
Review Article

Counterpoint and Emancipation

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A continued struggle against elitism seems to be within the reach of mankind. The only way to stop the human march towards emancipation would be, indeed, to annihilate the world.

W. F. Wertheim

The work of the Dutch sociologist W. F. Wertheim is internationally known primarily through his studies on South East Asia, in particular Indonesia (Wertheim, 1964). In addition Wertheim published work of a more theoretical character, notably *Evolution and Revolution* (1974). The more recent publication of *Emancipation in Asia* (1983) here serves as an occasion for a reflection upon the theoretical perspectives advanced in Wertheim's work. But first let me introduce (or reintroduce) Wertheim's work by reviewing the themes in this collection of essays.

Most of Wertheim's work, whether his studies of developments in South East Asia or his more general work, may be characterized as a reflection upon the problematic of development and democracy, and at the same time, as a sustained critique of modernization theories, inasmuch as they are theories of development *from above*. This kind of approach has been confronted by Wertheim in several ways: as a form of 'betting on the strong' (as in Community Development schemes or more recently the Green Revolution, which have in common the reliance on a rural elite as the carriers of agricultural development), and on a theoretical level, as a mode of thinking in terms of elites and a pessimistic view of human nature. The counter-perspective to modernization which Wertheim has developed is that of emancipation.

Emancipation in Asia elucidates this perspective from several angles: as if a kaleidoscopic treatment of the general thematic of

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modernization versus emancipation. It opens with a general reflection under the programmatic title 'Emancipation as motive power of human evolution and survival'. This recapitulates views formulated earlier in *Evolution and Revolution*, expanding on them in relation to issues of ecology and with a discussion of the stages of emancipation.

Emancipation in Wertheim's thinking is a broad concept which applies as much to movements of minorities, women, national liberation or the underprivileged generally. All of these are emancipatory processes and Wertheim has sought to outline the general phases according to which they develop. Briefly, they are the following: (1) A claim for integration and equality with dominant classes, which can be summed up in the demand 'we too!' The leading forces in this stage are typically 'bourgeois' and no total change of social structure is envisioned. (2) In a further development, non-co-operation and withdrawal may become forms of resistance, and the characteristic position at this stage is 'we alone', a stage marked by the pursuit of self-reliance, independence and separatism, which also means self-assertion. (3) 'In this phase the basis of cooperation and solidarity is broadened in order potentially to encompass all those who belong to the oppressed ones. The phase can be characterized by the words "we together". In this phase the solidarity on an ethnic or religious basis is broadened to one on a class basis.' The particularistic demands and loyalties which prevailed at the earlier phases may now make way for a more universalistic outlook, and the aim of this struggle becomes the radical transformation of the social system.

The subtitle of this collection is *Positive and Negative Lessons from China* and several essays are concerned with developments in post-revolutionary China, which are contrasted on the one hand to modernization theory and developments in Indonesia, and on the other, reviewed critically in terms of their own aspirations.

In *Evolution and Revolution* Wertheim had argued that emancipation should be considered as the touchstone of evolution as well as revolution; still, in a work that was primarily concerned with analysing dynamics of evolution and revolution, emancipation as a thematic took a back seat. In *Emancipation in Asia*, however, emancipation takes the centre stage and structures the essays in the collection. Part II is entitled 'Modernization versus emancipation: the elite issue'. 'Elite or vanguard of the masses?' confronts the elite theorists in western sociological thought, in particular Pareto and Robert Michels ('the iron law of oligarchy'), whose views are the classic counterpositions to an emancipatory outlook.¹ 'The Chinese

anti-elitist experiment and its failure' is a discussion of the participatory qualities of the Chinese revolution, in contrast to the Soviet model, and of the ultimate failure of the Cultural Revolution. The closing essay in Part III 'Emancipation at a deadlock?' is a reflection upon post-revolutionary developments in Third World countries and the reactions of disappointment in the West.

Characteristically, Wertheim concludes one of his essays thus: 'A true realist should be aware that human beings will never permanently submit to their subjugation by any "power elite". A continued struggle against elitism seems to be within the reach of mankind. The only way to stop the human march towards emancipation would be, indeed, to annihilate the world' (Wertheim 1983: 199).

In making emancipation the theoretical foundation of his work Wertheim has chosen to elaborate a concept that has been generally treated as a stepchild in sociological thought — a marginal concept in sociological thought has been given depth and range and become a central tool of social analysis in Wertheim's work (Schenk-Sandbergen, 1971). This also means, in parentheses, that Wertheim has avoided taking Marxism or class struggle, in their intellectually conventional forms, as the point of departure of his work. Accordingly a subsidiary theme in his work is a certain theoretical tension with Marxist thinking, which is objected to essentially for its dogmatic and doctrinaire aspects; but this is only subsidiary to the central theme of Wertheim's work which is the confrontation with modernization theory and forms of elite thinking. Most significant perhaps in this departure from more conventional modes of social analysis are Wertheim's ideas about how emancipation comes about: his counterpoint theory of emancipation.

What makes emancipation a strategic concept and perspective is its open-endedness: it does not pre-categorize its historical subjects, as do class struggle and national liberation. It transcends the politics of class and the politics of identity.

This discussion will focus on the main outlines of Wertheim's thinking on emancipation, his counterpoint theory of emancipation, and how these perspectives depart from and compare with Marxism, world system theory and critical theory.

REFLECTIONS ON COUNTERPOINT AND EMANCIPATION

The opening chapters of Wertheim's chef d'oeuvre *Evolution and Revolution: the Rising Waves of Emancipation* are devoted to the

vicissitudes of the evolutionary perspective in social science. While Wertheim rejects unilinear evolutionism, he also objects to the cultural relativism school of anthropology which refrains from making any value judgements in comparing cultures, and he concludes in favour of retaining an evolutionary perspective on human history. How then do we identify evolution or progress (words used interchangeably in his work)? 'Various criteria pass under review: technological progress, energy production and transformation, complexity of organization, division of labour and increase in size or scale. But none of these is deemed adequate: either because they are mono-causal or because counterevidence can be found. An increase in the complexity of a society for instance can also lead to 'involution' rather than evolution. Undoubtedly, technical progress is an important dimension of evolution, but it cannot be the whole story. It can also serve to produce 'the increasing capacity to conduct wars of extermination as well as to maintain social inequities with ever more perfect means' (Wertheim, 1983: 7). Accordingly, the concept of *progress* itself requires differentiation; in Wertheim's perspective, following a distinction made by the Dutch historian Jan Romein, it is distinguished from *progression* or *growth*. For social developments to go beyond merely technical and quantitative attainments, to be truly progressive, they must include liberation from human-made domination. This reasoning leads Wertheim to suggest *emancipation* as the criterion for evolution. It is defined in a twofold sense of emancipation from the forces of nature (i.e. technical progress) and emancipation from human domination. The next step for Wertheim is that 'we will have to develop a conceptual framework in which the process of emancipation, as a decisive force both in evolution and revolution, has to be incorporated from the outset as a basic element, instead of being viewed as a force alien to the social reality with which sociologists are concerned' (Wertheim 1974a: 86).

This is being done through a critique of structuralism which takes as its point of departure Weber's critique of reification. If reification of social structure took shape with Durkheim and his principle of treating social phenomena as 'things', Weber's critique of reification implies an alternative mode of conceptualizing society. Weber, as Wertheim notes, never spoke in terms of social *structures*, preferring instead *Gebilde*, *Kollektivgebilde* or collective *constructs*. Warning against a 'substantial' interpretation of social institutions, he argued that their reality can be expressed only in terms of the *chance* that certain social actions will or will not take place. Part of the back-

ground of Weber's position is his affinity with the neo-Kantian Heidelberg school of Rickert and Windelband and their distinction between cultural and natural sciences (*Geistes- und Naturwissenschaften*), the former being ideographic (interpretative) and the latter nomothetic (concerned with formulating general laws). If social institutions are constructs, then human consciousness and motives are of key importance: hence Weber's emphasis on *Verstehen* in social science, his interpretative method. Hence also the methodological device of the 'ideal type' as an expressly mental abstraction and a precaution against 'the fallacy of misplaced concreteness'.²

For Wertheim the critique of reification carries a definite political implication: 'Reification of social phenomena may serve the interests of those in power; it adds a quality of endurance to the present distribution of positions and roles' (Wertheim 1974a: 94). What he refers to as 'Weber's psychic relativism with regard to social structures' is a means of throwing light on the essentially contingent and unstable nature of social structures: 'Social structures can be no more permanent than the social consciousness deriving from a more or less explicit system of values that is at the base of a given structural principle'.

This is the point of departure of counterpoint theory as a theory of value conflict. Here Wertheim at an early stage rejected the mainstream perspectives in American sociology, functionalism and Parsons' social systems theory. If for Parsons *values* are at the base of the social system, constituting its normative order, it is precisely in this realm that one can discern cracks in the foundation. For instance with regard to social stratification, if functionalists hold that only one value system can be sociologically valid, Wertheim argues instead that in any society more than one value system is to be found: 'beneath the dominant theme there always exist different sets of values, which are, to a certain degree, adhered to among certain social groups and which function as a kind of counterpoint to the leading melody.' If functionalists tend to be influenced by the social perceptions of higher strata and dismissive of the perceptions of lower strata, Wertheim notes: 'Different theories may reflect a different position towards the dominant value systems in one's own or an alien society' (Wertheim 1964: 26, 34). A keynote here is *ambivalence*, within one and the same person and permeating society. Thus acceptance of domination is never total. The sequence of values—social institutions is thus amplified with ambivalence to counterpoints, contestation, conflict, making for the instability of any social construction.

No society is culturally and structurally homogenous. The seeds of dissension and growth are omnipresent. So is, in my view, the counterpoint phenomenon, as a source of all emancipation movements and of social evolution.

In their most embryonic shape, those counterpoints only manifest themselves under disguise. In more primitive societies they mostly appear as tales, jokes and myths, which give expression to the deviant sets of values. In an urbanized society, one could think of examples such as graffiti, badges and soap-box oratory. From the fact that in such cases the contrary set of values expresses itself in an institutionalized form, it can be deduced that it is not merely an individual expression of protest against an over-rigid cultural pattern, but a group protest which has a certain sociological meaning (Wertheim, 1974a: 109, 114 and 1974b).

Wertheim's counterpoint theory made him a 'conflict sociologist' long before the debate challenging the 'harmony model' of functionalism and Parsons had even begun (the earliest formulation of the counterpoint perspective dates back to 1953) (Wertheim 1953).

Counterpoint theory is a component of Wertheim's emancipation perspective, a perspective which argues, essentially, that social evolution is a two-way process, propelled and nourished not only *from above* but also *from below*. This is the basis of Wertheim's critique of modernization theory, as, essentially, a theory of development from above. Similar perspectives of development from above, through elites, entrepreneurs or 'betting on the strong' are likewise rejected and contrasted with a different understanding of 'development':

Any social process is a two-way affair of interaction . . . No process started from above takes root without actual involvement of the people concerned, who therefore have to be 'mobilized' in order to take an active part therein. On the other hand, there are many historical instances of processes in which the initiative came to a large extent from below, although (mostly urban-oriented) leadership is always required to canalize the initiative into coherent action (Wertheim, 1983: 2).

In the long run, according to Wertheim, the evolutionary advantage lies with the emancipatory, democratic approach: 'the societies where emancipation has progressed most are making the greatest strides, not only in technology but in motivation to proceed further' (Wertheim 1974a: 42). These then are the outlines of an emancipatory sociology, a sociology suffused with the imagery of motion — 'dynamic', 'dialectical', a 'sociology of a world on the move'.

Marxism and Emancipation

In a fundamental sense it can be said that Wertheim substituted emancipation struggle for class struggle. The ideas have a similar

status — when for Marx class struggle was the motor of history, for Wertheim emancipation struggle occupies an even more fundamental place, as the touchstone of evolution. In the stages of emancipation outlined by Wertheim, the third stage when ‘group solidarity on an ethnic or religious basis is broadened to one on a class basis’, is likened by himself to Marx’s ‘class for itself’ (Wertheim 1983: 19). So there is a definite convergence between class analysis and emancipation theory; the differences between the two perspectives, however, are significant as well.

Wertheim has applied his emancipation perspective particularly to large, predominantly agrarian Third World countries. Hence in his work there is more frequent mention of peasantries than of the proletariat, and in this sense it is a marriage of Marx and Mao, parting company with Lenin and Trotsky. There is no longer mention of ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ in Wertheim’s vocabulary, there is no longer an emphasis on the role of the state or even the party, rather the emphasis is on *movements* as the carriers of emancipatory momentum. (A Leninist notion of ‘vanguard’ however still does recur in his work.) Instead of a watershed-demarcation between capitalism and socialism there is the Maoist idea of ‘continuous revolution’ and an emphatic understanding of emancipation as an ongoing, dialectical and long-term process.

None of these nuances are singular to the emancipation perspective, most of them are found nowadays also among adherents of class analysis. What does single out emancipation theory, aside from its dropping of much Marxist excess luggage, is the explicit importance attached to *spiritual motivations* in history. As Wertheim pointed out: ‘The determinist preoccupation of many Marxists with material conditions and technological factors led to a general neglect of the autonomous forces of spiritual motivations as decisive factors throughout the history of mankind’ (Wertheim 1974a: 335). This is associated on the one hand with a particular interpretation of Marxist theory: ‘The primary role accorded, in Marxist theory, to class consciousness shows how erroneous it would be to interpret Marxism in such a way as to deny the *mental* urge towards emancipation its preponderant role in the process of human evolution.’ And on the other hand, Wertheim states (p. 58), ‘My own attempt to establish emancipation as the main criterion of human progress is, at the same time, an attempt to reformulate the evolutionary process in a way which implicitly acknowledges the primary significance of mental attitudes.’ Thus it is here that the key departure from Marxism must

be located, while at the same time there is a concurrence with 'mentalist' tendencies in Marxism (in the vein of Lukács and Gramsci). Wertheim himself mentions two further differences with Marxism. In the theoretical Epilogue to *Evolution and Revolution* he characterizes his own position as that of *probabilism* (p. 376–7) 'as a substitute for an outlived determinism'. Furthermore he notes: 'Perhaps Marx and his followers have overrated the significance and omnipresence of class struggle. Kropotkin may have been right when, as a reaction, he strongly stressed the element of cooperation as at least as essential in human beings as the element of strife.'

The counterpoint-dominant value system conceptualization bears a resemblance to Gramsci's concept of hegemony with its prioritization of the cultural field of social conflict. Also Marx's metaphor of the new 'growing within the womb of the old' is taken further in Wertheim's work where the new growing within the womb of the old is made *visible*. While Marxist approaches generally deal with social conflict that is manifest, the counterpoint perspective draws the attention to dissent that is latent, concealed, camouflaged. There is an awareness in this work of the *silence* of social struggle (p. 115): 'True emancipation movements are incessant, often silent, struggles.' There is a concern with what appears to be small and insignificant: with 'how a counterpoint, from its tiny and apparently futile beginnings, may evolve into a powerful stream leading humanity, or part of it, towards evolution and, in more extreme cases, revolution' (p. 114). Thus it renders visible the tunnels secretly dug underneath the fortifications of the status quo.

These departures from the base-superstructure paradigm yield what is in several respects a drastically different mode of interpreting social realities. Theoretically it is founded upon a 'subjectivist' rather than an 'objectivist' appraisal of the nature of social reality. There is no rigid demarcation in Wertheim's perspective between Being and Consciousness, rather Being is also a matter of Consciousness. As such this work belongs to a more relativistic, less positivist era in social science. The source of social conflict in emancipation theory is different than in class analysis — mental rather than material factors are emphasized. The course of social conflict likewise is appraised differently — the circumstances in which counterpoints grow to social protest movements are shaped by the interaction of mental perceptions and material conditions. Economic conditions, amidst political manoeuvres and psychological influences, play their part in this, but not according to any 'determined' course, for how economic

phenomena are evaluated is, again, a matter of subjective value judgement (cf. Wertheim 1974a: 100). This also affects the interpretation of the dynamics of revolutionary processes. Thus, according to Wertheim (p. 199), in a pre-revolutionary situation:

What is really changing is not the functioning of social institutions as such, but rather the significance of these institutions in the light of the values to which people adhere. It is mainly in the realm of values as a driving force that a pre-revolutionary situation may be distinguished from one where a counter-revolution is more probable.

Accordingly we find in Wertheim's emancipation perspective several departures from classical Marxism. First, from materialism — not technical changes resulting in changes in the forces of production and strains in the relations of production, the Marxist script, are the source of social unrest, but counterpoints which stem essentially from spiritual or mental origins. Second, from determinism — for probabilism. Emancipatory social change is regarded not as 'necessary' but as probable. Third, from class reductionism — whereas in class analysis ethnic, national, religious and other dimensions of social struggle must always be accounted for with much mental acrobatics, the emancipation perspective does not pre-categorize its subjects. Thus, key problems in Marxist theory, materialism, determinism and reductionism, problems which stem essentially from a nineteenth-century epistemology, are left behind in this outlook.

World System Theory and Emancipation

The problematics of world system theory and Wertheim's emancipatory sociology are quite different. Wertheim's work is primarily concerned with twentieth-century Third World revolutions, its essential problematic is the relationship between national revolution and social revolution in the twentieth century and the concept of emancipation serves to address that question. The problematic of world system theory is historical capitalism, its rise as a global mode of production and its subsequent trajectory. If we compare the underlying perspectives of these approaches several similarities and differences stand out. Both perspectives are global in scope, as nowadays all major departures in social science must be, and both are conceived in terms of extended time frames. Both also take issue with

the modernization theory, but they do so for different reasons and here the divergence of the two perspectives becomes apparent. For Immanuel Wallerstein the problem presented by modernization theory is, primarily, that it is ahistorical — the modern world, he argues, evolved from a transformation of feudal Europe into a European world-economy, and so on. The related perspective of ‘developmentalism’ is criticized as well on account of its unit of analysis, the state or nation, whereas world system theory takes as its framework a ‘world’ constituted by an elementary division of labour (Wallerstein, 1979: 134, 155). In effect Wallerstein replaces modernization theory with a model that is both centrist and Eurocentrist — the modern world system, a model that in some respects is not all that different from modernization theory. Wertheim, addressing the question in a contemporary context, mentions neglect of the period of world history among his objections to modernization theory, but his main criticism is that it is a theory of development from above. Likewise he rejects the centre–periphery perspective, the one feature that dependency theory has in common with modernization theory — the world view in which the West forms the centre of the universe.

To the extent that world system theory is a ‘globalized Marxism,’ or a neo-Marxism applied to the stage when capitalism has ‘conquered the world market’, the question of emancipation is narrowed to class struggle, the problematic of emancipation is capitalism and the overcoming of capitalism. This theoretical orientation, however, is intersected by a systems perspective in which capitalism is conceptualized as ‘the capitalist world system’ and certain movements as its negation, as ‘antisystemic movements’. These comprise class struggles as well as national liberation movements. This makes for an odd framework, as if the populism of the 1960s of being ‘against the system’ has been promoted to a fine point of theory. It is inconsistent in that national liberation movements may be argued to contribute to the reproduction of the capitalist world economy whereas class struggles strive to eliminate the capitalist world economy (Arrighi, Hopkins and Wallerstein, 1987: 403). While a common criticism of world system theory is that it neglects class struggle, a recent formulation (p. 416) notes: ‘Our conception of class struggle as the pivotal process of the capitalist world-economy is . . . unremarkably conventional.’ But this conventionality in fact is remarkable, if only in view of the shortcomings of class analysis in relation to contemporary emancipatory projects — feminism, the new social movements, the ‘fourth world’ struggles of oppressed groups,

minorities and indigenous peoples. If these issues find no place in the dictionary of world system theory, it is because they cannot be conceptualized in terms of conventional class struggle.

While world system theory is a theoretical hybrid, its overall approach to the nature of social reality is objectivist, as evidenced in the tendency towards reification of 'the world system'. On the one hand world system theory is preoccupied with the 'ascent and decline of nations' in the world system, the shuffling of positions from periphery to semiperiphery and core and vice versa, and on the other it evinces a conventional class analysis. It is both steeped in heterodox neo-Marxism with its emphasis on the sphere of exchange and it carries all the luggage of classical 'scientific Marxism' including base-superstructure reasoning, determinism and reductionism. As such its concept of emancipation suffers from the same limitations as the conventional class struggle perspective discussed above. To close with the words of Wallerstein (1979: 143): 'We shall have to stop maneuvering in the present with antiquated concepts derived from the past'.

Critical Theory and Emancipation

Critical theory departs from classical Marxism, as does Wertheim, in that it does not reduce emancipation to class struggle. Other themes that Wertheim's perspective has in common with critical theory are the critique of reification, the emphasis on the subjective dimension, on consciousness, the consideration for art, the influence of psychoanalysis. Wertheim has drawn a parallel between his own counterpoint method and psychoanalysis, in a plea for what might be termed a 'depth sociology' (Wertheim 1964: 36–7): 'the social anthropologist and sociologist have to develop a keen sense for discovering hidden signs of social discontent and conflicting value systems in the most trivial forms of behaviour, in the same way as the Freudian school of psychology developed the capacity of detecting significant symbols of conflicting norms in such seemingly futile phenomena as lapses or dreams.' One might add, with regard to Wertheim's work, the importance attached to folk art and religion. In Wertheim's work these themes are elaborated in a Third World setting whereas the landscape of critical theory is the western world. This is where the perspectives diverge, diverge as much as the horizons of Europe and Asia.

Critical theory may be considered a liberation sociology of Nazi Germany — from the rise of Nazism (corresponding with the early

years of the Institut für Sozialforschung in Frankfurt) to its demise (the relocation to New York and California and Adorno's work on the Authoritarian Personality) up to Habermas's later contributions to the intellectual reformation of the 'new Germany'. As such it cannot be bypassed by anyone looking past the picture postcards of the western world, into the abysses of the old world and of Germany in particular; yet by the same token critical theory is not a global statement. Non-western issues are absent from its discussions and where they are looked into it is through western binoculars. In critical theory the Enlightenment promise has become the Enlightenment problematic. The concept of emancipation which different formulations of critical theory have in common is imbued with the Enlightenment tradition. In the perspectives of critical theory emancipation is historically correlated with the Enlightenment, its aspirations and its 'negative dialectics'. Accordingly, emancipation is coupled with rationality, from the 'romantic reason' of radical Jacobinism to Habermas's communicative rationality. As in a steeplechase of Europe's mental horizon, critical theory takes us past Descartes–Kant–Hegel–Nietzsche–Marx–Freud–Piaget as landmarks in European self-consciousness. As a historical dynamic perceived and defined as emanating from Europe, emancipation is conceived in tandem with modernization and the contradictions of modernization, so that in this regard critical theory returns to the same fold as Marxism, as a radical modernization theory, in which it differs from Marxism in that its concept of modernization is not only radical but also tragic.

In contrast, although there are traces of Enlightenment optimism in Wertheim's evolutionary panorama, his problematic is neither focused on Europe nor shaped by Europe. Wertheim's personal experiences with the Bolshevik revolution in St Petersburg in his youth, with the Indonesian national revolution, as an observer of Chinese affairs and his years in west Europe have given rise to what may be termed a 'three world' perspective: a conceptual framework that needed to be able to accommodate dynamics in different world zones. Accordingly, and this is what sets Wertheim's concept of emancipation apart from most other western views, it is a conceptualization that is not steeped in the Enlightenment tradition. Its understanding of emancipation is value-centred, not rationality-centred. Counterpoint theory is a theory of emancipation through value conflict. It is not conceived along the specifically western axis of irrationality–rationality, where emancipation is implicitly taken to mean 'emancipation from irrationality.' Furthermore, it is an emancipation perspective developed not as a

variant on modernization theory but in reaction against modernization theory.

There are yet other differences with critical theory. When in successive formulations of critical theory the emphasis gradually shifted from class contradictions to contradictions between people and nature, this anticipated the ecological sensibilities of the Green movements. In Wertheim's work we find an attitude to issues of technology more oriented towards Third World concerns than to western pre-occupation with 'overdevelopment.' The question of alienation which looms so large in critical theory is absent from Wertheim's work. The culture pessimism which permeates so much of the outlook of critical theory is not shared by Wertheim either. On a global canvas this may also exhibit a 'regional' flavour.

The focus of Wertheim's work is the problematic of Third World revolutions and as such it belongs to the era of the national liberation struggles. How then does this perspective relate to the retrenchment of the 1970s, the 'ideological hardening' of the 1980s, to the disappointment and cynicism evoked by post-revolutionary developments in the Third World? When the revised edition of *Evolution and Revolution* appeared in Dutch in 1977 it did so under the new title *The Long March of Emancipation*, which qualified the earlier perspective when the book was subtitled *The Rising Waves of Emancipation*. The new title emphasizes the long-term nature of emancipation processes while reaffirming the original commitment in the image of the Long March. In a later article 'Some paradises lost?' Wertheim observes, 'It has become difficult to defend revolutions in a world where these not only devour their own children but also their neighbouring brother countries.'³ The dangers of relapse and restoration in the post-revolutionary phase are explained here in terms of left-overs from pre-revolutionary times and relics from previous emancipation phases. Again the long-term nature of emancipation is emphasized: 'Even within a state calling itself "socialist", emancipation is not an achieved objective, but a perspective for a remote future.' With respect to developments in China, Mao's basic idea is reaffirmed: 'Ten cultural revolutions might be needed to produce a true socialist society, one transformed not only institutionally but also mentally.' Here Wertheim goes against the current of all those who declare, as does the present Chinese leadership, the Cultural Revolution to be 'ten lost years' (cf. Wertheim and Stiefel, 1983). It is also here in the discussion of post-revolutionary dynamics that the shortcomings of his

perspective emerge. The essential problematic of Wertheim's work is to explain revolutions and its strength lies in uncovering counter-points and analysing pre-revolutionary dynamics. It is a perspective that is more adept at examining local dynamics than at analysing transnational and global ramifications. When it comes to accounting for post-revolutionary set-backs, Thermidor, or counter-revolution, the mentalist orientation shows its limitations. The appeal to a remote future cannot be a substitute for an analysis of current dynamics, or it becomes a 'retreat into the future'. An analysis in terms of the past, in terms of hangovers and relics, likewise falls short.

There may be a certain logic to an emancipatory sociology that discusses the unit of social analysis in terms of people's perceptions from below and that stops short of a theory of the state and its relative autonomy in a global context. Yet these are the kind of questions that present themselves at the post-revolutionary stage. In some respects then Wertheim offers us outlines of a theory rather than a theory. A discussion of phases of emancipation that does not account for the variability of emancipatory projects and their fields of action can only produce generalizations. If the counterpoint perspective is penetrating, it is only part of the dialectics of emancipation. If the emancipation perspective is illuminating, it is only part of the problematic of social evolution. The problematic of emancipation ('pushing from the bottom upwards') is different from the problematic of evolution ('a two-way affair') in terms of theoretical status and complexity. There are overtures in this oeuvre towards a dialectical sociology whose subject matter is the dialectics of power and liberation, the interplay of initiatives from above and from below, but it would require a theorization of domination as well as of emancipation to provide a comprehensive perspective. In drawing the portrait of the 'Eternal Figaro' Wertheim has told part of the story and uncovered a dynamics which is probably potent enough to substantiate his view that 'There is a *probability* of continuing evolution.'

NOTES

1. A more wide-ranging treatment of this subject appeared in Dutch only. See W.F. Wertheim (1975); also relevant is Wertheim (1981).

2. See, for example, H. Stuart Hughes, (1958); M. Weber (1974). The critique of reification is taken further in the sociological phenomenology of A. Schutz (1932/1972). This approach also influenced P.L. Berger and T. Luckmann (1966).

3. Wertheim (1983). The reference is to Vietnam and Cambodia.

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