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# Globalisation and Social Class

JOHN H. GOLDTHORPE

*'Grand' theories of globalisation – those that treat globalisation as a social and cultural as well as an economic process – regularly feature claims that fundamental changes are involved in the nature of class inequalities in modern (or 'post-modern') societies, in the form of the class structure itself, and in the relationship between class and politics. The theoretical and empirical bases of such claims are critically examined and are found to be inadequate. Some wider implications of the critique are brought out both for globalisation theorists' notions of 'epochal change' and for their views of the kind of social science that the 'global age' requires.*

## CONCEPTS AND THEORIES

An effort to achieve greater clarity is by now an essential preliminary to any essay on 'globalisation'. To this end, it would seem important, first of all, to distinguish between *concepts* and *theories* of globalisation: that is, between 'nominal' propositions about how globalisation might most usefully be understood and 'real' propositions about the causes or consequences of globalisation, as understood in one way or another. A review of the current literature would suggest that, in the case of concepts and theories alike, sharply contrasting positions can be identified according, chiefly, to the degree of ambition that they display. By way of introduction, I shall therefore outline these positions and note those concepts and theories of globalisation that will be of greatest concern to me in this essay.

Concepts of globalisation can be divided into those that would represent globalisation narrowly, as indeed a primarily economic phenomenon, and those that would represent it more largely as an economic but at the same time as a political, social and cultural phenomenon.

For economists, globalisation is a process whereby economic activity of all kinds is increasingly organised and conducted in ways that cut across politically defined national or regional boundaries. Thus, the advance of globalisation is revealed by various indicators of the degree of cross-national and cross-regional integration of markets for capital, labour, goods and services. However, for most political scientists, globalisation would

also signify a process through which – in part as a response to the globalisation of economic activity – new agencies of governance of an international or a transnational kind are created, so that greater substance is given to the idea of a world political as well as a world economic order. And, finally, there are at least some sociologists who would wish to see globalisation as further entailing social structural and cultural changes that reflect the growing interdependence and more frequent and rapid interaction of individuals and organisations across space and time and that are now leading if not to a ‘world society’, then at all events to the emergence of a new ‘cosmopolitan’ social order.

Theories of globalisation can likewise be divided into two main types. On the one hand, there are those that offer accounts of present-day processes of globalisation that recognise or imply an essential continuity with earlier experience, at least within the modern period of history. On the other hand, there are those that give accounts that stress the historically unprecedented nature of contemporary developments and indeed their radical *discontinuity* with the past.

Theories of the first kind tend to be associated with a relatively narrow, economic understanding of globalisation. The economists and economic historians who chiefly advance or support such theories would not seek to deny that a new ‘wave’ of globalisation is now in train, nor that this shows a number of distinctive features. But they would at the same time point to basic similarities between the current and previous waves – those, say, of the 1950s and 1960s or of the decades before the First World War – and, most importantly, in the micro-level mechanisms through which globalisation is generated and through which it in turn exerts its economic, and perhaps also its political and social, effects.<sup>1</sup>

Theories of the second kind may also be associated with a primarily economic view of globalisation but more often go together with wider ranging conceptions. What is in any event maintained is that globalisation in its contemporary phase has a different dynamic to the globalisation of earlier periods and is, moreover, of a ‘transformational’ character: we are today witnessing a historical disjunction and the beginning of a new epoch. This epochal change may be represented in terms chiefly of economics or of political economy – as, say, expressing the triumph of free-market capitalism within a liberal-democratic world political order. But it is more often represented within a more ambitious sociological perspective as one that brings about a new stage of modernity – ‘second’, ‘reflexive’ or ‘post’ modernity – and thus a new socio-cultural context not just for economic and political action but for ‘human being and human doing’ in general.<sup>2</sup>

The concern of the present investigation is with the impact of globalisation on social class – in the context of the more advanced societies of the present day. While it will therefore be much concerned with globalisation in its economic aspects, I shall inevitably be led to engage with larger conceptions also. The theories of globalisation on which the analysis will focus are in fact those of the *discontinuiste* variety and, more specifically, those that would claim that not only a new world economy and world polity are now in the making but, at the same time, a radically new form of society. For with almost all such ‘grand’ theories of globalisation it proves to be a major part of this claim that the nature of class inequalities and of the class structures in which they are grounded are undergoing fundamental changes; and it is then often *these* changes that are seen as in turn playing a key role in other macro-level transformations, and especially via their effects on political action, organisations and institutions. In what follows, I treat in turn three sets of arguments of the kind referred to that relate to the effects of globalisation on:

- (i) economic inequalities among members of different classes;
- (ii) class structures in themselves; and
- (iii) the relationship between class and politics.

In each case, I begin with an exposition of the arguments and then proceed to a critical examination of their theoretical coherence and of their conformity with the available empirical evidence.<sup>3</sup> In some instances, the upshot of my critique is that processes of globalisation have not occurred in the way or to the extent that theorists have supposed; in others, it is that such processes, even where present, have not had the effects that have been attributed to them. While such a critique is limited to only one aspect of those theories of globalisation that claim epochal change, I conclude by suggesting that certain issues are raised that must call the more general validity of these theories into question.

#### GLOBALISATION AND CLASS INEQUALITIES

During the years of the ‘long boom’ that followed the Second World War, it was widely believed that, as living standards generally improved within Western nations, class inequalities, of both opportunity and condition, tended to decline. However, since the ending of the long boom – say, from the mid-1970s onwards – such an optimistic view has become a good deal more difficult to sustain. Perhaps most disturbing has been evidence of a widening inequality in earnings and also in household incomes with,

seemingly, a rather clear class basis. Specifically, the main 'losers' would appear to be unskilled wage-workers in manual or routine non-manual occupations, whether through the stagnation or decline of their real earnings, even under conditions of continuing economic growth, or the increasing risk of long-term or recurrent unemployment.

It is, then, widely held by globalisation theorists that this 'new inequality' must be understood primarily as a consequence of the progressive integration of world markets, and in particular of increasing world trade, rather than of economic or socio-political processes operating within the boundaries of nation states and thus, potentially at least, subject to their control. The central argument here is the following. In the global economy, more developed nations are increasingly open to trade with less developed nations in which unskilled labour is cheap. In these latter nations, therefore, goods of a labour-intensive kind can be produced at a far lower price than in the former, with the result that unskilled workers in more advanced societies are inevitably disadvantaged in one way or another. Either they must accept a fall in their wage level – as has occurred most notably in the US – or, if their wages are maintained by union power or by protective legislation, then they must face an increase in their level of unemployment – as has occurred in continental European countries.

No protection against this economic logic, it is held, can be provided by the institutional forms or policy repertoires of particular nations. Competition on an ever more global scale acts as a kind of universal acid, eroding the distinctive features of the national capitalisms of the mid-twentieth century. Supposedly sovereign states have, willy-nilly, to accept the global free market and indeed are compelled, as Gray puts it, to engage in the 'competitive deregulation' of their economies. A mechanism of 'downwards harmonisation' is thus in operation: 'Every type of currently existing capitalism is thrown into the melting pot.'<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, as well as creating greater inequality in 'primary' incomes in the form of earnings, globalisation is also seen as having major implications for 'secondary' incomes: that is, those incomes that result when, in addition to earnings, taxes, on the one hand, and state benefits, on the other, are taken into account. The 'downward harmonisation' enforced by the global economy extends, it is argued, beyond the labour-market policies of nation states to their tax and expenditure policies also. Capital will flow – and especially through the agency of multinational corporations – to those countries that are most 'investment-friendly' in imposing the lowest tax burdens on firms (and their senior executives) and in giving priority to expenditure not on social benefits but rather on developing transport, communications and other facilities in ways that will enhance productivity.

Thus, in Beck's words, multinational corporations are now in a position 'to play off countries or individual locations against one another, in a process of "global horse-trading" to find the cheapest fiscal conditions and the most favourable infrastructure'.<sup>5</sup>

As a result, the capacity of nation states to pursue policies that might offset greater inequality in primary incomes and in turn redress class inequalities becomes ever more constrained. Intensified global competition and the centrality thus given to productivity impose strict limits on the resources that can be raised through taxation in order to fund social welfare services and, in effect, according to Giddens, rule out 'attempts to use the welfare state as a redistributive mechanism'. Rather than succeeding, such attempts are more likely to be counter-productive through deterring investment, reducing levels of wealth creation, and thus damaging those individuals and families they were intended to help. In short, as part of the larger process in which national political autonomy is undermined, globalisation throws 'social-democratic' welfare states into crisis. For Beck, they are 'caught in a downward spiral'; for Giddens, they are part of 'a now lapsed historical endeavour'.<sup>6</sup>

Such arguments are advanced with great confidence and have attracted wide public attention. One may, however, still ask just how secure is their theoretical and empirical basis, in particular, when they are viewed in the context of a larger body of social science literature than that to which their proponents usually refer. The issues in question are in fact ones that have been of interest not only to grand globalisation theorists but also to those who have concentrated more narrowly on globalisation as an economic phenomenon and to a range of other social scientists, less concerned with privileging globalisation as a theme than with understanding class inequalities or welfare state development in their own right.

To begin with, it may be noted that in their accounts of the impact of globalisation on inequalities in earnings, the authors cited above appear in fact to be essentially reliant, though they may not in all cases realise it, on certain basic propositions in neo-classical economics – that is, ones deriving from what is usually known as Heckscher-Ohlin trade theory. This theory provides an explanation of why in general, as trade becomes more open, 'locally scarce' factors of production, which are overpaid in a closed economy, will fall in price in response to shifts in demand, at the same time as 'locally abundant' factors, formerly underpaid, will rise in price. Thus, in an increasingly global economy (abundant) unskilled labour in less developed societies will benefit, while (less abundant) unskilled labour in more developed societies will be disadvantaged, with declining demand leading either to falling wages or, in so far as wages do not fall, to greater

unemployment. However, what globalisation theorists do not appear to appreciate is, first, that the Heckscher-Ohlin theory is, though rigorous, a highly abstract one that holds good only under a range of assumptions; and, secondly, that its applicability to present economic realities has come increasingly to be called into question.

For example, in a recent important contribution, Atkinson has pointed out that a simple two-bloc, less developed/more developed nation model is, from the point of view of realism, scarcely defensible, and that, at very least, a distinction *within* the more developed, OECD nations between the US and the 'Eurozone' (EZ) would seem to be required. But once such a distinction is made, what then follows from the neo-classical theory is that, in so far as the EZ takes the strain of the fall in demand for unskilled labour via increased unemployment, wage levels should be unaffected in either the EZ or the US. And, further, any way of modifying the analysis so as to accommodate the fact that in the US wage differentials between skilled and unskilled labour have widened is then likely to carry the implication that these differentials will widen in the EZ also and that unemployment will fall.<sup>7</sup> In short, the Heckscher-Ohlin theory does not provide a very satisfactory basis for claims that intensifying world trade is the key factor in explaining at one and the same time the declining wages of unskilled workers in the US and their rising risks of unemployment in Europe.

Furthermore, Atkinson, among others, has also observed that, on close examination, the detailed facts of increased earnings inequality turn out to be more complex than is usually supposed. Thus, as well as there being wide cross-national differences in the extent to which such an increase has occurred, the increase seems nowhere to have been of a sustained kind, and it would therefore seem more appropriate to think of 'episodes' of rising – or falling – inequality than of general and secular trends. Again, and yet more significantly, at least in those nations where growing inequality has been most evident, such as the US and the UK, this no longer reflects only, or even primarily, a worsening of the position of unskilled wage workers. Indeed, over the 1990s earnings in the bottom deciles of the American and British distributions have actually been rising, relative to the median, and increased dispersion has occurred chiefly in their upper reaches – that is, one may suppose, as a result of relative gains made among higher-level salaried employees.<sup>8</sup>

Once these features of increasing earnings inequality are recognised, an explanation in terms of the progressive development of world trade must therefore appear *a priori* far less plausible, and various alternative explanations, emphasising, for example, technological, organisational or demographic changes or, perhaps, quite short-term and nation-specific

factors, such as changes in processes of wage and salary determination, correspondingly gain in credibility.

In these circumstances, an empirical approach aimed at assessing quantitatively the relative importance of various possible causal factors would appear appropriate, and a series of studies of the kind in question has in recent years been carried out. So far as trade is concerned, the findings from such studies have in fact shown a large degree of consistency, despite sharp differences in, and debates over, methodology. In a comprehensive review paper, Slaughter and Swagel sum up the emergent consensus as follows: while the effect of increased world trade on the growth in inequalities in earnings in advanced societies over the last decades of the twentieth century has not been zero, it has still been 'only modest'. Thus, typical results would be ones showing trade effects to explain somewhere between five and 20 per cent of this growth. Moreover, the position is not greatly altered if, in addition to the direct effects of trade on inequality, those possibly arising from the 'exporting' or 'outsourcing' of jobs by multinationals or from the inward migration of labour are also taken into account.

Thus, Slaughter and Swagel observe, the impact of globalisation on widening earnings inequality must be judged, so far at least, to be a good deal less than what might be expected from 'purely anecdotal evidence' or again from sweeping assertions about the irresistible consequences of ever-intensifying international competition. And in turn, in so far as the relevance of trade theory is still maintained, one conclusion that might be drawn from the results reviewed is 'that on balance the advanced economies have *not* in fact become substantially more open to trade' (emphasis in original) – because, say, as tariff barriers have fallen, they have been replaced by other barriers such as voluntary export restraints and bilateral protectionist agreements. It has, however, to be said that the research from which the results in question derive would appear to have had little influence on grand globalisation theorists. Such research is rarely, if at all, cited in their work and, one must then suppose, they either are unaware of it or have chosen to ignore it.<sup>9</sup>

A situation essentially similar to the foregoing is, moreover, to be found when one moves on to the further issue of the implications of globalisation for secondary incomes, and, more specifically, for the capacity of national governments to use fiscal and social policy to offset rising earnings inequality. On the one hand, globalisation theorists again seem to have a less than certain grasp of the theory on which they – implicitly more than explicitly – rely; on the other hand, there is a substantial body of directly relevant research that, for whatever reasons, but to their cost, they largely ignore.

Claims that national welfare states can no longer achieve redistributive goals because of the constraints imposed on fiscal policy by trade and capital market integration and by the increased mobility of firms and individuals relate to the 'efficiency effects' of globalisation, and to what might be regarded as the supply side of the political market. If these effects alone are taken into account – as is largely the case among the globalisation theorists earlier cited – then the argument that welfare states aiming at income redistribution among social classes will face fiscal crisis can be made with some apparent force. But, theoretically, it is important to recognise that globalisation may have not only 'efficiency effects' but 'compensation effects' also. That is to say, on the demand side of the political market, globalisation may lead to mounting pressure on national governments to increase public spending in order to provide various forms of protection against market dislocations and the increased likelihood of different social groups experiencing sudden reversals in their economic fortunes. The crucial question then becomes that of whether it is efficiency effects or compensation effects that are to be reckoned as having greater relative importance; and at this juncture theory has again to give way to empirical inquiry.

In fact, a good deal of quantitative research on this question has of late been undertaken, which can be seen as parallel with that previously referred to on the impact of globalisation on earnings inequality; and while the findings are somewhat less consistent than in the latter case, a significant amount of agreement, at least as regards more advanced, OECD countries, can once more be discerned. Here, a valuable review paper is that by Schulze and Ursprung. The main conclusion these authors extract from the work they survey is that the extent to which the efficiency effects or the compensation effects of globalisation predominate on welfare state development is cross-nationally variable, but that a key factor in determining the outcome can be identified: that is, the form of political institutions. In societies endowed with political institutions that facilitate the collective representation of interests, most notably the institutions of 'neo-corporatism' or of 'consociational democracy', (demand-side) compensation effects tend to be the stronger, while in other societies (supply-side) efficiency effects are more likely to prevail.

In other words, the evidence from what Schulze and Ursprung call 'encompassing and sophisticated' empirical investigations does not bear out 'the extreme opinion, often heard in the media and from armchair social scientists that globalisation is bound to destroy the fabric of social welfare states'. The tax and social policies of national governments are not inevitably caught up in a 'race to the bottom'. An extended welfare state

remains entirely possible and redistributive policies can still be successfully pursued, provided that there is adequate electoral support and that collective, including, of course, class interests have an effective means of expression.<sup>10</sup>

It is also relevant to add that Schulze and Ursprung, in a rather similar way to Slaughter and Swagel, are led to comment that research that finds globalisation to have less dramatic effects than has often been asserted tends in turn to suggest that claims about the extent of globalisation itself may be exaggerated. And they indeed emphasise that while the economies of advanced societies are currently more integrated than they used to be, the reality at the turn of the century 'does, in no way, resemble the notion of a single and uniform global economy'.<sup>11</sup>

#### GLOBALISATION AND CLASS STRUCTURE

Globalisation theorists would see the progressive integration of world markets as a key factor in increasing economic inequality between individuals and families occupying what could, descriptively, be treated as different class positions. However, these theorists would at the same time regard the idea of class structure as being of rapidly declining value in attempts at understanding either the causes or the consequences of the new inequality. The idea of class structure, it is held, is tied to that of the nation state; but, today, inequality, even if still viewed in class terms, must be linked to processes operating within the world economy rather than, as Albrow puts it, associated with 'the social structure of a national entity'. And, further, globalisation itself serves in various ways to loosen the connection that exists, both in fact and in popular consciousness, between economic – and wider social – inequalities and the class positions that individuals or families hold. For Beck, social inequality becomes in its nature increasingly 'classless'; modern world capitalism is 'a capitalism without classes'. For Giddens, 'Class for the most part is no longer experienced as class', but rather as a variety of constraints and opportunities – in the formation of which globalisation plays a crucial role.<sup>12</sup> The more detailed arguments that are then advanced in support of these claims relate to two main themes: insecurity and mobility.

As regards insecurity, what is most frequently maintained is that, in the context of the global economy, the threat, if not the reality, of job loss and unemployment is no longer largely confined to individuals in less advantaged class positions but becomes quite pervasive. Previously, it was for the most part the working class – that is, manual wage-workers and their families – who bore the stresses and costs of economic fluctuation. But, in

the global epoch, salaried professional, administrative and managerial employees become similarly exposed to insecurity. Job loss, unemployment and resulting poverty, Beck asserts, 'correspond less and less to class stereotypes'. Indeed, world capitalism is a capitalism without classes essentially because the quantity of paid labour of all kinds is 'rapidly shrinking' and we are now approaching 'a capitalism without work'.<sup>13</sup>

In this last respect, it should be said, other globalisation theorists might not go to Beck's extreme, and would see 'classless inequality' as resulting more from the radical transformation of work than from its disappearance. Thus, Castells argues that 'the traditional form of work', based on full-time employment in a specific occupation and also entailing a 'career pattern over the life-cycle', is being 'slowly but surely eroded away'. Gray likewise believes that global capitalism has revolutionised the nature of work and emphasises the decline of 'the bourgeois institution of the career or vocation' and its replacement by the idea of the 'portfolio person' without permanent attachment to any particular occupation or organisation. Today, Gray holds, much of the workforce 'lacks even the economic security that went with wage-labour', so that, rather than the main tendency in class structural change being the *embourgeoisement* of the working class, as was confidently predicted in the 1960s, it is in fact 'the de-bourgeoisification of what remains of the former middle class'. All work, whatever might once have been the class structural location of those performing it, is now brought down to the same level of 'commodification'.<sup>14</sup>

As well as creating generalised economic insecurity, the rapid rate of change within the world economy is also regarded by globalisation theorists as a source of increasing rates and new forms of social mobility which further serve to reduce the significance of class. The continuity of occupational and class membership, both across generations and over the course of individuals' own working lives is undermined and so too then is class as the basis of social identity. For example, Giddens contends that, especially as a result of the decline of the industrial working class and the break-up of 'traditional' working-class communities, fewer people now 'automatically follow' in their parents' footsteps, while greater opportunities for upward mobility from blue-collar to white-collar jobs mean that 'class is less of a "lifetime experience" than it was before'. Of obvious influence here is Beck's notion of the 'individualisation' of social inequality as in effect the counterpart to its 'classlessness'. Beck argues that, although individualisation must still 'compete' with the experience of class as collective fate, it is nonetheless the case that what were formerly 'class biographies' and 'somehow ascribed' are now being transformed into 'reflexive biographies' that 'depend upon the decisions of the actor'.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, though, it should be noted that even while emphasising the 'classless' or 'individualised' nature of the new inequality, globalisation theorists are much attracted to a further idea that would appear to imply inequality of – in some sense – a structured kind: that is, the idea of 'social exclusion', which, in the global age, is to be preferred to that of 'poverty'. While the risk of poverty was experienced primarily by members of the working class, social exclusion, it is held, comes about through a variety of processes that can pose a threat to individuals and families across a wide range of class positions. Moreover, social exclusion, according to Giddens, is 'not about gradations of inequality but about mechanisms that act to detach groups of people from the social mainstream', and further that it is 'not a matter of differing from others in degree – having fewer resources – but of not sharing in opportunities that the majority have'. The idea of social exclusion is likewise taken up by Gray, Castells and Beck, and in the case of these authors is linked to that of an 'underclass' or 'new *lumpenproletariat*' that is seen as a quite distinctive product of global capitalism. The underclass indeed gives direct and dramatic expression to globalisation by bringing elements of the third world into the first.<sup>16</sup>

Arguments on the lines indicated are, again, ones that have achieved public resonance. But again, too, the question of their theoretical and empirical grounding is one that can, very pertinently, be raised.

To start with perhaps a rather obvious target, claims of the kind made by Beck to the effect that the inequalities of global capitalism are becoming classless if only because we are fast approaching a workless capitalism are scarcely to be taken seriously, and indeed well merit Krugman's label of 'globaloney'.<sup>17</sup> Theoretically, they provide a prime example of the 'lump of labour' fallacy – the fallacy that there is only a limited amount of work to be done in the world and that, as productivity rises, the number of jobs available must therefore fall. Empirically, they are without foundation. Further, though, even the seemingly less extreme positions reviewed tend to derive from unwarranted interpretations or extensions of the results of such research and analysis as are, rather sporadically, cited in their support.

Thus, as regards economic insecurity, it is true that after the ending of the long boom of the post-war years rates of unemployment in general increased in advanced societies, though with much temporal and cross-national variation; and, further, that falls in the average length of job tenure have been recorded across most kinds of occupation, though usually quite modest ones. However, this does not in itself constitute evidence that the link between class position and insecurity of employment has been broken. And indeed the findings of the more systematic research that has actually focused on this link would suggest that, while it has possibly weakened

somewhat in the US, elsewhere its strength has been little affected. For example, Gallie and his associates have analysed complete employment histories of a representative sample of the British workforce over a series of birth cohorts and show that for men, though not for women, some increase in work-life instability has occurred. But they also show, in the case of men, that structural factors are far more closely associated with the risks of instability than are individual attributes and, further, that it is class position that remains 'critical' so far as vulnerability to unemployment is concerned. In the 1990s, just as in the 1970s, men in skilled working-class jobs were two-and-half times more likely to become unemployed than were those in professional, administrative and managerial positions, and men in unskilled working-class jobs were three times more likely.<sup>18</sup> In the light of such research, then, the idea that employment insecurity is now losing its class structural basis or that what were formerly 'class biographies' become 'reflexive biographies' expressing individual choice appear merely fanciful.

Again, there is evidence from many advanced societies, though most notably from the US, that a growth in 'non-standard' forms of work has extended to some degree into the higher levels of white-collar employment – as, say, in the form of short-term contracts for professional staff. And there are also indications that firms are less ready than previously to offer assurances of lifetime continuity of employment even to their managerial personnel, who are now more exposed to losing their jobs as a result of 'downsizing', 'delayering' and other organisational changes that may occur in economic good times as well as bad. But none of this can be thought sufficient to give serious backing to claims that the 'bourgeois institution of the career' is now at an end or that a universal commodification of labour is in train.

One important point that such claims leave out of account is that non-standard forms of work carry very different implications at different levels of employment. Thus, professionals on short-term contracts are in a far less disadvantageous situation than are routine wage-workers employed on a temporary basis in, say, retail or hotels and catering. While, for the latter, temporary work may well become a 'trap', for the former it more often serves as a 'bridge' into better, more permanent positions.<sup>19</sup> More generally, though, very little evidence has been mustered, even for the US, specifically to show that professional, administrative and managerial careers are in decline – provided only that careers are seen as being made between as well as within organisations, which is, after all, scarcely a novel idea. Indeed, Sanford Jacoby, starting from a rejection of Richard Sennett's claim that there is now 'no long term' in American life, reviews a large body of research that indicates that the stock of 'career-type' positions in the American economy is little diminished. The extent to which understandings

on continuity of employment have been dropped from the 'implicit contracts' between firms and their higher level employees is easily exaggerated but, even where this is the case, understandings on continuity of employability – as furthered via appropriate training, 'planned experience' and so on – are typically substituted. Generalisations from Silicon Valley *à la* Castells are invalid.<sup>20</sup>

In short, while individuals in unskilled, routine types of work may increasingly be employed on the basis of various approximations to 'spot' contracts, this is not the case with the vast majority of those in professional, administrative and managerial positions. Rather than 'the transformation of work' in the global economy removing the class character of inequality, the differentiation of employment contracts persists – and, it could be said, for good organisational and thus economic reasons – and can itself be regarded as the abiding foundation of the class structures and associated inequalities that are generic to modern 'employee' societies.<sup>21</sup>

The grounds on which globalisation theorists argue that the pervasiveness of economic insecurity now undermines the significance of class must then be reckoned as tenuous. But the factual basis of their contention that a similar effect results from new levels and patterns of social mobility is difficult to discern at all. For example, in maintaining that in the advanced societies of today fewer people than previously are found in the same class positions as their parents, Giddens cites no supporting evidence – which is scarcely surprising since little indeed could be found. Research into class mobility in these societies has amply demonstrated that the net association between class origins and destinations continues to be characterised by a high degree of temporal stability – thus again undermining the idea of the transformation of 'class' into 'reflexive biographies' – and the further implication then is that any changes in 'total' mobility rates must be overwhelmingly determined by structural effects.<sup>22</sup> Such effects did in fact lead to modern societies experiencing particularly high rates of intergenerational mobility at a relatively *early* stage in their industrialisation, as men and women flooded out of agricultural into non-agricultural employment. But, so far at least, the class structural changes of the 'global age' have been a good deal less dramatic and, correspondingly, there is now a tendency for total mobility rates to level out or even, as in Britain, to decline somewhat. While intergenerational stability within the contracting working class – on which Giddens focuses – is indeed falling, this is offset, or perhaps more than offset, by increasing intergenerational stability within the expanding service class or salariat.<sup>23</sup>

Giddens' further argument that class is now less of 'lifetime experience' than it was previously is likewise lacking in empirical support. The service

class is in fact characterised by distinctively high levels of work-life 'retention' and these seem to have been little if at all affected by its growth. Moreover – and quite contrary to what Giddens would suppose – class immobility over the course of the working life would appear actually to be increasing among manual wage-workers, in part at least as a result of recruitment to administrative and managerial, as well as to professional positions, being now more often made directly from among those completing their educational careers rather than through 'promotion from the ranks'. Thus, while work-life mobility between different occupations or different industries or economic sectors may be more frequent than before – whether in consequence of globalisation or not – all the empirical indications are that such mobility between different class positions is tending to fall or, at all events, that the proportion of their lives that individuals spend in the same class positions is growing: that is, class is, if anything, becoming *more* of a 'lifetime experience'.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, when globalisation theorists maintain that in understanding the new inequality the concept of 'social exclusion' (complemented perhaps by that of the 'underclass') must become central, it has to be said that this is, once again, far more a matter of assertion than of demonstration. The idea of social exclusion arose in political discourse, in which context, as several authors have observed, its very vagueness had obvious advantages;<sup>25</sup> and attempts to give it the degree of clarity required for its useful application in sociological research and analysis must be reckoned as having, so far at least, achieved little.

One immediate indicator of this failure is the lack of even a broad consensus on how the socially excluded are to be enumerated. For example, in the case of present-day Britain, Giddens represents them as only a small minority – '5% or so of the population'. Gray, however, puts the proportion much higher at around 20 per cent, though regarding this as 'a magnitude of social exclusion unknown in any other European country'. But Castells and Beck would clearly regard the socially excluded as already forming a quite substantial minority in most societies – according to Beck, at least 30 per cent in Germany – and one that, in consequence of globalisation, is steadily growing. For Castells, the socially excluded can, apparently, be equated with 'the mass of generic labour'; for Beck, they are those 'without purchasing power' or who are in precarious, non-standard and 'nomadic' work and who, through a process of the 'Brazilianisation' of the world, may well come to represent 'the future majority of mankind'.<sup>26</sup>

The main problem of definition at the source of these wildly divergent estimates is, evidently, that of specifying just what social exclusion is exclusion *from*. In this regard, reference is usually made in some way or

other to a social 'mainstream', but this merely serves to expose the inadequacy of the concept itself. Thus, Giddens characterises the excluded as being 'cut off from the mainstream of opportunities that a society has to offer'. However, one has then to ask what meaning can possibly attach to such a phrase, given that all of the most important opportunities – in education, employment, housing and so on – are well known to be structured in a highly unequal way and very clearly, even if not only, on the basis of class. Just what *is* 'the mainstream'?<sup>27</sup>

In this regard, it is of interest to note the findings of one of the most detailed studies to date of the nature and generation of extreme and (possibly) multiple and cumulative social disadvantage in a society highly exposed to the global economy – the Republic of Ireland. The authors, Brian Nolan and Chris Whelan, establish two main points: first, the 'strikingly strong relationship' that exists between being in poverty (defined in terms of both low income and life-style deprivation) and holding a working-class position – with the high risk of frequent or lengthy unemployment being the major mediating factor; and, second, the difficulty of identifying any distinctively 'excluded' sub-group within the working class that is created through the effects of early-life experience, subculture, neighbourhood and so on. Those suffering severe social disadvantage, Nolan and Whelan conclude, are the unlucky victims of economic changes that increase the risks of such misfortune for 'the manual class as a whole', and not members of an underclass whose formative experiences or current situation set them apart, in some qualitative way, from the 'mainstream', even of the working class itself.<sup>28</sup>

In sum, rather than 'social exclusion' being now a key concept in the analysis of inequality, its significance must still be reckoned as far more political than social-scientific. In understanding the 'new' inequality, just as the 'old', the concept of a class structure, grounded in the differentiation of employment relations, would appear still to retain its central importance.

#### GLOBALISATION AND CLASS POLITICS

For grand globalisation theorists, as I earlier remarked, changes in the pattern of class inequalities and in the nature of class structures themselves play a key role in mediating between the economic and the other macro-level transformations of the global age. This point is perhaps best illustrated by the importance that these theorists attach to the argument of 'the decline of class politics'. In brief, this argument claims that while in the epoch of 'first' modernity it was social class that provided the main structural basis of politics, in the epoch of 'second', 'reflexive' or 'post' modernity that is

created by globalisation, class politics give way to new kinds of politics reflecting the radically different structural, and also cultural, conditions under which political action is pursued. In turn, the new forms of political mobilisation and organisation that develop promote, or indeed compel, similarly fundamental changes across the major institutions of governance, both national and international. The particular processes through which theorists represent these transformations as being actually brought about are quite diverse and some differences, at least of emphasis, are apparent. The following, however, are recurrent themes.

First of all, the dissolution of class structures, associated with globalisation, is taken as in various ways weakening specific linkages between class and party that were previously well established. For example, Gray, referring to Britain 'where electoral allegiance and class culture have always been closely and deeply connected', sees the impact of global capitalism, accentuated by Thatcherite free-market policies, as encouraging voters to abandon their class-based loyalties. Initially, the destruction of old industries and of traditional working-class communities favoured the Tories; but the fact that Thatcherism was perceived as contributing significantly to the generalisation of economic insecurity then had a converse effect – the corrosion of Tory support within the middle classes. Again, Giddens argues that the reduction in size of the working classes of all Western societies must lead to dramatic shifts in the class relations 'that used to underlie voting and political affiliation', if only because left-wing parties can no longer afford to restrict their electoral appeal essentially to the working class.<sup>29</sup>

Moreover, as well as former class-party alliances being thus undermined, yet wider reaching political implications are also believed to follow from the generally waning influence of class position on experience and action. In this way, it is held, class divisions become a less important basis for the formation of social identities, and are superseded in this regard by other divisions that in the global age take on major political significance – in particular by those reflecting what Beck calls the more 'ascribed' characteristics of race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality. It is issues associated with these divisions that increasingly shape political conflicts and policy agendas in advanced societies, and in turn it is the social identities that derive from them that become crucial to political commitment. Thus, Castells sees the construction or reconstruction of such identities as the key to new social movements, both reactive in regard to globalisation (populist, fundamentalist) or proactive (environmentalist, feminist), that are now transforming politics in the first world as much as in the third. Similarly, Albro directly counterposes to 'old-style class

politics' the 'new identity politics' that centre on 'the relative positions of groups whose very existence is problematized by processes of global social change' – but that at the same time offer the possibility of political action that can transcend national boundaries.<sup>30</sup>

Finally, though, not only is it believed that class politics are thus giving way to forms of politics grounded in other social divisions but, further, that 'social cleavage' politics in general are now increasingly rivalled by politics in a quite different and novel mode – what Giddens refers to as 'life politics'. In contrast to politics based on considerations of material interests and life-chances, life politics express value choices and life-styles. The issues and conflicts that arise do not map onto old, class-based 'left-right' oppositions but have a wider significance. They concern 'how we should live in a world where everything that used to be natural (or traditional) now has in some sense to be chosen, or decided about'. It is 'thinking in life-political terms' that in fact lies behind the environmentalist and feminist movements, although life politics has various other manifestations.<sup>31</sup> Somewhat more specifically, Giddens underwrites Inglehart's thesis of the rise of 'post-materialism' in the politics of the advanced democracies. With rising prosperity, and as the influence and guidance of tradition and custom weaken, individuals' engagement in politics has less and less to do with their economic well-being but increasingly reflects their personal search for autonomy, self-fulfilment and meaning in their lives. In this regard, 'a sea-change in people's attitudes and aspirations' has occurred through which the contours of electoral, and of democratic politics more generally, have been radically reshaped.<sup>32</sup>

I have previously sought to show that the claims made by globalisation theorists concerning changes in class inequalities and in class structures themselves have, at best, only a very uncertain grounding in the relevant social science literature. As regards class politics, the situation is somewhat different. The idea that class divisions, and perhaps other forms of social cleavage, are of waning influence on political partisanship has in fact, in one version or another, been advanced and supported by a number of political scientists and sociologists and, for some, might even count as the emerging orthodoxy in the field. However, it has still to be noted that globalisation theorists do in fact make only very limited reference to the relevant research (Inglehart's work being most often cited) and, further, that they clearly go beyond the authors of this research in representing globalisation as a key causal factor. Further still, they entirely ignore the forceful attacks that have of late been made on the thesis of the decline of class, or of social cleavage politics more generally: attacks that, so far at least, have received no very adequate response.<sup>33</sup>

For example, claims of 'class dealignment' in electoral politics were challenged in the British case by Heath and his colleagues at a relatively early stage on the basis of new quantitative techniques of a clearly superior kind to those used in previous work. It was made possible for analysts to go beyond the use of crude class (manual/non-manual) and party (left/right) dichotomies, and also to assess the underlying strength of class-party linkages while controlling for changes in the relative size of classes and of the 'overall' popularity of parties.<sup>34</sup> A more recent work then brings together a series of national and cross-national comparative studies which exploit and develop these techniques and report findings which allow the editor, Geoffrey Evans, to conclude as follows: 'the thesis of a generalized decline in the class basis of voting in advanced industrial societies is, quite simply, wrong.'<sup>35</sup>

In elaboration of this bald statement, two additional points may be made of particular relevance to the previously reviewed arguments of globalisation theorists. First, it does not of course follow from the conclusion reached that class dealignment in voting is *never* in evidence: what is rejected is the idea of such dealignment occurring as part of an encompassing epochal transition, whether driven by globalisation or some other force. Levels of class voting must, rather, be understood as showing both wide cross-national variation and over-time fluctuation. And indeed the longer the historical period that can be covered, the more apparent it becomes that class voting could be at a distinctively low level in the supposed heyday of 'traditional' industries and working-class communities. Second, class dealignment – a reduction in the level of class voting – has to be distinguished from class *realignment* – a change in the pattern of class voting. Thus, even if some long-established class-party alliances are now in evident decay, as authors such as Gray and Giddens emphasise, this need not imply that, overall, the level of class voting is being reduced. New linkages between class and political partisanship may be replacing the old.<sup>36</sup>

Also of relevance here is a significant theoretical shift that current empirical work has prompted. Since both class dealignment and realignment in voting appear to be more place- and time-specific than universal and secular, there are good reasons for seeking their explanation as much in political as in the macro-sociological terms that globalisation theorists favour: that is to say, in terms of parties' electoral programmes and strategies and of their policies when in office. The basic insight here is that class voting is likely to be low in so far as parties do not actually give voters the opportunity to vote on the basis of their class positions and associated interests. Thus, even if globalisation plays a part in the general reduction in the size of working classes in advanced societies, this does not in itself

entail a decline in class voting, as Giddens would seem to suppose. Whether such a decline occurs will depend essentially on the responses made by left-wing parties and, specifically, on whether, rather than seeking to extend the range of their class appeal, they ostentatiously abandon class politics and aim in fact to become centrist, 'catch-all' parties. Moreover, even if it is the latter strategy that is favoured, it still does not follow that the influence of class on electoral politics will simply disappear. As the association between class and voting weakens, that between class and *non*-voting may well strengthen – witness the current concern of New Labour in Britain that its 'Third Way' strategy could be threatened by its former 'heartlands' (working-class) supporters increasingly taking the 'sofa option'.<sup>37</sup>

Finally, as well as making it increasingly difficult to link globalisation to a general process of class dealignment in voting, recent research also throws serious doubt on further claims either to the effect that other forms of social cleavage are superseding class as a basis of social identity, and thus of political commitment, or that social cleavage politics is in general giving way to a new kind of politics expressing individuals' autonomous value-choices.

Of particular interest here are recent studies carried out in the US and in (West) Germany, as two national cases in regard to which both of these latter claims have been strongly pressed. Manza and Brooks have analysed data from studies of American presidential elections from the 1950s to the 1990s and examine changes over this period in the extent to which voting was patterned according to race, religion, gender and class. Some shifts occurred, but scarcely ones that would support the idea of a transformation of the political scene. Race increased in its influence on vote but was from the first always the most important cleavage; religion, the second most important, declined slightly in its effects; gender increased in influence but remained clearly the least important cleavage; while class was unaltered in its effects up to the last election covered, that of 1996, when it weakened somewhat, chiefly as a result of the defection of unskilled workers from the Democrat cause. Moreover, Manza and Brooks find that the total effect of all four cleavages on voting, rather than declining, actually showed some tendency to increase over time. In other words, political partisanship in the USA was, if anything, more socially structured in the mid-1990s than it was 40 years before. If, then, social identities or post-materialist or other value-orientations characteristic of the 'new politics' have become of greater significance in the American case, this, it would seem, has occurred without the old politics being in any fundamental way disturbed.<sup>38</sup>

For Germany, Müller has drawn on surveys containing information on party preferences carried out between 1976 and 1994 and, as regards social

cleavages, produces results that are yet more clear-cut than those of Manza and Brooks. The influence of class, religion and gender on partisanship shows few changes over time – rather, ‘a remarkable stability’ – even though clear differences in patterns of party choice are apparent across birth cohorts. Further analysis of these differences reveals, *inter alia*, significantly greater support for the Greens among men and women who were born and grew up after the Second World War. However, what Müller then goes on to demonstrate is that, in accounting for preferences for the Greens (or indeed for other parties) across different classes, individuals’ scores on Inglehart’s own scale of post-materialist value-orientations are in fact of little importance. In contrast, Green support turns out to have a rather clear social basis – that is, within the segment of the service class or salariat made up of professionals and semi-professionals working in the social welfare and cultural fields, who may, Müller suggests, be less attracted to the environmentalist movement by their distinctive values than by their distinctive interests.<sup>39</sup>

In short, it is again the case that the more systematic, detailed and technically adequate the research one considers, the greater the gap that is apparent between what this research reveals and the visions of the new world order that globalisation theorists conjure up. New political issues, new political alliances, new socio-political movements can all be seen emerging – as indeed they have regularly done throughout the modern period. But the idea that a new identity politics or life politics is now exerting a transformatory effect and radically undermining the basis of politics in class and other long-established social cleavages finds no serious support.<sup>40</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

In the foregoing I have considered arguments advanced by grand globalisation theorists regarding the effects of globalisation on class inequalities, class structure and class politics. I have found these arguments to be generally unpersuasive. The changes that are seen as following from globalisation, in so far as they are in evidence at all, turn out to be far less dramatic, far more limited and also far more cross-nationally variable than the authors in question would suppose; and, in turn, the extent to which they are in fact the outcome of processes of globalisation becomes increasingly open to question. The critique advanced here does of course refer to only one aspect of theories that would regard the current phase of globalisation as being ‘transformational’ in character. Nonetheless, it must carry negative implications that are of some wider significance. For one thing, it may be

asked why, if these theories lead to arguments of such obvious inadequacy concerning social class, one should expect them to be of any greater value in understanding the significance – or lack of significance – of globalisation for other aspects of contemporary social change. Further, though, my critique suggests that in the very way in which grand globalisation theories are conceived and then developed and upheld, there are at least two underlying problems that must seriously detract from their general credibility.

First, proponents of these theories would seem simply to assume that the idea of epochal change is a valid one to pursue. There is, however, little reason to accept this assumption. While proclaiming that such change is in train may well be a good strategy for gaining attention (and for hyping books), its intellectual merits are dubious. Historians have become increasingly aware of what has been termed ‘the fallacy of discontinuity’ – the conceit that the present is fundamentally different from the periods that preceded it. For example, it would now be widely recognised that what was once subsumed in school textbooks under such headings as ‘The Renaissance’ or ‘The Industrial Revolution’ was not in fact well understood until the idea of epochal change was in effect abandoned and attention was focused on persistence as well as change, and on long-term and gradual change, as well as that of a more sudden and abrupt kind. And for social scientists this should in no way be surprising. For the systematic study of social change from, say, the time of Ogburn onwards has served chiefly to show that change in different institutional and cultural domains typically proceeds at differing rather than at similar rates, so that societal transformation is always a far less likely outcome than more complex situations that are characterised by marked and quite possibly long-lasting ‘leads’ and ‘lags’.<sup>41</sup>

From this standpoint, then, the opposition that has been set up within the debate on globalisation – as, for example, by Held and his associates – between the ‘transformationalists’ and the ‘sceptics’ who believe that ‘nothing much has changed’ is seriously misleading.<sup>42</sup> What can be, and indeed chiefly is, postulated as against the transformationalist position is not virtual stasis but rather what might be called ‘normal’ change: that is, change of the kind that has been characteristic of what we now think of as modern societies for several centuries – change that may occur in some respects with startling rapidity while in others only so slowly that it is in fact the degree of continuity that is most in need of explanation.<sup>43</sup> I cannot find that transformationalists have anywhere systematically set out the grounds on which they would wish to claim that either current globalisation processes themselves or their supposed consequences are such that the idea

of epochal rather than normal change is necessary to their comprehension. Secondly, grand globalisation theorists would appear to have no very adequate view of how their arguments – which they would, presumably, want to represent as having some social scientific status – should be sustained. Thus, as I have sought to show, in their treatment of a range of issues relating to social class, their use of the relevant body of social science research is at best patchy and selective and at worst simply non-existent. A general inspection of the references and bibliographies that are to be found in their publications would indeed suggest that for most of these authors such research is not a very important point of intellectual reference – far less so than, say, the writings of other theorists, past and present, the output of ‘think-tanks’, or the columns of social and political commentators.<sup>44</sup>

Part of the problem here may lie in the view taken by some globalisation theorists that so deep and far-reaching are the changes with which they are grappling that, if they are to be adequately comprehended, corresponding changes – amounting to a ‘paradigm shift’ – are called for in the social science that is to be applied to this task. But, unfortunately, what is then said about nature of the new social science that the global age requires is vague in the extreme. Beck, for example, urges a reversion to some form of ‘dialectical thinking’ that, we are assured, ‘alone makes possible the sociological investigation of globality’ but that in fact remains entirely unexplicated; Albrow calls for a return to ‘epochal theory’ – likewise left as little more than a phrase; while Urry sees the need for a collection of new categories and metaphors capable of capturing ‘global networks and flows’.<sup>45</sup> Rather than such ‘avant garde social science’, as Beck chooses to call it, being taken as the key to the understanding of globalisation – or indeed of anything else – no grounds have yet been provided, I would suggest, for regarding it as anything other than intellectual bluff and bluster.

A more general difficulty, though, would seem to be that globalisation theorists have persuaded themselves that cross-national comparative sociology and political economy, of the kind that I have in fact chiefly drawn on in the foregoing, is no longer a viable proposition. Since globalisation has created a new world social order within which not only former economic and political barriers are transcended but also those of space and time themselves, the nation state, it is argued, can no longer serve as an appropriate unit of social analysis and the basic strategy of cross-national comparative work is therefore undermined. However, leaving aside the manifestly question-begging nature of this position, the assumption that cross-national research and analysis must suppose what Beck calls ‘the container theory of society’ and thus entail the neglect of cross-national interdependencies, is totally mistaken – as is best indicated by

comparativists' long-standing concern with what they know as the 'Galton problem' and with ways of overcoming it.<sup>46</sup>

I would then conclude, first, that the social science we already possess does in fact offer a far better possibility than 'avant garde' alternatives of gaining a serious understanding of globalisation and its consequences; and, secondly, that cross-national comparative work is of particular relevance – indeed, is indispensable – in addressing the crucial issues of just how far processes of globalisation have diminished the political autonomy of nation states and have narrowed down the range of variation in national institutional forms, social structures and cultures. Grand globalisation theorists would do well to abandon the pose of 'public intellectuals' and get down to some serious reading in the journals.

#### NOTES

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1. See, for example, Paul Bairoch, 'Globalization Myths and Realities', in R. Boyer and D. Drache (eds.), *States Against Markets: The Limits of Globalization* (London: Routledge 1996); K.H. O'Rourke and J.G. Williamson, *Globalization and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1999); C. Oman, 'Globalization, Regionalization and Inequality', in A. Hurrell and N. Woods (eds.), *Inequality, Globalization and World Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1999).
2. Compare, on the one hand, Robert Reich, *The Work of Nations* (New York: Knopf 1991), K. Ohmae, *The End of the Nation State: The Rise of Regional Economies* (New York: Free Press 1995), and Susan Strange, *The Retreat of the State: The Diffusion of Power in the World Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996), and, on the other hand, such works as Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right* (Cambridge: Polity Press 1994) and *Runaway World* (London: Profile Books 2000); Martin Albrow, *The Global Age* (Cambridge, Polity Press 1996); Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2nd edn. 2000), *The Power of Identity* (Oxford: Blackwell 1997) and *End of Millenium* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2nd edn. 2000); John Gray, *False Dawn: The Delusions of Global Capitalism* (London: Granta, 1998); and Ulrich Beck, *What is Globalization?* (Cambridge: Polity Press 2000).
3. I recognise that there is not a complete consensus among the globalisation theorists whose work I consider (although they do cite each others' work approvingly to a rather remarkable extent). I focus on views that can be shown to be fairly widely held and also note occasional disagreements.
4. Gray, *False Dawn*, p.78.
5. Beck, *What is Globalization?*, p.4.
6. Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, pp.74–5, 140; Beck, *What is Globalization*, p.96. Cf. also Castells, *End of Millenium*, pp.354–5; Gray, *False Dawn*, pp.64, 88–9.
7. A.B. Atkinson, *Is Rising Inequality Inevitable? A Critique of the Transatlantic Consensus*. WIDER Annual Lectures, 3, 1999, and cf. also idem, 'Bringing Income Distribution in from

- the Cold', *Economic Journal* 107 (1997), pp.297–321.
8. See also, for example, M.R. Smith, 'What is the Effect of Technological Change on Earnings Inequality?', *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 19 (1999), pp.24–59, and 'La Mondialisation: a-t-elle un effet important sur les marchés du travail dans les pays riches?' in D. Mercure (ed.), *Une Société monde?* (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval 2001). Further 'anomalous' facts are that significant differences in unemployment rates exist among EZ countries and that there are several instances of these rates being relatively low in countries with very open economies and a good deal of labour protection – for example, Austria, the Netherlands and Norway.
  9. M.J. Slaughter and P. Swagel, *The Effect of Globalization on Wages in the Advanced Economies* (Washington: IMF Staff Studies for the World Economic Outlook 1997). See also Dani Rodrik, *Has Globalization Gone Too Far?* (Washington: Institute for International Economics 1997). Of the theorists in question, only Giddens and Castells show any awareness of the complexity of the issue of 'trade effects' and neither attempts to engage with it in any depth. Moreover, while Giddens is relatively sceptical about the role of freer international trade in creating increased earnings inequality, he does not then make it clear in what other way, if any, he believes that globalisation is involved.
  10. G.G. Schulze and H.W. Ursprung, 'Globalization of the Economy and the Nation State', *World Economy* 22 (1999), pp.295–352. Further studies of major relevance here include D. Quinn, 'The Correlates of Changes in International Financial Regulation', *American Political Science Review* 91 (1997), pp.531–52; Dani Rodrik, 'Why do More Open Economies have Bigger Government?', *Journal of Political Economy* 106 (1998), pp.997–032; Duane Swank, 'Globalization and the Welfare State' (11th International Conference of Europeanists, Baltimore 1998); A.B. Atkinson, *The Economic Consequences of Rolling Back the Welfare State* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 1999); P. Hirst and D. Thompson, *Globalization in Question* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2nd edn. 1999), ch.6 esp.; N. Olewiler, 'National Tax Policy for an International Economy: Divergence in a Converging World?' in T.J. Courchene (ed.), *Room to Manoeuvre? Globalization and Policy Convergence* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press 1999); Geoffrey Garrett, 'Globalization and Government Spending Around the World', Istituto Juan March Working Paper 155 (Madrid 2000); and F.W. Scharpf, 'The Viability of Advanced Welfare States in the International Economy', *Journal of European Public Policy* 7 (2000), pp.997–1032. Scharpf in effect echoes Schulze and Ursprung's conclusion when he argues, on the basis of his 12-nation comparative study, that advanced welfare states differ in the degree of their vulnerability to international economic pressures and in the policy options that are open to them in seeking to maintain their viability but that there is no reason why they need abandon their 'employment, social security and egalitarian aspirations'.
  11. Schulze and Ursprung, 'Globalization of the Economy and the Nation State', p.345. This position could be seen as an intermediate one among political economists. Thus, Rodrik in *Has Globalization Gone Too Far?* argues that the effects of globalisation in limiting the capacity of nation states to provide adequate social insurance for their citizens against 'external risk' are in fact underestimated by some more 'Panglossian' authors, and fears a populist and protectionist backlash. In contrast, Torsten Iversen, 'The Dynamics of Welfare State Expansion: Trade Openness, Deindustrialization and Partisan Politics', in P. Pierson (ed.), *The New Politics of the Welfare State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000), regards the main source of economic and social risk in modern societies – and thus the greatest challenge to welfare states – as being not globalisation at all but rather *de-industrialisation*, driven almost exclusively by domestic factors. Cf. also Iversen and T.R. Cusack, 'The Causes of Welfare State Expansion: Deindustrialization or Globalization?', *World Politics* 52 (2000), pp.313–49.
  12. Albrow, *The Global Age*, pp.159–60; Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society* (London: Sage 1992), p.88; Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, p.143.
  13. *What is Globalization?*, pp.58–9, 153. Cf. Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, pp.142–4.

14. See Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, p.290; Gray, *False Dawn*, pp.29, 71–2, 111. In his most recent work, *The Brave New World of Work* (Cambridge: Polity Press 2000), Beck himself does indeed seem more concerned to stress the transformation rather than the disappearance of work, although, as is characteristic, the claims he makes are often quite contradictory. Cf. the pointed critique by Max Steuer, 'A Little Too Risky: Does Professor Beck have a Thesis?', *LSE Magazine* (Spring 1998).
15. Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, pp.92, 143–4. Cf. Beck, *Risk Society*, p.88.
16. Giddens, *The Third Way* (Cambridge: Polity Press 1998), p.104, and *The Third Way and its Critics* (Cambridge: Polity Press 2000), p.105; Gray, *False Dawn*, pp.29–31; Castells, *End of Millenium*, pp.71–3, 128–52; Beck, *What is Globalization?*, pp.50–51, 152–4. In earlier work, e.g. *Beyond Left and Right*, pp.144–8, Giddens also takes up the idea of an underclass, but with his adoption of the language of social exclusion he would appear to abandon it – perhaps because it is difficult to think of members of an underclass *not* 'having fewer resources' than others.
17. Paul Krugman, *The Accidental Theorist* (London: Penguin 1999).
18. See Duncan Gallie *et al.*, *Restructuring the Employment Relationship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1998). There would seem no reason for supposing that the British case is wildly exceptional – broadly similar results are emerging from current Irish research (personal communication from Chris Whelan) – but some degree of cross-national variation is of course to be expected, related to differences in both class structures and forms of social protection. For somewhat differing views on the US, see Henry S. Farber, *The Changing Face of Job Loss in the United States, 1981–1993* (Washington: NBER Working Paper, 55, 1996), and F.X. Diebold, D. Neumark and D. Polsky, 'Job Stability in the United States', *Journal of Labor Economics* 15 (1997), pp.206–33.
19. See again Gallie *et al.*, *Restructuring the Employment Relationship*, ch. 6 esp.
20. See Sanford Jacoby, 'Melting into Air? Downsizing, Job Stability and the Future of Work', *Chicago-Kent Law Review* 76 (2000), pp.1195–234, and Richard Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character* (New York: Norton 1998). An instructive debate on these issues is that between Jacoby and Peter Cappelli in the *California Management Review* 42 (1999). It should, however, be noted that Cappelli does not dissent from Jacoby's main argument concerning the persistence of 'good jobs' in the US economy. The main point of difference arises over whether jobs offering career prospects *within one firm* are in decline.
21. Jacoby underlines the force of a theoretical argument that I and others have also emphasised from the side of class analysis but which is largely ignored by exponents of the 'transformation of work' thesis. With increasing competitiveness and economic turbulence, employers may well wish to reduce the burden of risk that they assume on behalf of their employees. But how far they can go in this direction is constrained by limits to the range of work that can in fact be commodified without loss of organisational effectiveness. In particular, where employees are required to deploy expertise or exercise delegated authority on behalf of their employing organisation, employment contracts approximating a 'spot' form are unlikely to be efficient contracts. See Richard Breen, 'Risk, Recommodification and Stratification', *Sociology* 31 (1997), pp.473–89, and John H. Goldthorpe, *On Sociology: Numbers, Narratives and the Integration of Research and Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000), ch. 10; and, for further relevant debate, A.B. Sørensen, 'Toward a Sounder Basis for Class Analysis', *American Journal of Sociology* 105 (2000), pp.1523–58, and John H. Goldthorpe, 'Rent, Class Conflict and Class Structure: A Commentary on Sørensen', *American Journal of Sociology* 105 (2000), pp.1572–82.
22. For a review of such research, see Goldthorpe, *On Sociology*, ch. 11. Even where the argument is made that the origins-destinations association shows a long-term tendency to weaken, the extremely slow nature of this change is emphasised. See e.g. H.B.G. Ganzeboom, R. Luijkx and D.J. Treiman, 'Intergenerational Class Mobility in Comparative Perspective', *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* 8 (1987), pp.3–55.
23. See Robert Erikson and John H. Goldthorpe, *The Constant Flux: A Study of Class Mobility*

- in *Industrial Societies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), and John H. Goldthorpe and Colin Mills, 'Trends in Intergenerational Class Mobility in Britain in the Late Twentieth Century', in R. Breen (ed.), *National Patterns of Social Mobility: Convergence or Divergence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press forthcoming).
24. See Jay Gershuny, 'Post-Industrial Career Structures in Britain', and M. Tählin, 'Class Inequality and Post-Industrial Employment in Sweden', both in Gösta Esping-Andersen (ed.), *Changing Classes: Stratification and Mobility in Post-Industrial Societies* (London: Sage 1993). The idea that with modernisation increasing intergenerational mobility is largely offset by decreasing intragenerational or worklife mobility – the 'counter-balance' thesis – did not in fact hold for British society, nor for many others, over the middle decades of the twentieth century, since the very rapid expansion of the service class or salariat allowed upward mobility to increase both inter- and intragenerationally. See John H. Goldthorpe, *Social Mobility and Class Structure in Modern Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2nd edn. 1987), ch. 2. But with a larger service class expanding more slowly than before, the 'counter-balance' thesis does now start to apply.
  25. See e.g. Serge Paugam, 'La Constitution d'un paradigme', in Paugam (ed.), *L'Exclusion: l'état des savoirs* (Paris: La Découverte 1996); A.B. Atkinson, 'Social Exclusion, Poverty and Unemployment', in A.B. Atkinson and J. Hills (eds.), *Exclusion, Employment and Opportunity* (Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, London School of Economics 1998); and Mark Kleinman, 'Include Me Out? The New Politics of Place and Poverty' (CASE paper 11, Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, London School of Economics 1998).
  26. Giddens, *The Third Way and its Critics*, p.53; Gray, *False Dawn*, p.30; Castells, *End of Millenium*, pp.375–7; Beck, *What is Globalization*, pp.50–51, 153.
  27. Giddens, *The Third Way*, p.103. See in this regard the pertinent remarks of M. Kronauer, "'Social Exclusion" and "Underclass" – New Concepts for the Analysis of Poverty', in H.-J. Andress (ed.), *Empirical Poverty Research in a Comparative Perspective* (Aldershot: Ashgate 1998). Kleinman, 'Include Me Out', contains perceptive observations on the political uses and ideological implications of the 'social exclusion' concept. The extent of its acceptance within the social scientific community has undoubtedly had much to do with its political currency and the consequent pressure to introduce it into applications for research funding – as might indeed also be said of the concept of globalisation itself. It would be to the advantage of social science if what is often admitted in private in these respects could be publicly stated.
  28. Brian Nolan and Chris Whelan, *Loading the Dice? A Study of Cumulative Disadvantage* (Dublin: Oak Tree Press 1999). The continuing research of Nolan, Whelan and their associates has two further important implications. First, it brings out the point that one of the chief supposed 'mechanisms' of social exclusion – social isolation arising from area of residence – has to be demonstrated as a contextual effect, not just asserted, and that this may well prove difficult to do (see also J. Friedrichs, 'Do Poor Neighbourhoods make their Residents Poorer?' in H.-J. Andress (ed.), *Empirical Poverty Research in a Comparative Perspective* (Aldershot: Ashgrave 1998). And secondly, it shows up a major limitation of the empirical study perhaps most often cited by proponents of the thesis of the 'individualisation' or 'democratisation' of poverty, L. Leisering and S. Leibfried, *Time and Poverty in Western Welfare States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1999). If poverty is measured not by income level alone, as in Leisering and Leibfried's study, but also through various indicators of deprivation, its relation to social class emerges far more strongly. See Nolan and Whelan, 'Urban Housing and the Role of "Underclass" Processes: the case of Ireland', *Journal of European Social Policy*, forthcoming; and Richard Layte *et al.*, 'Persistent and Consistent Poverty in the 1994 and 1995 Waves of the European Community Household Panel Study' (Working Paper 128, Economic and Social Research Institute, Dublin 2000).
  29. Gray, *False Dawn*, p.32; Giddens, *The Third Way*, p.20.
  30. Beck, *Risk Society*, p.101; Castells, *The Power of Identity, passim*; Albrow, *The Global Age*,

- pp.150–51. Cf. Beck, *What is Globalization?* p.107.
31. Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, pp.14–15, 90–92; cf. Beck, *What is Globalization?* pp.1–2.
  32. Giddens, *The Third Way*, pp.20–23, 35–7. Cf. R. Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles among Western Publics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1977), *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1990) and *Modernization and Postmodernization* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1997).
  33. See e.g. Geoffrey Evans, 'The Continued Significance of Class Voting', *Annual Review of Political Science* 3 (2000), pp.401–17; and cp. T.N. Clark, 'The Debate over "Are Social Classes Dying"', in Clark and S.M. Lipset (eds.), *The Breakdown of Class Politics* (Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center 2001).
  34. A.F. Heath, R. Jowell and J. Curtice, *How Britain Votes* (Oxford: Pergamon Press 1985). See also John H. Goldthorpe, 'Class and Politics in Advanced Industrial Societies', in Clark and Lipset (eds.), *The Breakdown of Class Politics*.
  35. Geoffrey Evans, 'Class Voting: from Premature Obituary to Reasoned Appraisal', in Evans (ed.), *The End of Class Politics?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1999).
  36. The clearest examples of class dealignment in voting come from the Scandinavian nations. Here, in effect, very high levels of class voting around the middle of twentieth century have 'regressed towards the mean' of the western democracies in general. For evidence of low levels of class voting in Britain in the 1930s, see D.L. Weakliem and A.F. Heath, 'The Secret Life of Class Voting: Britain, France and the United States since the 1930s', in Evans (ed.), *The End of Class Politics?* (Such evidence is characteristic of that now emerging from the work of both social scientists and historians which calls into question the concept of the 'traditional' as applied in the work of authors such as Giddens and Beck. This concept, it seems, affords a vast residual category, to be invoked as convenient across time and space and without need for serious documentation, in order to create a required contrast with the 'modern'.) A notable example of class realignment is provided by M. Hout, J. Manza and C. Brooks, 'Classes, Unions and the Realignment of US Presidential Voting, 1952–1992', in Evans (ed.), *The End of Class Politics?*
  37. The most striking and best documented case of such class-linked non-voting is of course the US. See e.g. S. Verba, N. Nie and J. Kim, *Participation and Political Equity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1978), and R. Vanneman and L.W. Cannon, *The American Perception of Class* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press 1987). On the relation of class voting and party programmes and strategy, see, for the Swedish case, Walter Korpi, *The Democratic Class Struggle* (London: Routledge 1983); for Britain, G. Evans, A.F. Heath and C. Payne, 'Class: Labour as a Catch-All Party?' in G. Evans and P. Norris (eds.), *Critical Elections* (London: Sage 1999); and, more generally, Weakliem and Heath, 'The Secret Life of Class Voting'
  38. J. Manza and C. Brooks, *Social Cleavages and Political Change: Voter Alignments and US Party Coalitions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1999).
  39. Walter Müller, 'Class Cleavages in Party Preferences in Germany – Old and New', in Evans (ed.), *The End of Class Politics?*
  40. It may be thought that I have here concentrated too much on electoral rather than social movement politics. But the claims of globalisation theorists do specifically relate to the former as well as to the latter; and, moreover, the social movements that they cite as examples of the new politics (see e.g. Castells, *The Power of Identity*, chs.2–4) could scarcely be regarded as ones that, in advanced societies at least, have so far played a transformatory, or indeed any central, role. As Iversen aptly observes ('The Dynamics of Welfare State Expansion') the distributional – including class – conflicts that are likely to continue around the welfare state are in themselves sufficient to ensure that 'post-materialist' politics of the kind envisaged by Inglehart will not dominate.
  41. William F. Ogburn, *Social Change with Respect to Culture and Original Nature* (New York: Huebsch 1922).

42. D. Held *et al.*, *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1999). Cf. Giddens, *Runaway World*, ch.1.
43. Social stratification is one area in which persistence seems in many respects to be more striking than change – in contrast, say, with that of family and sexual relations where over recent decades change has been quite dramatic. This ‘revolution’ has indeed attracted the attention of most grand globalisation theorists. However, their attempts to show the connection with globalisation amount to little more than placing two trends of change alongside each other, with no clear specification of the causal processes supposedly linking one to the other. See e.g. the treatment of the topic in Giddens, *Runaway World*, ch.4.
44. The chief exception here, among the theorists with whom I have been chiefly concerned, might appear to be Castells whose books have extensive bibliographies and also contain swathes of statistics. However, Castells refers little more than the others to work in mainstream economics, political science and sociology journals, and the statistical material remains largely in form of univariate or bivariate tables rather than forming a basis for analyses in support of his ‘theoretical’ arguments – on which see further P. Abell and D. Reyniers, ‘On the Failure of Social Theory’, *British Journal of Sociology* 51 (2000), pp.739–50.
45. Beck, *What is Globalization?* pp.48–52; Albrow, *The Global Age*, chs.1, 9 esp.; John Urry, ‘Mobile Sociology’, *British Journal of Sociology* 51 (2000), pp.185–201.
46. Beck, *What is Globalization?* pp.23–4; cf. also ‘The Cosmopolitan Perspective: Sociology of the Second Age of Modernity’, *British Journal of Sociology* 51 (2000), pp.79–105. On the ‘Galton problem’, see further Goldthorpe, *On Sociology*, ch.3; and for a good illustration of how comparativists would seek to address this problem, and specifically in regard to the possible effects of globalisation on cross-national variation in class structure and mobility, see R. Breen and D.B. Rottman, ‘Is the National State the Appropriate Geographical Unit for Class Analysis?’ *Sociology* 32 (1998), pp.1–21.