relations, professionals and experts generally experience work in a much less alienated way than workers, and this contributes to the general perception that they are "middle class."

5. State employees Mediated relations are particularly salient for understanding the class location of state employees. While their direct class location can be seen as constituted within postcapitalist statist relations of production, to the extent that the conditions of production within the state are dominated by capitalist relations, their class location may be more fundamentally determined by their mediated locations than by their direct locations.

At the core of Marxist theory is an elegant and simple abstract picture of classes in capitalist societies: a fundamentally polarized class structure which constitutes the basis for the formation of two collectively organized classes engaged in struggle over the future of the class structure itself. We have now journeyed far from that simple core. Instead of only two, polarized classes, we have contradictory locations within class relations, mediated class locations, temporally structured class locations, objectively ambiguous class locations, dualistic class locations. Instead of a simple historical vision of the epochal confrontation of two class actors, there is a picture of multiple possible coalitions of greater or lesser likelihood, stability, and power contending over a variety of possible futures. The question, then, is whether this repertoire of new complexities actually enriches the theory or simply adds confusion.

This potential confusion can be reduced if these new complexities are seen as appropriate to different levels of abstraction in the analysis of classes. The appropriate level of abstraction depends upon the nature of the questions being asked. Thus, if one wishes to analyze the implications of epochal differences in class structures, the broad comparisons between feudal class structures and capitalist class structures might be appropriate. A simple two-class model of classes in capitalismcapitalists and workers-might provide the most powerful class map for such an investigation. If, however, one wished to embark on a more fine-grained analysis of the development of class structures within capitalist societies or the variations in such structures across capitalist societies, then invoking some of the complexities we have discussed would become necessary. And if one wanted to attempt a nuanced examination of the effects of location in a class structure on individual consciousness and action, then it would probably be desirable to introduce the full range of complexities that structure the class interests of individuals in time and place.

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