal community sharing in a common humanity. The project of a unified world state, or at the very least a League of Nations, was a potential reality based on known facts of the human race rather than a utopian speculation. However, this universal underpinning of instincts and affections, dividing into specific class instincts according to class-based differences in experience, was thought to give the Labour movement a special drive towards social reform and the reconciliation of humanity. Gerald Gould, the *Daily Herald* writer and left-wing ally of George Lansbury, wrote in 1920 that, while Labour’s adherents did not differ...

... from other human beings in natural affections, capacities, and desires, it is true that, by sheer force of *being* ‘Labour’, a certain portion, a very large portion, of the community lives under conditions fundamentally distinct from, and irreconcilable with, the conditions under which that class lives which employs, and lives by employing, Labour.⁵⁷

This universality also meant that the outbursts of emotion driving the Russian Revolution would be possible, if similar circumstances of social collapse were conjured by decaying capitalism in Britain. The years of war and unrest had taught Labour how quickly ‘fluctuations in the revolutionary temper of the workers’ could swing from reaction to revolution.⁵⁸ The inability of a revolutionary movement to get off the ground in Britain was no guarantee that it would be impossible in the future if conditions changed, and so Labour

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 55.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 80.

⁵⁷ Gerald Gould, *The Coming Revolution in Great Britain* (London, 1920), p. 31.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 7.

socialists took it upon themselves to prevent such conditions from arising by peaceful methods.

Within this parliamentary socialist settlement, there remained great distinctions. For the left-wing of Labour, this meant a much more interventionist approach, a conscious overhaul of the social system (a 'Revolution by Reason', as the programme designed by Oswald Mosley and John Strachey in the mid-1920s was known, otherwise termed a 'revolution by consent'). G.D.H. Cole's restatement of Guild Socialism in 1920 emphasised the need to transform social institutions 'not because it believes that the life of men is comprehended in their social machinery, but because social machinery, as it is good or bad, harmonious or discordant with human desires and instincts, is the means either of furthering, or of thwarting, the expression of human personality'.⁵⁹ R.H. Tawney famously called for the re-foundation of social institutions on the basis of 'function', duty, or obligation, rather than of rights. New institutional arrangements would mean the end of the reification of acquisitiveness, which had led to the catastrophes of the age.⁶⁰

For the leading figures of the Labour Party, however, socialist governance meant chiefly the amelioration of the elements of capitalist society which created social disturbance. Despite his flirtations with the language of social revolution, after 1918 MacDonald sought to avoid such interventionism. A Labour government would remove the worst irrationalities of the system while gradual, organic change spontaneously lead to a society of harmony and social sympathy. His broadly positive evaluation of revolutionary emotion soon gave way to a more pessimistic interpretation. The post-war general election of 1918 was not the breakthrough Labour figures had hoped, being held in a psychological atmosphere of revived jingoism. MacDonald himself, as a high-profile advocate of a negotiated peace, lost his seat in the House of Commons. His writing afterwards complemented the arguments of the *New Statesman*, highlighting the dangers inherent to such periods of unstable emotionality as unleashed by the world war far more than their creative potential:

⁵⁹ G.D.H. Cole, *Guild Socialism Restated* (London, 1920), p. 25.

⁶⁰ See: Tawney, *Acquisitive Society*.

At this present moment, we know the mass at its worst – a mass composed not of people who reflect, but of people who feel, its ‘opinion’ like a sea lashed into storm by winds, not like a river flowing onwards in well-defined channels; its activities of the nature of demonstrations, not of thoughts; roused by cries, catchwords, and phrases, and appealed to through its simpler emotions. The mass mind in times like this is still the elemental mind of primitive man, and its rationale belongs to the instinct through which social cohesion grew rather than to the reason by which social cohesion develops.⁶¹

The state of aroused mass emotionality necessary for the prosecution of modern warfare, he argued, provided the psychological atmosphere in which both revolutionary and reactionary movements could function effectively. Intensified collective emotions, ‘the emotions of the primitive herd ... the woodland emotions of [our] arboreal forefathers’,⁶² were the air such radical political movements breathed in and thrived on. MacDonald gave credit to the Bolsheviks for their critique of parliamentary government as a means by which the owners of capital ‘control the emotions and motives which determine the political actions of the mass’.⁶³ He nevertheless held firm to his belief in gradual, ‘organic’ change as opposed to class struggle, and what he called ‘intellectual determinism’ as distinct from ‘economic determinism’ – his poor experience of parliamentary democracy had left him more cynical, but not ready to renounce the primacy of politics.⁶⁴

In response to the Russian Revolution, MacDonald and other Labour socialists championed the values of civilisation in an almost Victorian manner, insisting on the need to use the democratic state to restrain the ardour of the population until such time, at least, as social reform had removed the causes of conflict between citizens. One writer affirmed, at the height of the post-war unrest, that:

Civilisation is as much a matter of restraint as of liberty. It is the discovery of a method of liberating human beings through a discipline that affects not only common people but kings and clergymen, schoolmasters, soldiers, and policemen.⁶⁵

As has been shown, Fabians read the ideas of the New Psychology in their most pessimistic interpretation. They countered the emphasis on the creativity of enflamed mass emotion seen among revolutionists, and tied themselves to the

⁶¹ J. Ramsay MacDonald, *Parliament and Revolution* (Manchester, 1919), pp. 5-6.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 86, 88.

⁶⁵ ‘Wild Beast Theory’, *New Statesman*, 698.

project of using the democratic state to restrain these passions alongside a programme of social reform. In place of the perpetual balance of power between self-interest and the passions envisaged by liberal theorists, Labour socialists hoped to overcome each of these. This would come about by a change of the socio-economic environment, the enthronement of reason by reform of the political process, and the cultivation of a gentle social sympathy achieved by a scientific understanding of the underlying problems which gave rise to disorderly passions.

In practical terms, all this was supposed to be achieved through the future Labour government. Socialist reforms could only be steered by representative government, embodying the positive values of reason and nationality. Labour sought, therefore, to defend parliament against the challenge posed to them by the Soviet form and to defend reason against revolutionary readings of the New Psychology, two tasks that were seen as intimately connected. The *New Statesman* extolled reason in grandiose terms as the saviour of civilisation, in a passage worth quoting at length as the exemplary statement of their belief in the abilities of human rationality, should the electorate choose to listen to its call:

The energy of politics may come from profounder passions – though surely no passion is profounder than the passion of justice – but reason must hold the reins. Reason during the last two years could have saved tens of thousands of lives and millions of pounds. It could have filled Europe with the eagerness to work for a new world. It could have assisted the resurrection of Russia and made Germany a partner working for the general wealth of Europe. It could have made peace with Ireland and produced conditions in England that would have prevented any honest man from being unemployed. We should – all but a few profiteers – have been richer, happier, more friendly, and less apprehensive of the future. We should be paying less for our food, and we should not be guilty of apologising for crimes committed in our name. Even to-day we could transform Europe, not by the worship of reason, but by making a quite moderate use of it. For lack of it, the bottom of civilisation may fall out one of these days, and we and our children may be precipitated into chaos. To live by impulse – the impulse of egoism, hatred, and revenge – is to be a savage. It is by keeping a firm grip on reason alone that we can hope to prevent the white races from reverting to savagery.⁶⁶

For this writer, nobody would ‘ever turn to violent revolution while the Parliamentary instrument is even moderately effective’.⁶⁷

The European social crisis of the early twentieth century was a fundamentally political problem, the result of parliament failing to play its dual

⁶⁶ ‘Reason, Reason, and Again Reason’, *New Statesman*, 260.

⁶⁷ ‘Revolution’, *New Statesman* December 11 1920, 301.

role of restraint and reform. There was little hint that the irrationalities of parliament in the past might have been provoked by socio-economic forces largely beyond political control, as the Marxists argued. If anything, the socialists of the Labour Party thought the opposite: that a government of the privileged had been irrationally opposed to spontaneous forces of progressive organic change. Instead, an elastic and responsive Labour government would give ‘free play for evolutionary forces’, as a commentator on Harold Laski’s *Grammar of Politics* (1925) wrote, in order to avoid ‘destructive explosions such as the French and Russian revolutions’ which were the result of reactionary attempts to restrain without reform.⁶⁸

Proto-Fascism: Exiles from Sentimental Socialism

My great religion is a belief in the blood, the flesh, as being wiser than the intellect. We can go wrong in our minds. But what our blood feels and believes and says, is always true.

- D.H. Lawrence, 1913.⁶⁹

This renewed emphasis on reason and restraint was alienating for some socialists, who had cut their teeth in the pre-war atmosphere of moral crusade. D.D. Wilson argued that the initial search for ‘fellowship and sentiment’ in the British socialist revival, through the struggle for a more equal and harmonious post-capitalist society, degenerated in the early twentieth century. Led by the *New Age* journal, a socialist and literary modernist incubator of British proto-fascism, Wilson argued that the sentimental socialist emphasis on ‘feelings and will’ became increasingly Nietzschean and decreasingly socialist.⁷⁰ The end of the First World War and the division of the world socialist movement into opposing revolutionary and parliamentary movements left many of these sentimentalists politically homeless, and prompted their ultimate rejection of socialism *tout court*.

⁶⁸ ‘Book of the Month’, *Labour Magazine* 4, 1 (May, 1925), 184.

⁶⁹ D.H. Lawrence, *The Selected Letters of D.H. Lawrence* edited by James T. Boulton (Cambridge, 1997), p. 53.

⁷⁰ See: Wilson, ‘Fellowship and Sentiment’, Chapter 8. ‘From Hope to Despair’: The Influence of Ethical Socialism in the early 20th Century’.

As MacDonald commented, ‘it is always unfortunate for the poor pioneer who has gone through the pioneering days and who lives into the stage after’.⁷¹ Shaw Desmond was one who had joined the ILP when the movement was ‘more a religion than a politic’,⁷² and was alienated by the increasing centrality of economic issues. He deplored the change wrought in the Labour movement by its decreasing stock of ‘feeling and imagination and passion’ in favour of the basic materialist goal of ‘more money for less work’.⁷³ Rather than celebrating the revolutionary passion of the Bolsheviks however, Desmond linked his socialism squarely to what he saw as the gentle sentimentality of the British working class, alien to Marxist dogmas or ‘the Social Democratic goal of the Clockwork State’.⁷⁴ His novel *Democracy* (1919) was partly a fictional representation of the pre-war socialist movement and partly a forecast of its further development.⁷⁵ Desmond imagined a coming revolution arising from the prevailing ‘Age of Nerves’ which followed the war. In this period, immediate and bodily desires ruled in the behaviour of the masses. Combined with the increasingly cold economic rationality of an over-intellectualised Social Democracy, the more spiritual emotionality which he had championed as the soul of socialism and the unique offering of the ILP was overwhelmed. It was this sentimentality which alone could provide a bridge between the intellect and material desire. For Desmond it was the absence of this emotionality verging on spirituality, which had animated the socialist revival of the 1880s, which allowed the catastrophes of the early twentieth century – cutting economic desire and cold scientism from any mediating emotional force. International socialism’s acquiescence to base material interest and to the fetishism of parliamentary reason marked:

⁷¹ James Ramsay MacDonald quoted in Asa Briggs, ‘Introduction’ in *Essays in Labour History volume II: 1886-1923* edited by Asa Briggs & John Saville (London, 1971), p. 2.

⁷² Shaw Desmond, *Labour: The Giant with Feet of Clay* (London, 1921), p. 1.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 133-4.

⁷⁵ His chapters on the pre-war socialist movement depict a running debate between three theoreticians, each arguing for the primacy either of the head (Social Democracy), the heart (sentimental socialism), or the stomach (Labourism) - with an impressive lack of subtlety. As the latter argues: ‘There’s only one wye to appeal to the hanimile known as the working-man, and that’s through his stummick. When you’ve filled that, then you can go a step ‘igher to his ‘art, and when you’ve torked to wot you might call his bloomin’ emotions, then you can come the intellectual over ‘im. But the stummick’s first...’. Shaw Desmond, *Democracy* (New York, 1919), p. 44.

... the triumph of matter over man – the triumph of death over life ... a Europe which had rapidly become a Europe of insanity and nervous decadence. It was as though a stage had been reached in the cold development of intellect to the exclusion of the spiritual, when, with the decay of the intuitive faculties, nerve-madness had supervened. It was as though the intellectual process, unvitalised by the spiritual, ceasing to be a bridge from the instinct of the lower animals to the intuition of man, had blinded itself in a *cul de sac* of matter...⁷⁶

Alienated by the adaptation of socialism to such a repulsive age and its neglect of the higher emotions which had once been its driving force, Desmond turned his back on the socialist movement. He came to satisfy his spiritual tendencies instead by co-founding the International Institute for Psychical Research in 1934, and by writing numerous works on faith-healing, reincarnation, and psychic-powers.

Desmond's ghost-hunting was perhaps a harmless avenue for frustrated sentimentalism. Others turned to martial, aristocratic, and illiberal 'irrationalist' politics, even to fascism. For D.D. Wilson, D.H. Lawrence was the figure in whom the disillusion of the sentimental socialists with socialism itself, the shift 'from hope to despair', was the starkest.⁷⁷ Mixing as a young man in Radical and Fabian circles, Lawrence's project of a more vivid and authentic collective life was linked to socialism for much the same reason that Oscar Wilde argued for socialism. By securing material security for all, and leaving no person dependent on the will of any owner of capital for their subsistence, it would free individuals from the necessity of involving themselves too deeply in vulgar anxieties and allow the fuller development of authentic individual personality. In Lawrence's case this fuller development was to be had through a kind of socio-sexual mysticism. He wrote to Russell in February, 1915:

I have only to stick to my vision of a life when men are freer from the immediate material things, where they need never be as they are now on the defense against each other, largely because of the struggle for existence, which is a real thing, even to those who need not make the struggle. So a vision of a better life must include a revolution of society ...[then] the drama shall be between individual men & women, not between nations & classes. And the great living experience for every man is his adventure into the woman. And the ultimate passion of every man is to >>realise<< [sic] be within himself the whole of mankind – which I call social passion – which is what brings to fruit your philosophical writings. The man embraces in the woman all that is not himself, and from that one resultant, from that embrace, comes every new action.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 189

⁷⁷ Wilson, 'Fellowship and Sentiment', Chapter 8.

⁷⁸ D.H. Lawrence, *D.H. Lawrence's Letters to Bertrand Russell* edited by Harry T. Moore (New York, 1948), pp. 36-7.

Lawrence wanted to return to the unconscious, basing life in ‘blood-being, a blood-consciousness, a blood-soul, complete and apart from the mental & nerve consciousness’. He exhorted Russell to ‘stop working and being an ego, & have the courage to be a creature’.⁷⁹

With the Great Unrest, the war and the Russian Revolution, Lawrence gradually turned against socialism and against democracy. For Lawrence, as for Russell, the war had been a revelation of the true nature of Europe’s populations:

Till the Great War, we believed in Liberty, Equality, Fraternity and in the Voice of the People. The best men and women believed that the poorer classes were simple and honourable, and that when the Voice of the People was heard, it would speak simple, but wise, and decent things, free from the falsities of the educated upper classes.

Came the war. And what then? What sort of sound did the Voice of the People make?⁸⁰

The ‘voice of the People’ had shown itself really to be the voice of the herd conceived in the most unflattering terms. *Demos* sought only after the immediate satisfaction of base instincts, ‘vulgar, common, ugly, like the voice of the man in the crowd’.⁸¹ Understanding the working-class struggle narrowly, as an expression of economic acquisitiveness alone, Lawrence conflated the mass support for the war with the Labour movement as each different expressions of ‘the mob’ mentality.⁸² In one 1915 letter to Russell he wrote:

Can’t you see the whole state is collapsing. Look at the Welsh strike. This war is going to develop into the last great war between labour & capital. It will be a ghastly chaos of destruction, if it is left to Labour to be constructive. The fight must immediately be given a higher aim than the triumph of Labour, or we shall have another French Revolution. The deadly Hydra now is the hydra of Equality. Liberty, Equality & Fraternity is the three-fanged serpent. You must have a government based upon good, better & best.⁸³

Though initially impressed by the power and spectacle of the Russian Revolution, and inspired by the vigorous dictatorial tendencies of the Bolshevik

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 65, 70.

⁸⁰ Lawrence, *Movements in European History*, p. 258.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 259.

⁸² See: Macdonald Daly, ‘D.H. Lawrence and Labour in the Great War’, *Modern Language Review* 89, 1 (January, 1994), 19-38.

⁸³ Lawrence, *Letters to Bertrand Russell*, pp. 52-3.

Party,⁸⁴ he soon began to regret the disappearance of Imperial Russia, which came to signify lost aristocratic virtues. With the war, the rise of the Labour Party and the rapid growth of trade unionism, the ‘herd’ or ‘mob’ had become the ruling force of society. The change which had transformed the noble and aristocratic Tsarist Empire into the plebeian and vulgar Soviet Russia was merely an observable, outward form of the internal change which the war had brought across Europe and within Britain.

Lawrence never lost his hatred of the bourgeoisie, or his total critique of industrial class society and the impoverished emotional lives it created. His poetry of the 1920s often reads like a disillusioned and embittered William Morris, who condemned the ‘sickly feelings’ of bourgeois society.⁸⁵

How beastly the bourgeois is
especially the male of the species –

Nicely groomed, like a mushroom
standing there so sleek and erect and eyeable –
and like a fungus, living on the remains of bygone life
sucking his life out of the dead leaves of greater life than his
own.

And even so, he’s stale, he’s been there too long.
Touch him, and you’ll find he’s all gone inside
Just like an old mushroom, all wormy inside, and hollow
under a smooth skin and an upright appearance.
Full of seething, wormy, hollow feelings
rather nasty –
How beastly the bourgeois is!⁸⁶

Or like an Edward Carpenter, growing ever more impatient for the long-awaited return of the body ‘long-concealed’:⁸⁷

They stole your body from you, and left you an animated carcass
to work with, and nothing else:
unless goggling eyes, to goggle at the film,
and a board-school brain, stuffed up with the ha’penny press.
Your instincts gone, your intuition gone, your passion dead,
Oh carcass with a board-school mind and a ha’penny-newspaper
intelligence,
what have they done to you, what have they done to you, oh what
have they done to you?⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Which, alongside the example of Mussolini’s Blackshirts, provided a model for ‘the Diggers’ in *Kangaroo* (1923).

⁸⁵ See chapter two.

⁸⁶ D.H. Lawrence, ‘How Beastly the Bourgeois is’ in *The Complete Poems of D.H. Lawrence* (Hertfordshire, 2002), pp. 348-9.

⁸⁷ See chapter two.

⁸⁸ D.H. Lawrence, ‘What Have They Done to You?’ in *Complete Poems*, p. 523.

However, in the 1920s this critique was no longer tied to an explicitly socialist project. It was increasingly directed against all forms of socialism or democracy, whether effete parliamentary socialism captured by what Lawrence considered to be disfiguring liberal rationalism,⁸⁹ or Communism, intent as it was on creating the kind of industrial society which he hated. He condemned these as inhumanly mechanical, assuming that ‘we are all little engines that must be stoked and watered and housed, so that we can do our share of the work and get our ration of amusement or enjoyment’, and as mutilating natural ‘blood-consciousness’.⁹⁰

Lawrence’s hopes came to rest in the revival of aristocracy, and the transformation of the bourgeois-proletarian class conflict into a harmonious relationship between natural leaders and natural slaves. He lost any feeling that communal fulfilment could be possible from the basis of modern European reality. Instead, he placed his hopes in the revival of a ‘natural aristocracy’ of feeling, recalling the hierarchical, racist, misogynist, and anti-democratic theories of emotion described in the first chapter. As he wrote, in one of his non-fiction essays:

Life is more vivid in the dandelion than in the green fern, or than in a palm tree.
 Life is more vivid in a snake than in a butterfly.
 Life is more vivid in a wren than in an alligator.
 Life is more vivid in a cat than in an ostrich.
 Life is more vivid in the Mexican who drives the wagon, than in the two horses in the wagon.

⁸⁹ As one historian wrote:

Lawrence’s theory of the individual psyche, on which his theory of society depends, can be summarised crudely enough as follows: Within each individual there is a “dark self” (or “blood being”, or “blood consciousness” or “active unconsciousness”) which exists independently of, and anterior to, “the ordinary mental consciousness” (or “white self” or “personality” or “social ego” or “mental-subjective self”). When the psyche is healthy, the dark self, which is the true source of the passions, the true centre of response to the outside world, has primacy and power over the mental consciousness, which should properly do no more than transmute the “creative flux” of life into what Lawrence called the “shorthand” of ideas, abstractions, principles, ideals.

See: Dan Jacobson, ‘D.H. Lawrence and Modern Society’, *Journal of Contemporary History* 2, 2: Literature and Society (April, 1967), 84. See also: Allen Guttman, ‘D.H. Lawrence: The Politics of Irrationality’, *Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature* 5, 2: Books & Writers of the 1920’s & 1930’s (Summer, 1964), 151-63.

⁹⁰ Lawrence, *Movements in European History*, p. 261.

Life is more vivid in me, than in the Mexican who drives the wagon for me.⁹¹

Historians and cultural theorists have argued over Lawrence's affinities with fascism through his rejection of bourgeois democracy, capitalism, socialism, and Communism.⁹² Two figures who became important in Britain's interwar far-right explored similar issues in the *New Age*, especially over the revival of a 'natural aristocracy'. In a debate with George Pitt-Rivers, Anthony Ludovici sought to defend emotion as a positive force in the attempt to revive pre-liberal aristocratic politics. Pitt-Rivers' *Conscience and Fanaticism* (1919) pitted Classical hierarchy and rational self-control against the emotionality of the 'madman and fanatics, the Kerenskys, Lenins and visionaries of all times'.⁹³ Ludovici disputed this distinction, writing:

... to anyone like myself who is a believer in race and ancestry, and who believes in little else where humanity and human problems are concerned, it is impossible to postulate such an axiom as 'emotion never brings us nearer the truth'. And that is why in an age like the present, when we are encompassed not only by a pot-pourri of races, but a pot-pourri of classes as well; in fact, when each individual male and female is even a pot-pourri of both sexes, we may rightly cry 'Beware of emotions!'; but, then, we must also cry 'Beware of the reason of such people too!' These people will have their reasons for being anarchists, Bolsheviks, ne'erdo-weels [sic], and female Members of Parliament – reasons which will be argued the more subtly seeing that their emotions urge them to be up to every trick.⁹⁴

Ludovici, and Lawrence, rejected the socialist assertion of the universality of emotion, which had been asserted so vigorously in the nineteenth century by Fourier and which formed the basis of the claim that a universal community could be possible. Instead, Ludovici championed the hereditary 'proper emotions' of aristocratic 'family pride, race pride, class pride, sex pride, and poetic pride' as elements of good breeding – the mark of a cultivated and just ruling class. Lawrence's theme of an aristocracy of emotion, then, reflected arguments of the time within what may be termed proto-fascist circles, forming

⁹¹ D.H. Lawrence, *Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine and Other Essays* edited by Michael Herbert (Cambridge, 1988), p. 357.

⁹² In 1926, the composer Rutland Boughton argued that Lawrence had grasped the communal essence of life yet wrapped it up in mysticism, and that to further develop 'either a Fascist or a Communist D.H. Lawrence will have to be'. Rutland Boughton, 'Fascist or Communist?', *Communist Review* 6, 11 (February, 1926), 522. See Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society* (London, 1958) for an influential defence of Lawrence as a critic of industrial society, and Abdulla Al-Dabbagh, *D.H. Lawrence: A Study of Literary Fascism* (New York, 2011) for a Marxist-Leninist presentation of the case against Lawrence.

⁹³ George Pitt-Rivers, *Conscience & Fanaticism: An Essay on Moral Values* (New York, 1919), p. 79.

⁹⁴ Anthony Ludovici, 'Conscience and Fanaticism', *New Age* 8 January 1920, 155-6.

in the ruins of sentimental socialism after the tumultuous decade which encompassed the Great Unrest, the Great War, and the Russian Revolution.

1926: The Revolutionary Impulse ... Thwarted

The English Crowd is a stupid dragon. It ought not to be allowed out alone! I have lain in it for hours together and have received *no sensation worth noting*. As Crowd it is a washout.

- Wyndham Lewis, 1937.⁹⁵

The General Strike of 1926 was a crucial challenge to the parliamentary model, and its failure marked the uncontested supremacy of parliamentary socialism in the British Labour movement. In responding to this extensive display of direct action, Labour's leaders displayed the distrust of class instinct, mass emotion, and the psychology of crowds which was a hallmark of their anti-revolutionary socialism.

With the ebbing of the 'moods of panic and hysteria' that fuelled revolutionary and reactionary movements in the immediate post-war period, Labour's socialists felt their insistence on a parliamentary method of change had been vindicated.⁹⁶ They saw a return to parliamentary norms after heady days of direct action, and achieved a minority Labour government in 1924. Although short-lived and judged to be timid by left-wing critics, it was a decisive landmark in Labour's forward march. Additionally, through the early 1920s, British Labour had the satisfaction of seeing their Russian revolutionary counterparts move towards what seemed a more reasonable statecraft, despite the continuing rhetoric of world revolution, as Michael Farbman noted:

... the more conservative the Bolsheviks become the readier they are to adhere to the revolutionary jargon. I personally am so convinced that there is an air of deliberate over-strain in their use of this jargon that when I read leading articles in their press proclaiming the primitive ardour of their revolutionary principles, I am sure that they are protesting too much, and that the party is probably preparing to make another step backwards ... the aim of the government is not the immediate establishment of socialism but the reconstruction of the country on "realistic" lines – "realistic" signifying obviously capitalistic.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Wyndham Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering* (London, 1937), p. 87. Italics in original.

⁹⁶ 'Editorial Notes', *Labour Magazine* 4, 1 (May, 1925), 24.

⁹⁷ Michael Farbman, *After Lenin* (London, 1924), pp. 25, 34.

In these conditions of growing confidence, Labour's political leaders sought to subordinate the rest of the movement to the PLP. Involving moderate Labour leaders themselves, the Councils of Action of 1920 had seemed to vindicate 'direct action', contributing to the mythology that the British Labour movement had intervened to stop a war on Russia. The post-war unrest, also, signified the possibility that politics would be increasingly driven by class conflict in the industrial sphere. In these conditions, Labour sought to re-emphasise restraint, parliamentarism, and the 'primacy of politics'.

The General Strike arose out of the fraught attempts to set the mining industry on its feet after the war, and especially the attempted imposition of deep cuts to the miners' wages. Over nine days in May 1926, millions of trade unionists and un-unionised workers came out on strike in support of the miners' standard of living, led by the General Council of the TUC. Many Conservatives fulminated that it was a revolutionary challenge to the state, as Keith Laybourn wrote:

The Tory press raged against the idea of revolution and the government played on such fears. Yet there was no revolutionary threat as such, and while violence and conflict occurred it did not assume the seriousness so often associated with European disturbances.⁹⁸

Despite the solidity of the strike, the General Council called it off against the wishes of the miners, who stayed out alone for months before being brought back to work by necessity. Recriminations within the trade union movement were bitter.

In the Communist Party's post-mortem reports after the failure of the General Strike, its writers emphasised the vigour of the spontaneous activity of the trade union rank-and-file, the correctness of the instinctive response of the working class as a whole, and the inability of the leaders of the TUC and Labour Party to adequately channel this instinct. Emile Burns wrote of how the Trades Councils other labour movement bodies across the country 'turned instinctively' to the organisational form developed during the campaign against Russian intervention, the Councils of Action, and highlighted how 'with very few

⁹⁸ Keith Laybourn, *The General Strike Day by Day* (Gloucestershire, 1996), p. 28.

exceptions indeed the Councils displayed energy and initiative to an extent that astonished all who had known them in the preceding period'.⁹⁹ Burns wrote:

The tremendous success of meetings and the unexpected size of meetings and demonstrations is a common feature of the reports. Audiences were easily gathered with little notice; hall meetings had to be supplemented with overflow meetings. No failures are reported. In such a situation the workers are willing to stand any weather and for any length of time, in order to keep in touch with events and to demonstrate their solidarity.¹⁰⁰

As one Communist writer argued, the 'rank and file of trade unions showed the utmost determination [but] but their leaders in the T.U.C., from the very first, took up a timid, negative attitude ... so fearful were [the leaders] that the news of the arrest of well-known Labour leaders was suppressed lest working class passions should be inflamed'.¹⁰¹ A.J. Cook, the left-wing General Secretary of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB), similarly attacked the nervousness of the TUC General Council, arguing that they had actively tried to quell the workers' will to struggle. He quoted J.H. Thomas, who said in the House of Commons, in the run-up to the strike, that he:

... did not want any speeches from the miners' side, because it might have rendered it more difficult to get peace. The suggestion we [the TUC General Council] made was deliberately designed for the purpose of creating the right atmosphere.¹⁰²

Cook argued that the leadership, by their desire to avoid the 'wrong atmosphere':

... threw away the chance of a victory greater than any British Labour has ever won ... That is the history of the Nine Days which gave an unexampled display of the solidarity of the workers ... the T.U.C. were afraid of the power they had created...¹⁰³

In an ironic echo of the Leninist distinction between 'trade union consciousness' and 'socialist consciousness', J.R. Clynes argued that the lesson of the General Strike had been that the trade unions should subordinate themselves to Labour, channelling the class instincts aroused in the strike behind the professional politicians:

The solidarity which is instinctive or the emotion which is sympathetic in the hour of an industrial strike must be transformed into an enduring political solidarity arising

⁹⁹ Emile Burns, *The General Strike May 1926: Trades Councils in Action* (London, 1926), pp. 11-2.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹⁰¹ Dr. Robert Dunstan, 'The Decrees of Fate', *Communist Review* 7, 2 (June, 1926), 58.

¹⁰² J.H. Thomas quoted in A.J. Cook, *The Nine Days: The Story of the General Strike told by the Miners' Secretary* (London, 1926), p. 15.

¹⁰³ Cook, *Nine Days*, p. 23.

from the conscious acceptance of Labour Party doctrines on how a country should be governed and what changes Parliament should enforce.¹⁰⁴

The ‘antimodernist’ novelist, artist and shrewd inter-war political commentator Wyndham Lewis saw the failure of the General Strike as like the lifting of a spell. In *The Art of Being Ruled* (1926), Lewis depicted the post-war European political scene as replicating all the tropes of the year 1917, stalled at its ‘Provisional’ phase and waiting for its ‘October’, whether represented by a revolution of Bolsheviks or Fascists:

... it is natural that the struggle for ascendancy throughout Europe should to-day be more or less reproducing the struggle that occurred in the first months of the revolution in Russia; and that the opposing camps resolve themselves into a set of men on the one side imbued with the notion of a rigidly disciplined obedience to a central authority with dictatorial powers, and on the other into a set of men faithful to the liberal, democratic ideal of the last century.¹⁰⁵

In Lewis’ analysis of the post-war period, British politicians had been unconsciously aping the protagonists of the Russian Revolution, playing their role as Kerenskys, Miliukovs, and poseur-Lenins. The General Strike marked the arrival of Britain’s ‘October’ and an end of this ‘post-war’ period.¹⁰⁶ The strike was a desperate failure if conceived in such terms. In the mind of Lewis, British Labour had been offered the revolution which so many socialists had spoken of, and they had declined to see it through, unable to shake off the rationalist heritage of nineteenth-century liberal-democratic thinking and actively embrace the new vision of man as a creature driven, first and foremost, by instinct and emotion.

Conclusions

In this final chapter I have sought to show how intellectuals in the Labour Party used the New Psychology to justify a resolutely anti-revolutionary form of socialism between the October Revolution and the General Strike. Compared to the ideas driving the socialist revival, of liberating the social passions and realising a felt, meaningful human community in place of the class- and nation-

¹⁰⁴ J.R. Clynes, ‘The Political Lessons of the Strike’, *Labour Magazine* 5, 3 (July, 1926), 101-2.

¹⁰⁵ Wyndham Lewis, *The Art of Being Ruled* (London, 1926), p. 95.

¹⁰⁶ Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering*, p. 1.

divided capitalist world, this project implied a much more cautious programme of reform.

Labour sought to restrain outbursts of proletarian passion, but its theorists did not accept the liberal formula of 'self-interest to rule and reason to restrain'. Instead, they hoped to channel the passions of the working-class movement into social reconstruction, transforming the state through democratic political reform, and enabling the gradual creation of a new more harmonious social order which would not be vulnerable to enflamed mass emotion.

Conclusions

The future? But, my poor friend, there is no future – there is nothing. Everything will begin the same again – people will build things and tear them down and so on forever. So long as men can't get outside themselves or free themselves from their passions, nothing will ever change.

- Anatole France.¹

Man will make it his purpose to master his own feelings, to raise his instincts to the heights of consciousness, to make them transparent, to extend the wires of his will into hidden recesses, and thereby to raise himself to a new plane, to create a higher social biologic type, or, if you please, a superman.

- Leon Trotsky,
1924.²

Influenced by the themes and ideas of the history of emotions, this thesis has sought to deepen our understanding of the ways that British socialists engaged with the passionate, emotional, and irrational dimension of politics, giving special attention to the ways that the Russian Revolution impacted upon socialist ideas. It has established that socialists were influenced by prevailing understandings of the non-rational forces of human nature, variously defined as passions, sentiments, instincts, drives, impulses, and emotions, as well as other terms embedded in a variety of conceptual frameworks. I have argued that the Russian Revolution, placed within the domestic context of a series of destructive and passionate episodes including labour unrest and the Great War, had a deep impact upon the ways that socialists understood and represented these non-rational forces.

The first chapter began by exploring the 'discourse of the passions', which has become a key subject for scholars working in the history of Western Enlightenment political philosophy. Scholars have shown how, for Enlightenment thinkers, strong passion tended to be understood as transgressive of moral and legal norms. For the political thinkers examined in chapter one, the problem of 'passion' was intimately connected to the problem of revolution and social instability. They sought to devise a political regime that might subdue the

¹ Anatole France quoted in Edmund Wilson, *To the Finland Station* (London, 1972), p. 76.

² Leon Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution* edited by William Keach, translated by Rose Strunsky (Chicago, 2005), p. 207.

passions to reason. Ultimately, for many in the liberal tradition this meant inflating the importance of the passion of acquisitiveness or self-interest as the least harmful, or even positively advantageous, passion. I sought to place early socialism in the context of this discourse, with special focus on the revolutionary thinker Karl Marx, who argued that the rule of acquisitiveness would neither create a durable social order nor prevent the growth of revolutionary passions among the proletariat. This analysis of the place of the passions in the thought of Marx laid the foundations for the discussion of British socialism which followed.

In the second chapter, I looked at the way that concepts associated with emotion pervaded British socialist discourse during the ‘socialist revival’ and the early twentieth century. I demonstrated how socialists drew on diverse influences to critique the deformed emotional lives they saw produced by Victorian capitalism, in which the social emotions had largely been reduced to a ‘sham’ sentimentality covering base economic egotism. I argued that theories about the emotions were key to socialist philosophy, from socialists’ grand anthropological narratives to their understanding of the dynamics of political struggle. This chapter established that the British socialist revival occurred at a period of transition in popular discourse about the emotions, from a morally-saturated language of passions and sentiments to a biological, Darwinian discourse of instincts and emotions. In the adaptation to new modes of thinking about the emotions as products of evolution, socialists sought to retain the values and meanings of the older philosophical discourse. By reframing their critique of capitalism and desire for socialism in terms of a biological ‘social instinct’ or even ‘Socialistic instinct’, British socialists accommodated their ideas to the prevailing intellectual climate and opened themselves to new influences.

In chapter three, I argued that this accommodation socialists had achieved with biological instinct theory was threatened, both by events and by popular theories in social psychology. The Great Unrest of 1910 to 1914, and the Great War of 1914 to 1918, brought the issue of man’s violent passions to the fore. Socialists were influenced by social psychologists like Gustave Le Bon, who saw emotion as a primitive survival which threatened to overwhelm civilisation and drag humanity back to a barbarian existence, in which the emotions might be expressed without restraint. In the multi-faceted

disintegration of the Victorian social order, conflicting forces of domestic class struggle and international war were seen as the agents through which the primitive emotions might so triumph. In these conditions, the February Revolution of 1917 came as a kind of salvation. The revolution seemed to promise a different course, in which the higher sentiments of humanity, working in harmony with reason and culture, could lay the foundations for a durable and just world order. It revealed to socialists what Kant had seen in the French Revolution: an encouraging 'moral predisposition in the human race'.

As the parties of the Russian Revolution themselves descended into factional struggle, class conflict, civil war, and competing dictatorships, the high hopes it had raised were dashed - for those unwilling to follow the Bolshevik course at least. Instead of an event to be celebrated and emulated, 1917 became something to analyse forensically with tools furnished by the New Psychology, in the hope of charting a better path to socialism. In chapter four I argued that Bolshevism and psychoanalysis shared a moment of interest on the British Left. Discussion of Bolshevism often drew on psychoanalytic themes while discussion of psychoanalysis often drew on examples from the Russian Revolution. Bertrand Russell was one such socialist who sought to apply psychological theory to the politics of revolution. He sought to grasp the Bolshevik Revolution by theorising the passions, impulses, emotions, and the instincts that had driven it on the basis of New Psychological ideas. The Russian Revolution now spoke of a very different kind of predisposition in the human race, dramatising a broader conflict between the emotions as lingering traces of man's evolution and industrial civilisation.

The exploration of the Communist writers Cedar and Eden Paul in the fifth chapter highlights an alternative, revolutionary orientation to the emotions on the British Left. The Pauls made the instinctive and emotional depiction of man by the New Psychology central to their support for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat in Soviet Russia. I argued that the Pauls have been somewhat overlooked in the history of British Communism. Their attempt to merge Bolshevism and the New Psychology found broad resonance in the early Communist movement, as revolutionary socialists sought to adapt their ideas around the new example of the Bolshevik Revolution. The Pauls even made an

impact abroad, seemingly read by Lenin and plagiarised by ‘the first Marxist in China’, Li Dazhao.

Finally, in chapter six I looked at how the Labour Party responded to the great passionate upheavals of the 1910s by placing a renewed emphasis on the need to restraint and dampen mass emotion. Labour adopted an avowedly socialist platform, convinced that only a thorough reform of British social, political, and economic institutions could prevent the growth of discontented passions. This would require a scientific politics, and the rational use of parliament by socialist politicians rising above the passions of class struggle. This pushed some sentimental socialists to become interested in ‘irrationalist’ philosophies, feeling that British socialism had compromised with base material interest masked under the label of ‘reason’. In the General Strike of 1926, the basic set of attitudes about emotionality and the unstable psychology of crowds held by leading Labour figures contributed to their fears about the potentially revolutionary character of the strike, and their unwillingness to give it their full support.

Limitations

This study has been self-consciously limited in its aims. It has sought to understand the shifting ways in which emotions appeared in British socialist discourse between 1884 and 1926, with a special focus on how socialists understood the Russian Revolution. In focusing on discourse, I have not followed the call of many theorists in the history of emotions to reach beyond the text, to interpret ‘emotions’ themselves. This problem of whether it is ‘possible to go beyond emotional *expressions* ... and attain some assurance that these are indicative of actual emotional *states*’, and the theoretical ambiguity as to whether it is appropriate to write of ‘emotional expressions’ as distinct from ‘emotional states’, is a central issue for theorists of the history of emotions.³

The approach taken here has had many advantages. The arguments in this thesis are readily supported with reference to the primary sources without needing to accept any particular theory of the emotions *a priori* to interpret those

³ ‘AHR Conversation: The Historical Study of Emotions’, *American Historical Review* 117, 5 (December, 2012), 1487.

texts. Most importantly, the themes raised by British socialists in their writing about emotion highlights the theoretical and methodological obstacles for the history of emotions to go ‘beyond the text’ in a meaningful way.

Firstly, historical agents sought to interrogate their own emotional experience, and translate its meaning for themselves, using the same techniques as historians analysing discourse. They sought to contextualise their own emotional experience with reference to a given cultural framework, and only by so translating experience into discourse did it ever ‘reveal’ its meaning for them. If historians may be confined to reaching emotional experience only indirectly, the same may be said of the historical subjects themselves.

Secondly, British socialists were chiefly interested in emotions for properties which are especially difficult to capture in ‘personal’ texts, like letters and personal diaries, commonly cited as providing a more direct access to emotions than ‘born public’ texts. Socialists tended to be interested not in the individual feeling agent, but in the ways that emotions grounded intangible relationships and inter-relations, and marked the impact of the environment on the individual. In *Emotional Currents in American History* (1932), J.H. Denison attempted to grasp the history of American collective emotions with an ‘amusingly pseudo-scientific ... metereology’, driven by ‘emotional storms’, ‘cyclones’, hatreds and fears sweeping across continents like winds as ‘independent historical entities’.⁴ This experimental approach to writing history was not judged a success by its reviewers, but it sought to address questions which are beyond the capability of more individualist approaches to the history of emotions today. Socialists were not only interested in the settled rhythms of a society, as when they diagnosed the results of the primacy of acquisitiveness under capitalism. Like Denison, socialists sought to study the emotions of great mass movements, the atmosphere of a community on strike, a nation on the eve of war, or the untranslatable mood of the streets in a revolutionary city. They sought to understand the ways in which emotions cut across the boundaries of the individual, especially in exceptional moments outside of the routines of everyday life. The established methodologies in the history of emotions do not

⁴ Walton E. Bean, ‘Ideas, Emotions, and History’, *Sewanee Review* 48, 1 (January-March, 1940), 8-9.

easily address such questions, dealing with self-descriptions of individuals and of ‘feeling rules’ which shift over the *long durée*.

Themes

There are a number of broader themes and issues that cut across the chronological account. Socialism can be placed within a Western philosophical tradition which sought to establish a science of politics, through an understanding of the emotions. As an ideology, socialism was always open to diverse influences in this period, adapting and re-adapting itself to prevailing intellectual currents that examined the nature of emotion.

Echoing Dixon’s argument about British theorists of the mind in the nineteenth century, I have argued that between the 1880s and the 1920s, the predominant mode of writing about the ‘passions’ was replaced by a discourse centring on ‘instinct’ in the work of socialist thinkers. The earlier ‘discourse of the passions’ was by no means simply replaced by the new discourse of instinct. This new discourse was adapted to the basic socialist goal of creating a harmonious transnational social order, as biological and psychological terms were taken and saturated with moral and metaphysical meanings specific to the socialist project, which had first taken shape in the context of the ‘discourse of the passions’. Nevertheless, the transition from a discourse of passion and sentiment to one of instinct and emotion clearly affected the ways that socialists wrote. It forced them to contend with biological and psychological theories which complicated their project of creating a felt social harmony and a more meaningful way of organising emotional lives than capitalism had achieved.

For theorists across the socialist movement, emotions were, fundamentally, the conduit through which supra-individual forces operated and were translated into human activity. In order to understand the nature and mechanics of this translation, socialists borrowed modes of thinking from the sciences, from the ‘Newtonian’ focus on the passions as the key to the laws of human ‘motion’ in Fourier, to a ‘Darwinian’ focus on emotions arising from biological instincts as developed by evolutionary struggle in Trotter, to a ‘Freudian’ focus on unconscious, repressed, and misdirected instincts, and the continuing influence of past traumas in Rivers.

Socialists defined themselves in opposition to the liberal doctrine, which saw the passions as disturbing forces liable to interfere with social order and sought to discipline the passions by means of state restraint and by the promotion of acquisitiveness or economic self-interest as a benign or positive passion. Socialists argued that this project had led to a host of unintended consequences, creating not the kind of society imagined by Smith in which prosperity provided a basis for social harmony, but a world of imperialism, national and class conflict. The normative focus on acquisitiveness, they argued, had not tamed the passions, but provoked the very worst of passions. The stark individualism of capitalist society left the complex of sociable emotions known as sympathy, solidarity, fellowship, gregariousness, and so on, disorganised and liable to pull society apart.

The place of emotions in socialist discourse was commonly linked to the way that emotions created collective entities, giving them a firm basis in the felt experience of the individual and governing the activity of the group. Socialists saw social stability threatened by emotional bonds which made up cohesive and exclusive groupings within society, in which individuals felt their group attachment much more keenly than their broader attachment to the human race. Their key problem was to create a social structure in which the emotions grounding different groups would be conducive to social harmony rather than strife. British socialists sought to create an environment in which emotions could be freely expressed without doing harm to society, rather than having to be restrained, suppressed, and deformed by the social machinery of capitalism and the state.

However, for socialists, this contradiction between the emotions and the environment was more often seen as a spur to development rather than simply an unfortunate cause of misery and disharmony. Whether Fourier's stages leading towards the harmonious phalanstery, Marx's development through stages driven by the passions of class struggle, the cyclical anthropological ideas of the British socialist revival, or Trotter's stages in the long-span of biological-evolutionary time, the interaction of emotion and the environment was a crucial factor. This was challenged, however, by the attitude held by some socialists that the emotions were simply a limit on development, unchanging from their emergence in man's prehistory, anchoring humanity to its bestial origins like

Prometheus to his rock. This was true for many of the Freudians who feared strong collective emotion as a form of infantile regression, and for Bertrand Russell, who wrote that to escape the cyclical history of development and regression there would have to be a direct physiological modification of the human body and scientific control of its emotions by the state.

The emotions of revolution always had a crucial place in these historical metanarratives. Revolutionary moments marked the release of the passions from their restraints, creating an ungoverned space in which the norms and institutional machinery restraining the passions were suspended. It meant both a period of creativity, the broadening of sympathy beyond artificial boundaries and the development of new hitherto restricted emotional relationships. However, especially for the reformists among the socialists, the weakening of the power of the state to restrain and channel the emotions also held the danger of retrogression into a more primitive state, which might only be tamed by those charismatic and dictatorial crowd masters who were the modern equivalent of the primeval horde chief. Reformist socialism, which was the dominant force in British socialist history, sought to avoid such a dissolution of restraint, and focused on devising the institutions which could make such a crisis impossible.

Further Research

This thesis closed with the General Strike of 1926, though in the late-1920s and 1930s the socialist movement grappled with the problem of instinct and emotion with as much intensity as ever. However, socialists were faced with a new set of difficulties, which made it impossible to give a full account of the interwar period here, and further research might fruitfully expand in this direction. The Wall Street Crash and the Great Depression prompted economists to try to integrate emotion into economic theories, most famously through the ‘animal spirits’ of John Maynard Keynes. The rise of Fascism and Nazism on the continent were crucial problems for the socialist movement, upon which theories of instinct, emotion, and irrationality shed light. A problem closer to home was the hold of the Conservative Party and the National Government over much of the British working-class electorate.

Commentary on the Russian experience continued to be an important prism through which issues of emotion were articulated for British socialists, but

the central emphasis shifted from understanding the Russian Revolution to understanding the construction of the Soviet state, the restructuring of society, and the development of a new culture. Socialists turned their attention from the emotions of revolt, and of a society in dissolution, to the attempt to create what might be called a ‘planned economy of emotion’.⁵ Socialists turned from the problems of the ‘great outpouring of the human soul’ in 1917 to Stalin’s ‘engineers of the human soul’ in the land of the Five-Year Plans. British writers looked to representations of the new ‘socialist man’ in Soviet culture, with his ‘new feelings, concepts, passions, perceptions of life’.⁶ As observers of the Soviet Union in the 1930s, British socialists were similar to the new ‘activist’ spectator of the Soviet cinema described by Sergey Tretyakov, who:

... demands to see the dialectics of emotion: which emotions are dying out, and which are just now coming into being; which are valuable to a person with a class orientation, and which constitute a social disease that doctors still have yet to cure.⁷

It is clear that the issues described in this thesis did not disappear from socialist discourse. Further study into the ‘discourse of the passions’ in British socialism would help to develop our understanding of its culture and ideology beyond 1926. Socialists continued to develop complicated and nuanced ideas about human nature and its emotions, and continued to think about the problem of revolution in relation to this theme. As Caudwell wrote:

In this struggle with reality in which instincts, feeling and thought all partake and interact, the instincts themselves will be changed, and emerging in consciousness as new thought and new feeling, will once again feel themselves in harmony with the new environment they have created. Social relations must be changed so that love returns to the earth and man is not only wiser but more full of emotion.⁸

Socialists continued to seek a revolutionary change not only of economic and social relations, but of human feeling itself.

⁵ In his work depicting the continued development of the human race beyond the Communist horizon, Bernal imagined that emotions would no longer be ‘at the mercy of the uncontrolled interactions of individual and environment’, rather ‘feeling, or at any rate, feeling-tones, will almost certainly be under conscious control’. J.D. Bernal, *The World, the Flesh & the Devil: An Enquiry into the Future of the Three Enemies of the Rational Soul* (London, 1929), p. 53.

⁶ *Problems of Soviet Literature* edited by H.G. Scott (London, 1935), p. 11.

⁷ Sergei Tretyakov, ‘Our Cinema (1928)’, *October* 118 (Fall, 2006), 31.

⁸ Caudwell, *Dying Culture*, pp. 68-9.

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