



A recipe for a cookshop of the future: G. D. H. Cole and the conundrum of sovereignty

Chris Wyatt

The concept of state sovereignty has, since Hobbes, been a highly contentious and much-debated issue. Marx's critique that institutional detachments obscure the modern state's embodiment in socioeconomic relations encapsulates the reason why sovereignty is not simply a political issue. This paper argues that the guild socialist theorist G. D. H. Cole completes Marx's analysis, effectively filling out Marx's critique of the liberal state as a mask behind which capitalist power thrives. In seeking to defend Cole from his critics, the paper shows that while Cole's scheme permits a sovereign body to exist, the manner in which its powers are exercised is constitutionally restricted. Such formal limitations successfully redefine the substance of sovereignty.

In light of the collapse of authoritarian state socialism and the debacle of democratic state socialism that we are currently witnessing, the pressing need to re-examine non-statist alternatives to liberal-democratic capitalism could hardly be more urgent. In recent years, the increasing dominance in political discourse of theories of globalisation has tended to switch attention away from debates on state sovereignty, and into the domain of international relations. This has effectively marginalised the assertions of those who continue to argue that the concept of state sovereignty remains deeply problematic. One of the earliest and best-known exponents of this view was Karl Marx. His powerful argument that the sovereignty of the modern state is somewhat illusory is of lasting value. For Marx, since this state defends the private ownership of the means of production, it is actually socioeconomic relations that for



the most part remain sovereign. However, for all of their undoubted brilliance, Marx's combined writings leave many organisational questions unanswered. In his early works (1843–4), Marx indicates that a non-authoritarian—indeed, a libertarian socialist alternative to social democracy and state socialism is possible; but he fails to sketch its institutional contours. This paper explains that the necessary interpretative completion is accomplished in the work of the lesser-known Left libertarian critic G. D. H. Cole (1889–1959).

While Marx made it clear that he had no desire to write 'recipes for cookshops of the future', Cole embraced such a challenge. Cole was part of a small circle of radical intellectuals who, like Marx, insisted that the sovereign state was fundamentally flawed. They united under the banner of guild socialism, of which Cole was the most sophisticated and influential proponent. He set himself the demanding task of constructing a theoretically sound, politically pluralist alternative to state sovereignty.

The fact that he largely succeeded has, disappointingly, escaped the vast majority of contemporary readers. In what follows, the argument is made that Cole's guild-socialist blueprint embodies an institutional setting that contains a genuine alternative to sovereign power. In his scheme, the need for ultimate control, whether overt *or* covert, either by a body resembling the modern state or by a small yet dominant economic class, is not a prerequisite for the democratically planned decentralised economy he sketches. The paper is divided into two parts, with subheadings within each. The first part provides a fairly brief exposition of Marx's critique and delineates Cole's system-building. The second section defends Cole's scheme from critics who question its political pluralism. The conclusion confirms that not only is there an affinity between the thinking of Marx and Cole but, moreover, that it is the latter who makes explicit what is only implicit in the former.

This argument will hopefully appeal to those who are in any way troubled by global capitalist governance, and/or have become disillusioned with statist attempts to realise socialist goals. Within the state-socialist traditions of Leninism (revolutionaries) and social democracy (reformers), economic power must be centralised in the hands of the state. These approaches have been dominant, and throughout the twentieth century, socialism was largely



associated with social-democratic reformism, Leninist vanguards, centralism, state planning, etc. Guild socialism, however, is fundamentally concerned with the question of how to devise a system that empowers producers in their own spheres, while at the same time protecting citizens as a whole. Central to Cole's political thought are questions concerning political pluralism, decentralised forms of participation, and the critique of the doctrine of state sovereignty. Since there has been a general disinclination, on the parts of those working within the dominant state-socialist perspectives, to acknowledge that emancipatory politics are unlikely to flourish without a socialism based on ideas such as these, the endeavour to re-emphasise these themes could hardly be more urgent. This point will be readdressed in the concluding section.

Part I

The state and sovereignty defined

As a distinct political institution, the state is the means by which political power is organised. In Western political thought, it is often seen as an impersonal and privileged constitutional order. It can administer and control the whole of its territory from a single centre, and in that it has primary jurisdiction, it is a sovereign political order. In point of fact, the origin, history and nature of the modern state are strongly connected to the development of the concept of sovereignty. Sovereignty is fundamentally a theory about political power. Straightforwardly defined, it is the idea that within the political community rests a final and absolute authority. To this, some have felt it necessary to add that no other authority of this kind exists elsewhere in the community. The sovereign state then, by definition, has supreme power of arbitration. It controls a monopoly of legitimate force and has ultimate authority to pass laws applying to every individual and agency in its territory, which may be reinforced by coercive sanctions. It also retains the power to settle disputes with a degree of finality. This implies its dominance over internal groups. The notion of sovereignty, therefore, means that such a political authority has a recognised and incontestable right to determine the legal framework and to govern accordingly (Dunleavy & O'Leary, 1987: 1–2; Held, 1989: 2, 11, 215, 224–5, 238; Hinsley, 1986: 1–3, 26).



Liberal-democratic theory has attempted to sanction state sovereignty while simultaneously placing restrictions upon its power. The state needs a monopoly of coercive power in order to protect trade and commerce. This force could, however, potentially undermine the political and social freedoms of the individual. Liberal democracy has sought to overcome this problem through the innovation of one of its most basic institutional arrangements: representative democracy.

Within this politically equalising system, individuals are free to pursue their own material objectives while the state supposedly upholds the general interest, thereby ensuring the greatest happiness for as many people as possible. It is, then, the combination of two institutions—the democratic constitutional state and the free market—which, from the liberal-democratic perspective, guarantees authority without sacrificing liberty. This is liberal democracy's response to the potential threat that sovereign power poses to individual freedom (Hirst, 1989: 81–2; Held, 1989: 48–9).

Marx's critique of the liberal state

Marx was not at all convinced by liberalism's 'solution'. The liberal fight against tyranny and for political equality was, he concedes, a significant advance towards human emancipation (Marx, 1975: 221). However, due to the internal dynamics central to its economy, capitalism necessarily and unavoidably generates immense inequalities which themselves drastically limit real freedom. The liberating potential of political equality is, Marx insists, hugely restricted by class inequalities. In the liberal-democratic tradition, the state may represent the public interest rather than private concerns. But for Marx, the opposition between public/general and private/particular interests is mainly illusory.

To presume that the state can defend the former is to suppose that classes do not exist, that one class does not exploit another, that there are no conflicts of interest between classes, and that class differences have no impact on economic and political life. In treating everyone equally, and in particular in its defence of individuals' property rights, the state's 'neutrality' simply generates partial effects: it sanctions and supports the privileges of those who own property. This ensures that the real source of power—the private ownership of productive forces—is 'depoliticised', i.e. it is not seen as



a proper subject of politics. The outcome of treating the economy as non-political is that the huge gulf between owners and non-owners of the means of production is seen as the result of free contract, and regarded as no concern of the state. In defending private property, though, the state cannot remain neutral with regards to property ownership. For Marx, the state is not an independent set of institutions operating above society; it is not a 'public power' defending the public interest. On the contrary, it is thoroughly implanted in socioeconomic relations, and deeply connected to particular class interests (Marx, 1975: 221–3, 229; Held, 1989: 48–9).

In his early writings, Marx insists it is not that the state underlies the socioeconomic order, but that it is the other way round. The notion that the state is sovereign is regarded as an illusion. Political power can more adequately be explained through an analysis of socioeconomic relations. It then becomes apparent that *in class societies* the state is not the organ through which the 'common good' (or 'public interest') can be realised.

Orthodox Marxism views the state as a class instrument coordinating a class-divided society in favour of the ruling class. On the occasions in which Marx recognises that the state's bureaucratic institutions may take dimensions and develop sources of power not directly controlled by the dominant class, and thereby retain some independent power—most notably in texts like *The Critique* (1843) and *The Eighteenth Brumaire* (1851)—he still regards the state as a conservative force.

Even in such exceptional periods, this 'arbiter' state's independence from capital on economic matters is weakened by its dependence on the accumulation of capital for its revenue. Economic organisations create the wealth from which the state apparatus is financed. The state is wholly dependent on the resources that stem from the organisation of profitable production, taxation and capital markets. Capitalists control resources, which they may withdraw or redirect as they see fit. The state bureaucracy is thereby compelled to sanction and support capitalist predominance in economic matters. It follows that those in state power have an interest in preserving the vitality of a market-forces economy. Marx confirms that in this sense, the state cannot avoid its dependence on the class that collectively owns the productive processes. For the sake of stability, state policies



need to be compatible with the objectives of the owners of the means of production.

Capitalists, therefore, do not necessarily have to transmit their preferences to state officials directly. State policy in a capitalist society is determined by the government's indispensable need to protect the development of the economic base while coercively preserving social stability. So for Marx, state agencies are inevitably entangled in the encounters of civil society. The state is viewed as an extension of civil society, maintaining the existing socioeconomic set-up for the enrichment of certain interests only. In the long-term, these particular interests are those of the capitalist class (Marx, 1970: 44–6, 50–1; 1975: 230; Dunleavy & O'Leary, 1987: 210–1, 231, 243; Held: 1989: 33–5, 239).

On the whole, Marx's combined writings on the state indicate that state intervention in capitalist societies will inevitably be reactionary in nature. Government administrative structures are shaped in a way that supports capital accumulation, irrespective of both the degree of capitalist control of the state and the intensity of class antagonisms. If intervention obstructs capital accumulation, then it also threatens the state's material basis. The inevitable outcome is that state policies must be favourable to capitalist relations of production. This ensures that a dominant economic class may actually rule even though it does not directly govern; it can determine the political agenda irrespective of whether it is officially represented in government (Held, 1989: 37).

Towards a libertarian socialist alternative

Marx's analysis of the modern state's general economic dependence on the capitalist mode of production, which consequently restricts its movements and intervening capacity, retains its penetrative force. In his guild-socialist writings, Cole does not refer directly to Marx; but his reflections on the modern liberal state mirror Marx's polemic. He also insists that the state 'faithfully' reflects the socioeconomic structure. Political power expresses social power, which in capitalism is inevitably economic. He stresses that 'economic power is the key to political power, and that those who control the means of production are able, by means of that control, to dominate the State', and that 'no Government dares to run seriously counter to the wishes and interests of the great economic magnates'. Cole's point



is that whatever the forms of state organisation, its true character is determined not from within but by the 'interplay of economic forces'. So for Cole, as for Marx, capitalist power 'stands behind the state' (Cole, 1972 [1917]: 4–6).

Authoritarian command socialism sought to eradicate such problems through centralised planning. Due to the well documented problems that this dictatorial system encountered, few if any democrats would now endorse an economy of this kind.

How, then, might a libertarian-socialist alternative overcome the frequently cited flaws that continue to plague the capitalist state, while simultaneously avoiding the deficiencies commonly associated with socialist command planning? Although Marx does not provide a comprehensive answer to this question, his analysis certainly indicates what the basic institutional arrangements of such an economic system must include. The existing process of separation between the modern political state and civil society confines exploitation to the latter, where it is sanctioned legally in the rights to private property and to hire labour as a commodity. For Marx, the limited acts of citizenship asked of individuals cannot possibly pass for a complete form of freedom. Rather, politics should be an integral part of all of our daily lives. In his words:

Only when real, individual man resumes the abstract citizen into himself and as an individual man has become a *species-being* in his empirical life, his individual work and his individual relationship, only when man has recognised and organised his *forces propres* as *social forces* so that social force is no longer separated from him in the form of *political* force, only then will human emancipation be completed. (Marx, 1975: 234)

Wherever power is exercised, it must be subject to popular control. The organising principle of every sphere of life must therefore be *democracy*. A higher unity of state–civil society is thus required. In civic terms, this involves replacing private property with communal ownership. In political terms, it entails abolishing the detached power of the state (Marx, 1975: 234; Schecter, 1991: 13–15). These are the institutional requirements of Cole's guild socialism. Cole was adamant that, in his model, sovereignty would neither be vested in the state, as it is in state socialism(s); nor in socioeconomic



relations, as Marx rightly insists that it is in liberal democracies.

Cole's guild socialist proposals and the rejection of the sovereign state

The basic structure of society outlined in Cole's mature guild scheme, as revealed in *Guild Socialism Restated*, has three branches of economic and social activity that are to form the basis of a federal and decentralised structure. They are: 1) producers' organisations—the economic guilds; 2) two distinct organisations to represent consumers; and 3) civil services, which will represent citizens' non-economic interests. This model is functional throughout, broken down into territorial units that are institutionally linked at different levels to bring consumption and production into harmony. The coordinating agency, a system of 'communes', consists of representatives from the guilds, the consumer and the civic bodies.

We will look briefly at each in turn, starting with the industrial guilds—which are 'industrial' in the sense that, as Cole argues, in order to assume control of industry, the trade-union structure must be 'industrial' rather than merely 'craft'. In brief, craft unions represent workers based within a certain skill, i.e. carpenters and tailors, etc. This perspective asserts that skilled and unskilled workers should have separate organisations. Industrial unionism, on the other hand, places them in one association. It unites all the workers who are combining and coordinating their activities in order to produce the same kind of goods, i.e. miners, shipbuilders, etc. The idea is that when an industrial union is formed and puts into practice the idea of collective control, and once it takes over the administration and the democratic regulation of its particular industry, it becomes a guild. Hence:

A National Guild would be an association of all the workers by hand and brain concerned in the carrying on of a particular industry or service, and its function would be actually to carry on that industry or service on behalf of the whole community. (Cole, 1920b: 46–7)

Cole proposes that the industrial guilds be coordinated through an 'industrial guilds congress'. This would be the ultimate representative confederation on the productive side, acting as the guild legislature and, in so far as guild-related



matters were concerned, adjudicating in its capacity as a final court of appeal. Like the guilds themselves, the industrial guilds congress would have guild councils at the local and regional levels (Cole, 1917: 54–65; 1920b: 43–7, 69–73).

Turning now to the equally important issue of the safeguarding of consumer interests, Cole sees consumption as possessing a principle of differentiation analogous to, yet different from that of production: a distinction not between individuals but, as with producers, between interests. It has two main divisions: a) household consumption, which includes an element of individual choice—he calls this ‘personal and domestic consumption’; and b) consumption and use that is undifferentiated and supplied in mass, which he calls ‘collective consumption’. Separate organisations are needed here, and Cole names them the ‘co-operative council’ to represent the former form of consumption, and the ‘collective utilities council’ to represent the latter. Their function is first to safeguard consumer concerns such as the quantity and quality of production, the prices charged and the variety of need; and second, to protect them from the producers. In order that they be genuinely democratic it is essential that, like the guilds, these organisations should be firmly decentralised and local. Cole argues that self-government must also apply to the ‘civic services’. He sees the need for an education guild, a health guild, and a guild for every non-economic civic service such as drama, music, medicine and sanitation. Along with the consumer councils, each locality needs a council to represent citizens’ general interests in education and health. Cole calls these bodies the ‘cultural councils’ and the ‘health councils’ respectively. Their role is to articulate the civic viewpoint, and to cooperate with the relevant guilds in order to ensure that supply meets demand. In choosing their consumer and civic council representatives, Cole suggests that citizens vote by way of ‘wards’ within each town. Each citizen would be granted four votes, one for each council. Every member of the four councils would be a ‘ward representative’, and would represent a particular function (Cole, 1920b: 79–92, 101–10, 123–6).

These, then—the producer, consumer and civil services—are the three main branches of economic and social activity. It is within this scheme that Cole offers an alternative to the sovereign state. He insists that, in a truly democratic society,



the state serves the people by mediating between organised producer and consumer interests—and that when it does this in practice, it is no longer ‘the state’ in any conventional sense. In this case, the state does *not* accommodate a sovereign, *undivided* general will that corresponds to representation in general. Democracy is best realised when our interests, both as producers and consumers, are organised on a functional basis. Cole accordingly rejects the doctrine of state sovereignty, since it is not functionally democratic. For the same reasons, he also rejects the existing structure of the state. He does not see the state as an association from which information regarding the overall organisation of society can be derived. ‘The state, I contend, even if it includes everybody, is still only an association among others, because it cannot include the whole of everybody’ (1914: 154). Therefore, in Cole’s guild writings the state is not given the role of integrating society, for groups cannot be free so long as one group regulates the others. There are three key reasons why the modern state has no place within his social and political thought. First, he argues that *the modern state violates the functional principle*; second, *that it is an inappropriate body to represent consumer interests* (since it would be an inappropriate way of returning a political content to civil society); and third, *that it is unfit to coordinate the interests of the various functional bodies*. He is, however, compelled to address the way in which all of the above groups might cooperate as part of a single system and express the ‘communal spirit’; and he must therefore construct a new coordinating governmental system. This is articulated in the shape of a system of local, regional and national ‘communes’. Cole maintains that a local commune would be a coordinative body, and not an administrative one. Each guild would manage its services, and the guilds’ cooperation with the relevant councils would largely determine their policy. Nevertheless, the commune would still have the following essential tasks: a) to allocate local resources—*financial* functions; b) to act as a court of appeal in disputes between the different types of functional bodies; and c) to control coercive machinery like the police force (Cole, 1914: 140–5, 151–4; 1972: 13–8, 160–2; 1920b: 127–9).

Since, in Cole’s view, society has many associations fulfilling various functions that cannot be regulated by a single body, he seeks to pluralise the state. The self-governing bodies would, through mechanisms of representation and



consultation, be the means by which democratic social governance was realised. Administrative machinery would be simultaneously disseminated into these functionally demarcated spheres of democratic authority. Government functions, therefore, would be devolved to and carried out by such bodies. The commune would unite these groups locally, coordinating the producer, consumer and civic elements that together constitute the totality. Since there would be few direct administrative functions, Cole predicts a distinct lack of opportunity for a centre in which a large bureaucratic and coercive apparatus could develop. The national coordinating body, the national commune—which would consist of representatives from the industrial and civic national guilds, those from the economic and civic national councils, and those appointed by the regional communes—would, he contends, be quite unlike the existing state. The civil service, for instance, would not simply become the commune's direct servant: it would be disseminated between the various functional associations. Each of the functional groups, along with the communes, would therefore have its own small 'civil service'. Consequently, the national commune 'would be a much less imposing body as the central organ of Society than the Great Leviathan of to-day, with its huge machinery of coercion and bureaucratic government' (Cole, 1920b: 135–7, 139–41).

The 'private sphere', according to Cole's scheme, is now premised upon cooperation and collective governance. In the manner in which it establishes both a self-governing civil society and a pluralised state, the scheme transforms the prevailing divide between state and civil society. Hirst summarises Cole's position deftly:

If the 'state' is thus dissolved into a multi-centred plural public power, so 'civil society' is transformed from a private domain governed by competing individual wills in the market into a federative structure of social cooperation between quasi-public bodies, the guilds. (Hirst, 1994: 103)

This dual process is crucial. The 'publicisation' of civil society and the pluralisation of the state's component functions constitute the unification of the private and public spheres. Cole has, then, devised a structure of economic governance that claims to transcend the doctrine of state sovereignty.



The division between state and civil society is transformed by limiting the central powers of the state, and by increasing the powers of middle-range institutions of democratic social and economic governance. Although the community would own productive properties, the guilds would control them collectively. So while a civil society consisting of self-governing associations needs a genuine yet secondary 'public power' to regulate their interactions, its role is mainly to coordinate and protect individual and associational rights. Cole's communes do not determine all the activities in their territories, and herein lies his repudiation of the sovereign state¹ (Cole, 1972: 36–8; 1920a: 124–7; Hirst, 1994: 26, 103–4, 167–8).

Part 2

Cole: Really pluralist

Since Cole no longer sees a role for the modern state (1920b: 43), there would be a supposedly 'stateless' administration. Controversy reigns, though, as to whether his final model actually signifies this. It has been claimed that the 'national commune' is merely another political leviathan in disguise, and hence a reinvention of the modern sovereign state. Noting that Cole opposes the principle of state sovereignty, Elliott (1925) observes that he nevertheless retains a body that is to be granted the final power of adjudication: the commune. This body, Elliott insists, bears a striking similarity to what others call a state:

The present parliament of England is not constituted in just the way that Mr. Cole would have his national 'commune' chosen; but it occupies exactly the place that the highest of the hierarchy of communes does in his theory of the 'new state'. (Elliott, 1925: 484)

For Elliott, the word 'commune' is but a pseudo-name for the kind of sovereign parliament lambasted by Cole (Elliott, 1925: 483–4). Elliott's concern regarding Cole's political pluralism is fairly representative of the general feeling amongst his critics,² and these objections are far from immaterial. Cole's commune is to be entrusted with considerable constitutional powers. It is also to have the last say when it comes to settling conflicts—which might, to

some degree, deviate from his argument that the principle of state sovereignty is indefensible. Cole's pluralism, then, is by no means perfect. However, there are six key factors in Cole's scheme that, once recapitulated, demonstrate that the sovereignty of the commune cannot be equated with the kind of ideal, typical sovereign state that controls all authority and is unlimited in its exercise.

1) *The democratic and pluralist economy*

The role of the communes is essentially one of coordination. They would not, in contrast with the modern state, be afflicted with the unenviable task of preventing competing private interests from generating the kind of 'social bads' detrimental to society at large. At the national level, and although the national commune would adjudicate between producer and consumer interests, it would have nothing like the authority that sovereign states have to intervene in all areas of our lives. Political life would alter drastically if the democratised economy that Cole pictures were to be installed. Central, here, is the manner in which dialogue would be institutionalised. In Cole's scheme, consumer and producer interests are divided. Producers are interested in the *process* of production—freedom at work, etc.—while consumers are concerned with quality, quantity and the prices of goods and services provided.

There is a clear demarcation of interests. The producers would be collectively sovereign over work conditions, and the consumers sovereign over the goods produced. So while the guilds tried to adjust supply in order to meet demand, the interests of the multitude of consumers would legitimately determine the quality and quantity of production, and matters connected to distribution. Establishing the means for dialogue between producers and consumers would thus ensure that democratic participation beyond the political sphere was enhanced. Cole, as we have seen, also insists that the widest possible range of civil interests should be represented (Cole, 1920b: 38, 60, 88–97).

Cole is adamant that it is only by allowing our partial wills full expression, and not allowing them to be subordinated through an appeal to a general will, that democracy can be realised. For this to be possible, suitable public spaces must be structurally established so that producers, consumers and community representatives are guaranteed sufficient means for adequate consultation. In

such cases, the community would have genuine control over what was to be produced. The institutionalisation of dialogue between all relevant bodies is therefore an indispensable feature of Cole's scheme. Hence the need for political institutions—the local, regional and national communes—to coordinate producer, consumer and community interests (Cole, 1920b: 87–8; Schecter, 1994: 116–7, 185–6). As one Left libertarian puts it:

The authority of the National Commune would not be based on the notion of State sovereignty. Rather, it would exist as a high level co-ordinating body based on a democratised economy. The National Commune would thus have very little in common with the existing State, which is a leviathan crushing powerless 'general' citizens. (Schecter, 1994: 186)

Once the essential features of Cole's democratic and pluralistic economy were established, then, the agenda of the political body would be radically transformed.

2) *The bottom-up approach to system building*

In Cole's thesis, guild socialism is above all a theory of citizenship—of the way active participation can determine common ends. He stresses that citizenship values must be achievable within groups. Whether by inter- or intra-group participation, individuals must be able to participate at different levels of political life—in small groups, to begin with. Their representatives would then form regional committees that would be the political agencies at the next level of association. In these successive levels, the multiplicity of interests (or wills) would be expressed under the general headings of 'functional', and 'territorial', since the old 'general' citizen would no longer exist. The workplace and the town ward would be the self-governing spheres of primary importance to individuals.

Above this, there would be institutional structures capable of expressing a more general and larger level of interest, first at the municipal, then the regional, and finally at the national level. In this set-up, the coordinating function of politics would be needed at these three major levels. Representatives from the functional and territorial constituencies would form the 'communal' or government authority, whose members would be elected from the



functional bodies (decided by product or service), and from the territorial regions. Authority positions, then, would not be filled from above, but from below. Although there would still be vertical lines of authority, the general idea is that the government system should be as decentralised as possible. Each level should assume only the minimum amount of responsibility deemed unsuitable for the level below.

Furthermore, in Cole's scheme, the vertical lines are *ascending* and not *descending*: the higher levels are to be kept directly accountable to the lower levels from which they are elected (Cole, 1920b: ch. II, VII, VIII; Vernon, 1980: xxii–xxx, xxxviii–xxxix); and it is the middle tiers that communicate with the local and national levels.

Cole's model is best understood, then, as a theory of decentralisation. In it, central government would have fairly limited powers, restricted, as much as possible, to matters of coordination, and in these it would be constrained by the representation of regional, local and professional interests. The federal and decentralised government would be limited in its control over localised units, and thus the constitution of the local, regional and national communes is at odds with the doctrine of state sovereignty.

3) *The 'reconstruction' of the state*

Cole is attached to the idea of community, and his lengthy quest to find its correct organisational expression is at the heart of his system-building. His community has a firm ethic of decentralisation and of radical participatory democracy, and it is in this setting that the state has to take its place. It is the variety of interrelated functional bodies that enables community expression, and the modern state as it stands at present cannot relate to this. So for Cole, a complex organisational structure is required in order to accommodate a diffused sovereignty. As Wright points out, it is not so much a question of abolishing the state, but one of *reforming* it. For bodies of community authority are still needed, even in Cole's radical proposals. Along similar lines, MaCain specifies that:

While the commune may be described as a state, its functions are the minimal ones of coordination and arbitration among the major functional groups in society, and thus it may be thought of as a natural and minimal state. (MaCain, 2001: B7)

Whereas for Vernon:

If there is a state ... the most reasonable conclusion is that the concept applies not to the 'National Commune' or to any institution alone but to the whole communal structure at its three principal levels taken together. (Vernon, 1980: xliv)

To this, Vernon adds that 'the feature of the state that is missing is its character as a focus or site for *political* contestation'. Whether or not Cole's guild socialism is a completely stateless society, then, one thing is clear: too much has changed to permit the simplistic response that his communal structure is synonymous with an ideal typification of the sovereign state (Cole, 1920b: 119–21; Vernon, 1980: li; Wright, 1979: 48–9).

4) '*Functional*' democracy

For Cole, it is only through a model of coordinated functional representation that real democracy can be achieved. He is not attacking the representation concept itself; rather, he criticises the principle that in one act, an individual can be represented 'totally'.

He duly seeks a more adequate expression of community will than is at present offered by geographical representation. He wishes to replace the current misuse of the representative principle with an elaborate representational model that ensures people are represented in terms of their multiple functional loyalties.

A condition of the functional principle is that industrial democracy be held responsible to the community. Industrial rights are not unconditional: the community grants them for a service well rendered, and terminates them when it is not. Such rights are therefore correlative to function. In this sense, the functional principle is a provision for ensuring that the guilds do not operate merely for their own benefit, but that they are responsive to community interests. Rather than grant property owners absolute and unconditional rights over their holdings, Cole would permit such rights only in regard to the rendering of a useful service.

Guild socialism, then, grants no individual or group an unconditional license to administer their firms solely as they please. Reservations can be introduced through the consumer councils in order to ensure the preservation of the public interest. The general intention is that it will not be possible



for any guild to profit while disregarding the common good (Cole, 1972: 7–15; 1920b: 12; Wright, 1979: 58–9).

For commentators such as Carpenter (1922), this is a particular strength of guild socialism. Through the functional principle, although private rights in industry are not abolished, they are nevertheless exercised in accordance with the sanction of the community. It is this ‘correlative functional principle of responsibility to the community’ that ensures that the guilds would not have such wide-ranging and self-contained interests that they could defy community sanctions. As such, these legislating bodies are prevented from developing into miniature, sovereign statelets.

Sovereignty, and this is the pivotal point, is to remain in the space existing between the interconnecting web of self-governing associations that together make up the community. Through the devolution of functions, then, Cole hopes to restrict the power and concentration of centralised authority.

He is therefore adamant that democracy must not be limited to parliamentary politics, but that it must not end in industry either, since in his scheme it is a theory of social organisation. It is this dissemination of functional democracy from the state to the civil realm that represents a significant step towards the realisation of the pluralist state (Cole, 1972: 7–15; 1920b: 12; Carpenter, 1922: 301–5).

5) *The restriction of the appeal court*

Although the communes would have the final word on conflicts and disputes that were brought before them, their arbitration would be limited to precisely that—those that were *brought before them*. The functional bodies would be empowered with considerable decision-making and policy-forming powers that the communes would *not* be at liberty to intrude upon. As long as matters were settled between the functional bodies themselves, the communes would have no constitutional powers of arbitrary intervention. Far from enjoying the liberty to intervene simply at will, they would only be entitled to operate within their own demarcated limits.

The commune’s control over the functional organisations within their respective jurisdictions would thereby be formally restricted. These statutory limitations are indispensable—for if they do not quite spell the end of sovereignty, they come about as close as is practically possible (Cole, 1920b: 128).

6) *Legislation in Cole's guild socialism*

Finally, our discussion would be incomplete without addressing the cardinal issue of Cole's legal proposals. Since this is one of the most salient features of his scheme, it must be considered more extensively. Cole attacks the principle of a constitutionally unchallengeable state power embodying unlimited legislative sovereignty in a hierarchy of authority. He seeks to replace the centralised sovereign state with a social order in which power and administration is spread out to cover the functional autonomous bodies and self-governing associations. He proposes that at the head of the national commune there would be a 'Constituent Assembly and the constitutional legislature of Guild democracy'. This would be the most powerful and comprehensive legislating body within guild-socialist society. The guilds, though, would also have their own legislative and administrative functions (Cole, 1920b: 149–51; Hirst, 1989: 2–6).

The most detailed critique of Cole's legalism is still K. C. Hsiao's *Political Pluralism* (1927). Hsiao notes, correctly, that Cole attempts to divide legislative power between several independent bodies so that this constitutional apparatus might be used to balance powers between diverse functions or organised interests, and thus prevent any from becoming supreme. In response, he argues that without a 'definitely established constitutional authority', i.e. a sovereign parliament, some conflicts between disputing bodies might end in deadlock. Federal conflicts would then have to be settled on a non-constitutional basis. Drawn-out attempts at compromise mean losses to all, and innumerable political conventions are expensive expedients. For Hsiao, in the absence of a written constitution some disputes would be impossible to settle; and so 'a federalism without constitutional sovereignty is ... inconceivable'. He is, then, highly sceptical of what he sees as the pluralists 'anti-legalism' (Hsiao, 1927: 42–3).

Hsiao therefore argues that the division of the constitutional instrument into independent organs would present insuperable problems. He observes that Cole acknowledged, even if only by implication, the difficulty of demarcating the numerous functional legislative spheres and attempted to overcome this with his 'supreme court' (which came to be called the 'special Constitutional Committee of the National Commune')—a court that was to settle any conflicts that could not be sorted out between the conflicting



parties themselves. Hsiao's reasoning is that every time Cole's supreme court has to step in to settle disputes between the diverse bodies, the pluralistic state moves closer to monism. As such, the denial of legal sovereignty contains a contradiction: it is not logically possible to have two or more sets of laws. For law to be fundamental in controlling and restricting our behaviour, it must not only be consistent but must also derive from a single source in a legislature that overrides all others (Hsiao, 1927: 44).

The disagreement between Cole and Hsiao comes down to this. In Cole's scheme, although there is only one judiciary there would be various sets of laws, and legal sovereignty would not be concentrated solely in one body. Hsiao, in contrast, reasons that since it is not logically possible to have two or more sets of laws, it follows that laws can only be passed by a supreme legislature that commands legal sovereignty.

In response to Hsiao's polemic, Hirst states that it 'is specious, since pluralism never argued against a legal order. To suppose it did is to identify all legal regulation with the full consequences of the doctrine of sovereignty'. To be sure, Cole does not take issue with the claim that regulation is essential. On the contrary, he believes that social affairs are in need of organisation and coordination, hence his elaborate system-building. Hirst acknowledges that there may be problems with Cole's arrangements of a congress representing the various functional bodies, and with his 'supreme court'. For example, the ad hoc adjudications of this court would in all probability frustrate coordination, producing anomalies that would result in more ad hoc decision-making, and so on. However, to identify this problem in Cole's reasoning is 'to accept the need for formally codified law and settled judicial procedures, not to wallow in the excesses of the doctrine of sovereignty' (Hirst, 1989: 28–9). These judicial procedures are actually an integral part of Cole's theory. The general picture is one of a coordinated pluralist order, in which the autonomous legislating functional bodies are aware of the legal boundaries of what they can and cannot do.

Clearly, a balance is needed. A guild should patently not have the constitutional power to imprison an individual for poor punctuality. Or, as Cole states, 'Obviously a Guild cannot put a man to death' (1919). Such a balance would not necessarily create unmanageable problems. If, on a given



occasion, a matter came to court that fell within the jurisdiction of a guild, then it would be tried by the legislation passed by that guild (or guild congress, as the case may be). If, on the other hand, it were a more serious offence, the legal status of which the guild legislatures were not at liberty to overrule, then it would be tried in accordance with the laws passed by the national constitutional legislature. Providing that the legal boundaries of what the guilds could and could not legislate upon were unambiguously stated, any problems the judiciary might encounter in interpreting these various sets of laws need not be insurmountable. As long as laws are drawn up as clearly and as pertinently as possible, as far as their interpretation goes, it hardly matters which legislative body they come from. In contrast to Hsiao's logic, there is no obligation to conclude that the dichotomy of legislative power 'is always liable to lead to conflicts of jurisdiction'. Appeals to a 'definitely established constitutional authority superior to the disputing bodies' are not necessarily the only prerequisite for a codified legal order.

Hirst confirms that the pluralist state would be a minimal one, whose principle aim would be to create and sustain the conditions for independent associations to exist and develop by means of their own internal deliberations. This state would be constituted in such a way that no single agency could command a 'plenitude of power'. Associations would be consulted in the legislation process. The pluralist state might have primacy in rule-making, but it could only engage in such processes within its own demarcated constitutional limits. Since it would use its legal primacy to establish its fundamental goal—a pluralist socio-political order—it would have little in common with the classic theory of sovereignty. But this does not imply that the pluralist state is incompatible with a legal order. The key theme to Hirst's response to Hsiao is that the political theory of pluralism has no inherent objection to the necessity of a systematic legal system. As such, Hsiao's charge that pluralist political theory contains an 'anti-legalism' is simply erroneous (Hirst, 1989: 29–30).

It is true, though, that the national constitutional legislature would be by far the largest and most powerful legislating body. It would be a public-order power implementing a legal system which would regulate the interaction of functional bodies as well as rectifying their economic proposals. It would also have the final say on the interpretation of the laws it had passed. It would be separated



from, and superior to, the other legislating associations. Since this would be necessary in order to preserve legal order, there is perhaps some substance to Hsiao's claim that Cole's supreme court might not invariably 'fit into the pluralistic system' as readily as Cole proclaims. But it is equally clear that the substance and volume of sovereignty has been re-delineated in Cole's scheme. On the proviso that the particular legislating bodies do not overstep their legal extremities, Cole's national legislating assembly would not hold the legal power to overrule the laws those bodies passed. This is the crucial distinction between Cole's and the sovereign state's legislatures: the latter is omnipotent; the former is not. Although a legal order has to command primacy in its own domain, the state need not contain an unchangeable 'plenitude of power and legislative omnicompetence' (Hirst, 1990: 17, 76). A pluralist state would sustain a legal order—but it 'will claim legislative sovereignty *within its own constitutional limits and objectives*, that is where the difference lies, for it is these limits and objectives which redefine the content of sovereignty' (Hirst, 1990: 77).

To reiterate, Cole's scheme has no inherent objection to a codified system of legal regulation; and this legal order could embody and sustain the conditions for a plurality of independent legislating associations to exist *simultaneously*. The implication is that the absence of a concentration of legal sovereignty in one body is not synonymous with the rejection of a legal order—in which case, Cole's legal system need not, in terms of its jurisprudence, concede extensive admissions towards the sovereign state.

Summary

These six factors indicate that Cole's model is not a 'perfect example of a monistic state'. He is therefore entitled to claim that the political institution he visualises as uniting the guilds and councils—the commune—cannot be equated with the doctrine of state sovereignty. As one critic acknowledges:

Mr. Cole ... gives to his co-ordinating body, the commune, a distinctly federal character as representing not immediately the members of his community, but rather the various functional organisations in which they are grouped, and thus *gives it in spite of the coercive power which he ascribes to it, a certain pluralistic cast, without,*



however, destroying its ultimate unity. (Ellis, 1923: 595; my italics)

Despite her critical attitude, Ellis recognises that Cole's commune does indeed have a 'certain pluralistic cast'. Indeed, the communal structure (state) and the producer/civic guilds and consumer/civic councils (civil society) not only interpenetrate but are, to a large extent, analogous. Since the commune's powers are formally restricted, they cannot dominate the self-governing associations of civil society, which themselves have an active role in determining social life. The guild-socialist commune is internally divided, not between state and civil society in ways that preserve inequality and hierarchy, but between the productive, consumptive and civic interests. So the claims that the commune represents a sovereign state, a new leviathan, a political monism, the present parliament of England, etc., are perhaps not as well founded as they might initially appear to be. And to the degree that such statements could be defended, excessively loose definitions of monism and pluralism would need to be accepted.

It appears that Cole's communal structure and the sovereign state of modernity are incompatible bedfellows. Likewise, the economic system in his scheme does not harbour the kind of sovereignty that Marx identified with liberal democracies.³ Guild socialism is a scheme of *non-statist* public ownership. Its economic policy is on behalf of and determined by *the community as a whole*, rather than by the state, or by an economically powerful class or particular industries or services. The idea is that neither the communes nor organised labour will be in a position to exploit the community in the way the capitalist class is able to exploit, with the state's apparent approval, both the community and the workforce at present (Cole, 1958: 454).

Conclusion

Marx and Cole

Although Marx's account of the problematic nature of state sovereignty is presented with masterly acuity, it is Cole who actually takes the debate a stage further. For Marx, even though the modern state is sovereign in appearance, in order to survive it is compelled to pass legislation and policies



that will generally favour the long-term interests of the capitalist class. It is therefore this class that directly or indirectly sets the narrow boundaries in which the state is forced to operate. In liberal democracies, it is the property-owning class that is really sovereign. Marx therefore rejects the argument that the selfish and egoistic interests harboured in the modern civil sphere are somehow overcome by the unity created in the institutions of the state. On the contrary, he insists that since competing private interests undermine legal equality, not only does the modern state fail to unite the particular interests of the wider community, but it also actually protects private interests. It should, therefore, be stripped down and legitimate authority placed in local democratic bodies.

Marx's early works, such as *On the Jewish Question* (1843) stress the need for emancipation from domination in any guise. New social institutions are needed in order to protect the individual as citizen, worker and legislator. The fundamental activity in civil society is, he argues, economic. So the task must be to abolish the representative power external to, and not belonging to, production. He therefore wants to abolish the political domain as a detached, unaccountable and alienated sphere of power. This is exactly what the guild socialists like Cole try to do. By turning the workplace into a democratic, decision-making institution, they hope to abolish the division between worker and citizen. Like the young Marx, Cole does not accept that democracy can be realised in the state while private interest and unaccountable power remain supreme in civil society. Cole insists that we cannot expect to achieve real democracy while there remain large inequalities of power and wealth. Appeals to democratic control will be in vain for as long as the members of the possessing minority can, through their economic power, stifle the political pursuits of the majority. Generally speaking, *for both Marx and Cole, production must be brought under the control of a politically organised community.* This is one of the key points of contact between them: they both agree that *real democracy requires a self-governing civil society that democratically integrates politics into its institutions.*

These are the themes that Marx's early writings and Cole's guild socialism have in common. The objective of this paper is to highlight the congruence between Marx and Cole, and to show how the latter can realistically be portrayed as standing in the Marxist humanist tradition. More than this,



though, it is to demonstrate *how Cole decisively advances the argument a stage further*. Cole's communes are not institutions that exercise a monopoly of legitimate force. On purely industrial matters, i.e. those concerning the organisation of production, the Industrial Guild Congress is the final authority. In addition, the consumer councils are constitutional bodies possessing the right to determine the quantity, quality and price of products and commodities. The overall objective is that since no single association can express ultimate power universally, sovereignty is divisible. This is achieved via the democratisation and re-politicisation of civil institutions like the guilds and the consumer councils. The political machinery is not to belong exclusively to the adjunct state: it is to be largely disseminated and extended into a domain in which the traditional state has hitherto been reluctant to tread.

This paper has shown that Cole's scheme signifies a path beyond liberal-democratic capitalism *without* making extensive concessions that lead or detour towards a socialist sovereign state. The unique way in which his scheme substitutes private ownership of the means of production with communal ownership, and its emphasis on cooperation rather than competition, ensures that civil society would no longer be characterised as a 'private domain governed by competing individual wills'. To be sure, Cole's democratically planned, decentralised economy is intended to operate in a way that ensures sovereignty would not come to rest with a relatively small class of economic actors who collectively wielded more power than the political class. There is reason to believe that the kind of sovereignty—regardless of whether it is directed and controlled by either elected representatives or an economically powerful class—associated with the modern state would not be one of the key defining features of Cole's guild socialism. Given the fiascos of state socialisms, it is this libertarian alternative that can now inform the contemporary Left.

Final reflections on the relevance to contemporary debates

Contemporary commentary on guild socialism is sparse. The Left libertarian Darrow Schecter (2000) argues that the critique of sovereignty is also an argument for the kind of socialist economy and pluralist polity that Cole sketches—see Schecter's *Sovereign States or Political Communities?* in its entirety—while David Blaazer (1998) appeals for a return



to guild-socialist discourse in the hope of articulating a ‘post-state socialist progressive politics’ (p. 1). Other than this, the guild idea continues to receive little or no attention from present-day authors. There are, though, current debates about governance, raised in recent humanist-Marxist and anarchist critiques of capitalist governance under globalisation, that are relevant to the argument of this paper. One of the main influences on these discussions is John Holloway’s *Change the World Without Taking Power* (2002) which, with its appeal for a ‘politics beyond the state’, breathes new life into the old state debate. Holloway’s work has prompted a lively discussion, notably in a special ‘Forum’ section of *Capital & Class* (Spring 2005). The ideas contained in that book will now be introduced in the briefest of terms and compared with Cole’s, in order to show why our argument has something important to add to this rich discussion.

The starting point in *Change the World* is the two-dimensional scream of abhorrence against capitalist society. Although the scream vents anger, it also expresses a desire to move towards a ‘radical otherness’. Holloway states that the struggle against capitalism is at the same time a struggle against fetishism, the latter of which is understood as a process. Any notion that fetishism is an ‘accomplished fact’ is rejected. If it is taken as fact, he warns, an authoritarian approach to working-class representation is likely to emerge, leading to a concentration on the state. Holloway dismisses outright the idea that the seizing of state power is central to a revolutionary movement, arguing instead that ‘anti-power and autonomy’ are key to world transformation. So, in the absence of an ‘emancipated vanguard’, the struggle against alienation starts with a ‘social self-determination’: a realisation of ‘where we are’, and, crucially, a sense of going ‘beyond’ (Holloway, 2002: 1–3, 6–7, 11–18; 2005: 39–40).

Holloway and Cole have much in common, in terms of their ideas. Both are Left libertarians, expressing a keenness to move beyond statist conceptions of socialism;⁴ and both seek to establish alternative methods of organising society, in which the ‘relations between things’ are subordinated to ‘relations between people’. Like Cole, Holloway does not deny the need to engage with the problem of the state; but he points out that when we do, we inevitably criticise its form. This is what is meant by the term ‘anti-power’. It involves an asymmetry between capitalist forms of organisation and our alternative forms. Holloway does not

provide a detailed institutional blueprint for 'our' forms; but he does propose, as an ideal type, what some of the basic characteristics of direct-democratic neighbourhood councils should be. Those characteristics include the premise of horizontality; a consensus that the point of reference is not the state; the rejection of the boundaries of private property; the move beyond a politics-and-society dualism; and the creation of a 'society based on the mutual recognition of people's dignity' (Holloway, 2002: 19–22; 2005: 40; 2006: 4). Were we to assimilate these organisational criteria into Cole's scheme, we would not have to change a thing in it.

Holloway acknowledges that we do not know how to change the world without taking power. But this acknowledgement is immediately followed by an appeal for practical and theoretical work towards finding the answer (2002: 22). Cole certainly does this, as Vernon notes: 'it is doubtful that anyone has set down in print and with such practical good sense so appealing a picture of what the "stateless" administration of a modern society might be like' (Vernon, 1980: xxxix). In the society to which he refers, power has been stripped from the state and placed in a democratic, self-regulating civil society. It has not disappeared. So although 'the separation between the political and the social' has been overcome, and the democratic ethic extended to the latter sphere, it is not a powerless order.

So would Holloway be enthusiastic about Cole's extensive system-building? There are good reasons for assuming that he would be. He asserts that their (capitalist) power is a power 'over': a power of fragmentation; whereas ours is a power 'to do' and to create: a power of sociality. Likewise, our democracy is one of resistance; their democratic principle is representation. Holloway rejects the latter utterly, arguing that we cannot reclaim and democratise the state since the state is a key element of capitalist domination. His critique duly extends to elections, which necessarily create separations, excluding subjects for the next five years, at which time the charade is repeated. This atomises electors as individuals, separates the leaders from the led, polarising the two, and imposes hierarchical structures (Holloway, 2006: 2–5). The parallels with Cole's rejection of undifferentiated representation are clearly identifiable. Most notably, both Holloway and Cole dismiss parliamentary democracy as a farce. It is, though, on the issue of representation that their ideas may begin to diverge.



Although Holloway acknowledges that dividing representative and direct-democratic structures is likely to be problematic, the general movement must be towards 'democracy without representation' (2006: 4–5). For Cole, though, providing that the representation is established within decentralised and functionally demarcated organisations, it can remain true.

In my opinion, both Holloway and Cole are right that, in principle, *people* cannot be represented. But Cole also has a point when he writes that certain groups of key *interests*, in particular those in the productive and consumptive spheres, are suitable for representation. This vital insight, central to guild socialism, can inform the political economy of our 'otherness'. It is far from clear why decentralisation without the direct representation of separated basic interests would improve the democratic process. It is more probable that the obscurity and secrecy of national decision-making would simply be repeated at the local level. In order for democracy to work, it has to be broken up into small units and managed by those concerned. And for this to happen effectively, a separation of purposes is the main prerequisite. This is where our analysis leads politically. In showing how a Left-libertarian alternative to global capitalism might operate practically and democratically at both the macro and micro levels, a significant addition is made to the contemporary anti-statist argument.

It is likely that Cole's democratic proposals will be received sympathetically by those who, while sharing the general spirit in which Holloway writes, call for further discussion on the issue of democracy. Lowy (2005) notes that Holloway dismisses democracy as a 'state-defined process of electoral influenced decision making' (2002: 97). Lowy disagrees, insisting that all social and political decision-making be subject to democratic adjudication. This will necessarily include 'power-over', not just 'power to' (2005: 23). Mathers and Taylor (2005) also believe that the aim is to encourage the development of democratic organisations that 'prefigure socialist forms of existence'. They are to exist as forms of 'counter-power' (2005: 29–30). On the notion of anti-power, Rey (2005) also does not deny the need to devise 'new forms of democratic, participative and horizontal ways of political articulation' (2005: 33–4).

These commentators all recognise the pressing need to establish democratic spaces of some description. The bigger



question now is that of what, exactly, they will look like. Marx avoided this question, perhaps with some justification. But given what we now know about the inadequacies of centralised command socialism, the ‘incorporativeness’ of the social-democratic state, and the omnipresent organisational threat of oligarchy, democratic alternatives to capitalism are in dire need of theoretical articulation. If writing receipts for tomorrow’s kitchens is, for some, still futile; then what, one wonders, is the point of setting off on a long journey with no real idea of where we are going? The ‘moving beyond and towards’ must have a sense of direction. A timely reappraisal of Cole’s guild-socialist writings could hardly be more urgent. Although there is much in them that is in need of revision and amendment, they still enable us to picture how a libertarian alternative to the neoliberal global order—a ‘radical otherness’ as a recipe for a cookshop of the present—might operate. Finally, in the words of one contemporary Left critic:

How can communal ownership of the means of production be organised without creating a ‘servile state’? How can industrial production be conducted without alienating workers? How can workers’ legitimate rights to power over their work be prevented from becoming sectional bullying? How can the status and power of workers who do not produce commodities (including those who labour in the home) be properly enshrined? What should be the relation between producer and consumer? Can a coherent polity or a concept of citizenship be built in the absence of sovereignty? These are the questions which constituted Guild Socialist discourse. They must surely help to constitute any viable radical discourse which may follow the debacles of state socialism. (Blaazer, 1998: 14–5)

Quite so.

Notes

1. He is accordingly critical of the traditional economic and political socialist theories of the state: the doctrines of collectivism and parliamentary representation, respectively. As is commonly acknowledged, his scathing

- appraisals stem from the same position—that of a radical democrat (see, for example, Laborde, 2000: 70–1).
2. The following critics raise various objections, similar to that above: Nicholls, 1994: 48–9, 87–8; Ellis, 1923: 585–6, 590–3; Elliott, 1968: 188; Gray, 1946: 454–5; Von Mises, 1951: 261; Hsiao, 1927: 122–3; Glass, 1966: 44–5; Ulam, 1951: 90.
 3. The idea that consumer interests must be represented as a right of citizenship, rather than determined through prerogatives of private wealth, as they are in market-forces economies, remains a potent argument. It must be acknowledged, though, that Cole’s democratically planned economy is in need of certain additions and amendments, perhaps in a direction that would not be wholly incompatible with worker-owned market socialism. For an attempt to modernise, rejuvenate and revitalise guild socialism along these lines, see the author’s ‘G. D. H. Cole: Emancipatory politics and organisational democracy’, D.Phil thesis, University of Sussex (2004).
 4. Shortly before his death, Cole confirmed that his pluralistic and libertarian attitude did not stem from the state-socialist or social-democratic traditions, but was more akin to Morris, Proudhon or Kropotkin. Indeed, on the matter of reconciling socialist planning with individual freedom, he concluded ‘that both Communism and Social Democracy have gone astray through an undue stress on the notion that centralisation of power is a necessary element in Socialist control’ (1958: 7, 26).

References

- Blaazer, D. (1998) ‘Guild socialism and the historians’ in *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 4, part 1.
- Camiller, J. A. & J. Falk (1992) *The End of Sovereignty* (Edward Elgar).
- Cole, G. D. H. (1914a) ‘Conflicting social obligations’ in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, vol. xv.
- (1972 [1919]) *Self-Government in Industry* (Hutchinson).
- (1919) National Guilds League meeting, Bramerton Street Circle, from the Cole Collection at Nuffield College, Box D3/10/1-11, 10 November.
- (1920a) *The Social Theory* (Methuen & Co).

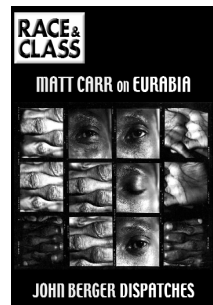
- (1920b) *Guild Socialism Restated* (Leonard Parsons).
- (1958) *A History of Socialist Thought*, Volume IV, Part I (Macmillan).
- Carpenter, N. (1922) *Guild Socialism: An Historical and Critical Analysis* (D. Appleton and Company).
- Dunleavy, P. & B. O’Leary (1987) *Theories of the State* (MacMillan).
- Elliott, W. Y. (1925) ‘Sovereign state or sovereign group?’ in *The American Political Science Review*, vol. xix, no. 3.
- Elliss, E. D. (1923) ‘Guild socialism and pluralism’ in *The American Political Science Review*, vol. xvii.
- Glass, S.T. (1966) *The Responsible Society: The Ideas of the English Guild Socialist* (Longmans).
- Gray, A. (1946) *The Socialist Tradition* (Longmans).
- Held, D. (1989) *Political Theory and the Modern State* (Polity Press).
- Hinsley, F. H. (1986) *Sovereignty* [2nd edition] (Cambridge University Press).
- Hirst, P. Q. (1989) *The Pluralist Theory of the State* (Routledge).
- (1994) *Associational Democracy* (Polity Press).
- (1990) *Representative Democracy and Its Limits* (Polity Press).
- Hoffman, J. (1998) *Sovereignty* (Open University Press).
- Holloway, J. (2002) *Change the World Without Taking Power* (Pluto).
- (2005) ‘Change the world without taking power’ in *Capital & Class*, no. 85, Spring.
- (2006) ‘Power and democracy: More than a reply to Michael Löwy’, online at <<http://libcom.org/library/power-democracy-john-holloway>>.
- Hsiao, K. C. (1927) *Political Pluralism* (Devonshire Press).
- King, P. (1974) *The Ideology of Order* (Allen & Unwin).
- Laborde, C. (2000) *Pluralist Thought and the State in Britain and France, 1900–25* (MacMillan).
- Lowy, M. (2005) ‘To change the world we need revolutionary democracy’ in *Capital & Class*, no. 85, Spring.
- MaCain, R. (2001) ‘Guild socialism’, online at <<http://william-king.www.drexel.edu>>.
- Marx, K. (1970 [1843]) ‘Critique of Hegel’s philosophy of right’ in J. O’Malley (ed.) *Karl Marx: Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right* (Cambridge University Press).
- (1975 [1843]) ‘On the Jewish question’ in L. Colletti (ed.) *Karl Marx: Early Writings* (Penguin).
- Mathers, A. & G. Taylor (2005) ‘Contemporary struggle in Europe: “Anti-power” or counter-power?’ in *Capital & Class*, no. 85, Spring.
- McLellan, D. (1995) *The Thought of Karl Marx* [3rd edition] (Macmillan).
- Nicholls, D. (1994) *The Pluralist State* [2nd edition] (Macmillan).



- Rey, M. T. (2005) 'The state as a contradiction' in *Capital & Class*, no. 85, Spring.
- Schechter, D. (1991) *Gramsci and the Theory of Industrial Democracy* (Avebury).
- (1994) *Radical Theories: Paths Beyond Marxism and Social Democracy* (Manchester University Press).
- (2000) *Sovereign States or Political Communities?* (Manchester University Press).
- Ulam, A. B. (1951) *Philosophical Foundations of English Socialism* (Octagon).
- Vernon, R. (1980) 'Introduction' to G. D. H. Cole (ed.) *Guild Socialism Restated [1920]* (Transaction).
- Wright, A. W. (1979) *G. D. H. Cole and Socialist Democracy* (Clarendon).
- Wyatt, C. (2004) 'G. D. H. Cole: Emancipatory politics and organisational democracy', D.Phil thesis, University of Sussex.

Globalisation and the War on Terror have changed the face of racism and imperialism. Only one journal, *Race & Class*, has risen to the challenge...

A. Sivanandan *Freedom of speech is not an absolute*
John Berger *Palestine: undefeated despair*
Matt Carr *You are now entering Eurabia*
Avery Gordon *Abu Ghraib, imprisonment and the war on terror*
Victoria Brittain *Assassination against liberation*



RACE & CLASS

Individual UK subscriptions to *Race & Class* cost £27 a year (4 issues).

To subscribe email: info@irr.org.uk, phone: 020 7837 0041, or write, enclosing a cheque, to the Institute of Race Relations, 2-6 Leek Street, London, WC1X 9HS.