# Emancipations, Modern and Postmodern

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**There is no shortage of reasons for rethinking emancipation.**
Theory lags behind practice. New social movements have generated
new practices and theorizing, much of which has not filtered
through to social theory. Some of the developments which can be
summed up as the poststructuralist turn are significant to eman-
cipatory thought and practice, yet most of this goes on as if these
developments were taking place on another planet. A tendency
towards de-ideologization and scepticism has become widely pre-
valent, if not routine. All the same some developments continue
to be referred to as 'progressive' while others are termed conser-
vative. Apparently some standard and sense of direction still exist.
Obviously it does for social movements. Obviously it does in
development efforts. It may be, however, a sense of direction far
more subtle, multiple and modest than the 'modern' views. It's a
matter of progress against the backdrop of pragmatism and eman-
cipation in the no-nonsense era.

While the 1960s are on record for being 'liberation' oriented, the
actual conceptions of liberation developed at the time were often
vague and unreflected. Prominent in the Western world were the
themes of the Freudian left, the encounter of Freud and Marx, ques-
tions of class mingling with individual liberation (e.g. Cooper,
1967). In the Third World the keynotes were national liberation and
variations on the theme of anti-imperialism. While the 1970s and
1980s saw new politics and new theorizing, the key concepts of 'pro-
gressive' thought, except for the problematic of class, were rarely
reflected on with any degree of thoroughness. Flagwords in political
analysis and policy, such as participation, emancipation, empower-
ment, have rarely been clearly defined, or for that matter referred
to in indexes, another indication of their unreflected use. The
cornerstones of analysis have often been the most casual elements.

This is a volume of reflections on reorientations in emancipatory thought and on the meanings of emancipation. The term 'emancipation' has been used increasingly widely in recent years, possibly as a reflection on the limitations of class analysis in the face of collective actions which are not reducible to class, and on the limitations of postmodern discourse whose generalized indirection impairs differentiation among types of collective action. The appeal of emancipation is that as a concept broader than class struggle it can potentially embrace the projects of old and new social movements. Even so, as a concept, emancipation has been closely linked to the Enlightenment tradition and it remains to be seen whether it can survive the poststructuralist turn.

The various terms used to describe collective action carry many different inflections. They include attitudinal terms such as dissent, opposition, resistance, protest, defiance; terms emphasizing methods of action such as riot, violence, *jacquerie*, rebellion, mutiny, revolution, petition, demonstration, consciousness raising; general terms with normative or political overtones such as class struggle, liberation, emancipation, participation, empowerment; and social science terminology such as collective behaviour, collective action, social movement.

Also among the latter there are distinct differences: collective behaviour is neutral and suggests distance, while collective action emphasizes the importance of agency, subjectivity. Collective behaviour, a term used by structural fuctionalists (Smelser, 1962), can accommodate negative and conservative interpretations of 'mass behaviour'. A substantial tradition in social science views collective behaviour, particularly violence and revolution, as manifestations of the breakdown of systems of social integration. Durkheim and his notion of anomie (normlessness) is one of the main lineages of this tradition. Along with the Durkheimian perspective, as part of its cultural assumptions, come negative, anxiety-ridden views of the 'masses', the crowd or mob — the threatening imagery of social pathology and collective criminality as laid down in the works of Le Bon, Sighele and Tarde (van Ginneken, 1992). The Durkheimian perspective interprets collective mobilization as the consequence of the breakdown of social control, or social disequilibrium; this results in individual disorientation, which in turn leads to violent protest. Psychologizing protest, in terms such as frustration, anger, panic, alienation, tends to discredit the motives of protesters. The imagery of the masses uprooted by rapid social

change, of crises, of alienation, suggests an ambience close to that of disease and crime.

In his studies of social movements in European history, Charles Tilly uses the concept of collective action, charting a course diametrically opposed to the Durkheimian view, also on the part of American representatives of the Durkheimian tradition such as Ted Gurr and Chalmers Johnson. Instead of social disintegration, uprootedness, alienation and assorted emotional states, Tilly's extensive empirically documented studies emphasize the role of solidarity and organization in collective action (Tilly, 1978; Hunt, 1984).

In structural functionalism collective behaviour is viewed primarily in terms of the 'problem of order', or the Hobbesian problem. A breakdown of social order, it must be remedied by the reimposition of order. Collective mobilization in this view easily exceeds the bounds of law and order. Thus the social movements of the 1960s were regarded as an 'excess of democracy', resulting in the 'ungovernability' of Western societies (Huntington, 1975). In like manner, the 'revolution of rising expectations' and consequent large-scale mobilization in developing countries were viewed negatively — as an obstacle to the process of modernization (Eisenstadt, 1966). As a general perspective, emancipation belongs to the collective action end of this theoretical spectrum as against the social pathology or breakdown view.

### EMANCIPATION

As a political term emancipation dates from the Enlightenment. By the turn of the nineteenth century emancipation was associated with a view of progress as a movement towards freedom and equality. In this way Condorcet formulated the general character of progress in the cause of reason — inequality among nations will disappear, equality will increase within each nation (Condorcet, 1794; Gay, 1969: 119-20). Progress defined as a process of increasing equality, in other words, a process of emancipation, was a common denominator of nineteenth-century liberal and radical perspectives (Greiffenhagen, 1973). A series of collective mobilizations was recognized in these terms: the emancipation of the bourgeoisie, workers, slaves, women, Catholics, Jews and serfs. All of these concern a two-fold process of the extension of political rights to

subaltern groups and subaltern groups acting as agents of history.

At the time the understanding of emancipation as a general pro-
cess of which these movements were specific manifestations seemed
unproblematical. Emancipation was a grand unifying theme; in the
words of Heinrich Heine: 'Not simply the emancipation of the Irish,
the Greeks, Frankfurt Jews, West Indian blacks, and all such
oppressed peoples, but the emancipation of the whole world, and
especially of Europe, which has now come of age, and is tearing
itself loose from the apron-strings of the privileged classes' (quoted
in Feuerlicht, 1983: 41). While there were vast ideological differ-
ences as to the prime mover, manner and direction of the process
among liberals, Owenites, Saint-Simonians, Blanquists, Marxists,
national movements and anarchists, there was little doubt as to its
overall momentum. Mankind was on the way to freedom, inexor-
ably so. These various views did not so much dispute this central
tenet as the modalities in which it would work out. The tenet
was questioned by those who disbelieved in the momentum of
modernization — by conservatives, Romantics, aristocrats, élite
theorists and all those to whom decadence was a matter of greater
concern than progress. For the rise of the bourgeois order coincided
with the decline of the aristocratic order, bemoaned by those taking
a racial view such as Gobineau, or nihilist in outlook such as Nietz-
sche. The interrogation of the Enlightenment and modernity did not
have to wait for critical theory or postmodernism: it was part and
parcel of the Enlightenment and modernization itself, which were
heterogeneous all along — from the 'Romantic Enlightenment' to
'conservative modernization' (e.g. Seidman, 1983; Kondylis, 1986).

Emancipation does not have a fixed meaning. Over time it has
been undergoing several changes. Since becoming a political flag-
word at the time of the French revolution, from a relationship
between individuals (father and son, master and slave) it came to
refer to relations between groups; from a formal process controlled
from above, or a gift (manumission), it came to refer to the self-
liberation of the non-privileged (Lempert, 1973).

## EMANCIPATION OR EMPOWERMENT

Emancipation is used more often as an explanatory term (e.g.
'emancipatory project') than it is explained, more often as a
qualification than it is qualified. As such it refers to a general

implicit understanding rather than to an explicit, defined body of theory. What definitions are given tend to be particularistic (e.g. women's emancipation is the improvement of conditions and life opportunities for women) rather than general. Emancipation tends to be used in two related ways: the process of the disadvantaged entering the mainstream, including women's liberation, and in a general sense of 'becoming free', the character of which varies according to the understanding of constraint.

In 'Capitalism and Human Emancipation', Ellen Meiksins Wood (1988) argues that race and gender discrimination, unlike class, are not intrinsic to capitalism but contingent, and that therefore class struggle remains the central issue. Unger (1987: 52ff) uses emancipation in a general sense, as 'emancipation from false necessity', from various forms of closure. Bob Marley's 'emancipate yourself from mental slavery' makes the connection between a specific and a general process.

Wertheim (1983: 11, 2) refers to emancipation as 'liberation of creative human potentialities from suffocating social structures' or 'liberation, from both natural and man-made shackles'. An explicit definition is that 'emancipation refers to a collective struggle on the part of a thus far underprivileged group or category' (see article by Wertheim, p. 258).

This provides little basis for distinguishing between different kinds of collective action. There is no distinction between an excluded group entering into dominance and a change of the rules of the game; between a minority's struggle for integration and a revolution, or between a political and a social revolution.[1] Another group, previously disadvantaged and underprivileged, joins the game. White sahib becomes brown sahib — as the classic description of the outcome of the anti-colonial struggle for independence goes. In other words, power itself has not changed; power is not problematized. If emancipation is to be a critical concept it must enable us to make such distinctions.

In his classic work on liberation theology, Gutiérrez distinguishes three interpenetrating levels of meaning of *liberation*: as the aspirations of oppressed peoples and social classes; as an understanding of history in which 'man is seen as assuming conscious responsibility for his own destiny'; and in a spiritual sense where it matches salvation from sin (Gutiérrez, 1973: 36–7, 176–8). The first meaning refers to national liberation and class struggle in one breath, the second is equivalent to progress, while the third refers to spiritual

redemption. The scripts of Enlightenment, Marxism, national liberation and Christianity are fused in a single theology of inter-dependent liberations.

*Participation* is a term widely used in liberal democratic theory (participatory democracy), community organizing, in development projects (popular participation) and forms of research (participa-tory action research). A more egalitarian-sounding term than mobilization (with its vanguardist connotations), it has been criti-cized for its neo-populist character (Dahl, 1970; Kothari, 1984). It refers to integration rather than transformation – taking part in something which itself is not necessarily changing – unless the notion is full participation, a notion which has been criticized for invoking the illusion of primary democracy. The weakness of par-ticipation is what it leaves out: 'the issue is not simply whether or not certain groups participate, but whether the mass of the population has the means to define the terms and nature of their participation' (Kaufman, 1991:n. 11).[2]

A fashionable term that gained currency over recent years is *empowerment*, used in development projects, women's movements, education, welfare and family support programmes. Its defining feature is a participatory approach which aims to 'enable people to emancipate themselves' (Kronenburg, 1986: 229–33). Definitions of empowerment tend to be soft, for instance: 'empowerment is a pro-cess aimed at consolidating, maintaining or changing the nature and distribution of power in a particular cultural context' (Bookman and Morgen, 1988: 4). This is not particularly helpful since the direction of the change in the distribution of power is not indicated. Accor-ding to another account, empowerment 'is taken to mean a group process where people who lack an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to, and control over, those resources' ('Empower-ment', 1990: 2). This is so broad that it might refer, for instance, to any method for getting rich. The term has also been used in a populist sense, as in the empowerment of the Philippine people through 'People Power'. More critical is the view of Sen and Grown (1988: 80, 81) for whom empowerment begins with 'self-definition' and is concerned with the 'transformation of the structures of subordination'.

Part of the appeal of empowerment is the aura of power. But it does not necessarily problematize power. It does not differentiate between 'power to' (ability) and 'power over' (control), between empowerment as acquiring skills or as seeking control. It can denote

anything from individual self-assertion to upward mobility through adaptation and conformism to established rules (e.g. sanskritization might be considered a process of empowerment). Accordingly empowerment may carry conservative implications, or more precisely, it is politically neutral. It does not necessarily imply a critical consciousness. Empowerment may relate to emancipation as a necessary but not a sufficient condition: emancipation implies empowerment, but not every form of empowerment is emancipatory.

The various definitions of emancipation, liberation, participation and empowerment show a tendency towards circularity, one being defined in terms of the other. Emancipation is a form of liberation, liberation a form of emancipation, etc. Some terms do not imply transformation. Clegg (1989) does refer to 're-fixing power' but does not specify the terms of re-fixing. We may try to gain further clarity by juxtaposing emancipation to resistance.

### RESISTANCE OR EMANCIPATION

It is striking how fundamental the imagery of resistance is to radical discourse. Stuart Hall's (1988: 237) observation that 'Socialism has been so long on the defensive in Britain that it has by now acquired a permanent negative posture', might as well apply to the left in general, although one might argue whether it applies since 1848, 1870, 1930 or the post-war era. Resistance is the default discourse of the left, casually embedded in terms such as cultures of resistance. In France a grouping of left-wing forces may be referred to as a *cartel de non*. All of this suggests a general attitude in which being progressive is identified with saying no, keeping things from happening, and in fact with a profound tendency towards cultural conservatism.

Closer consideration shows that resistance implies a complex register of notions. First, resistance is not simply negative but also affirmative — as in the basic understanding of *critique* as opening, and in critical theory's 'negation of the negation', monumentalized in Marcuse's Great Refusal. Next, resistance may reflect a commitment to and defence of an existing 'moral economy' or notion of social justice and collective rights. In this way Thompson (1971) interpreted the actions of crowds in eighteenth-century England. Scott (1976) used the term to explain peasant attitudes in twentieth-century South-East Asia. Resistance in this sense is also affirmative,

but in a conservative sense. In terms of action it may motivate rebellion, quietism or anti-emancipatory actions. For instance, the familialism of the anti-feminist movement in the United States has been interpreted in this way: 'as an attempt to reinstate an older patriarchal bargain, with feminists providing a convenient scape-goat on whom to blame current disaffection and alienation among men' (Kandiyoti, 1988: 284). In other words, emancipation efforts may be resisted in the name of a moral economy, which itself may be the crystallization of a previous wave of emancipation.

The currency of the term 'resistance' also derives from the legacy of anti-colonial struggles. Here resistance is conservative in the sense that the intention is to preserve community life as it existed before the colonizers intervened; its future is in the past. In the ter-minology of primary, secondary and tertiary resistance (as in David-son, 1978), the latter refers to nationalism.

The 'everyday forms of peasant resistance' (1985) and the 'arts of resistance' (1991) are themes of James Scott's work. 'Everyday resistance' avoids overt confrontation and defiance of élites and authorities, and instead applies the 'weapons of the weak' such as foot-dragging, arson, sabotage, pilfering and gossip. The way some women use spirit possession has also been regarded a weapon of the weak (Moore, 1988: 181). Is resistance, then, a weapon of the weak and emancipation a project of the not-so-weak? This is an impres-sion one might gain from Scott's work or from some studies of poor people's movements in the Western world (e.g. Piven and Cloward, 1977). The problem with this kind of analysis is that it renders invisi-ble what transformative element there is to poor people's actions — even in the process of withdrawal and evasion, new solidarities may be created and new cultural understandings and counterpoints take shape.

In his work on European social movements Tilly distinguishes between *competitive* actions, which claim resources also claimed by rival groups and take the typical form of village fights and brawls; *reactive* ones in which people act in the name of threatened rights, taking forms such as food riots and tax rebellions; and *proactive* forms which assert group claims not previously exercised, taking forms such as the demonstration and the strike. In the period from 1600 to 1850, in the context of large-scale structural change, pro-active forms of collective action gradually replaced reactive ones (Tilly, 1978: 143–71). Touraine (1985) distinguishes between defen-sive and offensive conflicts.

The common ground of resistance and emancipation is the con-cern with autonomy or self-definition (self-determination in an international context). The difference between resistance and eman-cipation seems to parallel in a general way the distinction between protest and transformation. Resistance is negative *tout court*; its politics are opaque, they must be decoded from context. Emancipa-tion is negative in that it is a process of a group freeing itself from restriction. Emancipation is concerned with 'freedom from' rather than 'freedom to'. It is proactive, but in an unfinished sense, as a negative commitment of transgression rather than a positive blueprint.

Emancipation is a matter of critique *and* construction, of which resistance represents the first step and transformation, in the sense of structural change, the second.[3] Resistance and emancipation are interdependent, with the proviso that not every form of resistance opens the way to emancipation and some block it. What sets eman-cipation as a concept apart from resistance is the proactive, trans-formative element. Foucault's understandings of power break with traditional political theory in showing that 'power's function is not merely prohibitive and repressive but productive, positive, educa-tive' (Cocks, 1989: 51). Similarly, emancipation is not simply about saying no, reacting, refusing, resisting, but also and primarily about social creativity, introducing new values and aims, new forms of co-operation and action.

Most representations of emancipatory processes, however, also on the part of the left, stress the negative and not the creative moment. While in many cases the vocabulary of resistance reflects the cultural conservatism of the left, in others it is tied up with a par-ticular argument. Often resistance implicitly passes for emancipa-tion, or at least the two are not clearly distinguished; in other cases they are consciously set apart, as in views which present resistance as an alternative to emancipation.

Habermas interprets the new social movements as forms of resistance to increasing commodification, bureaucratization and other processes of colonization of the life-world by capitalist and state interventions. The emphasis is on the defensive character of the new social movements. Are the new movements then solely moti-vated by the defence of existing claims? Habermas does acknow-ledge the proactive claims made by the new politics: 'The new problems have to do with quality of life, equal rights, individual self-realization, participation, and human rights' (Habermas,

1987: 392). If these proactive features are recognized and yet the overriding discourse remains that of the defensiveness of social movements, perhaps this may be accounted for by Habermas's view that the movements are concerned with developing the unfinished project of the Enlightenment. An evolutionary teleology is inscribed in the social movements: a telos of collective agreement underlies Habermas's perspective (Dews, 1986: 22; Lyotard, 1984: 66). In other words, according to Habermas resistance *is* emancipation.

Foucault opts for the vocabulary of resistance for entirely different reasons. Foucault differentiates between three forms of power and three forms of struggle: against *domination*, predominant in feudalism, taking the form of ethnic, religious struggles; against *exploitation*, dominant in capitalism, taking the form of class struggle; and against *subjugation*, which is dominant now, taking the form of struggles in the name of identity. For the latter Foucault's chosen vocabulary is that of resistance, rather than emancipation. Instead of proposing a theory of total liberation, Foucault (1980, 1981) speaks of a series of local resistances, local struggles. For Foucault there is no transcendence, there is only an alteration of discourse: another truth, another power. Struggle produces a new domination. Hence resistance is the appropriate vocabulary, not liberation or emancipation for there is no emancipation from the nexus between truth and power itself: in this sense there is no future which is different in a radical way.

Habermas opts for the vocabulary of resistance because the future is prefigured in the communicative rationality which is part of the Enlightenment project — the future is past; Foucault opts for resistance because there is no future. The latter is the essential poststructuralist criticism of emancipation discourse; a criticism which is rearticulated upon another arc of meaning by the postmodern critics. Lyotard (1988) also opts for the term resistance. Henceforth emancipatory thinking is thinking *after* the poststructuralist turn. One of the keynotes of rethinking emancipation is whether emancipation can survive this turn, and if so, what kind of emancipation.

## EMANCIPATIONS AND MODERNITY

A basic error that has been made in emancipatory thought time and again is to generalize from particular contexts towards a general

model, theory, strategy and agenda of emancipation. Therefore it is not merely illustrative but essential to historicize emancipation and show the plural character of emancipations. These emancipations, at the same time, may not be simply isolated processes but may be correlated in several ways.

Table 1 gives a loose list of emancipation projects from *c.* 1800. (It would not be difficult to add others but the list only seeks to cover the main projects and those which play a part in the literature. The table is not chronological in the sense that later projects annul former ones. Neither is the implication that later is better. Blank spaces under the subheadings indicate the absence of specific information on that point.)

Initially, the momentum of the age of the democratic revolution (Palmer, 1964) inspired emancipatory movements of different kinds. For a long time egalitarianism in the name of reason, the liberal ideas of the Rights of Man and bourgeois emancipation were the matrix for other projects, although it is important to note that they were never the sole source of emancipatory momentum. Thus, the emancipation movements of black slaves of North America were inspired by dissident Christian movements such as the Quakers, before riding piggy-back on the discourse of the democratic revolution. The abolitionist movements stemmed from similar multiple, heterogeneous sources. The nineteenth-century women's movements were motivated by the discourse of equal rights and, in the American Republic and England, by the example of black emancipation and abolitionism. In many respects the emancipation of workers followed in the footsteps of the emancipation of the bourgeoisie. The emancipations of Catholics and Jews depended on the climate of secularization. The theme of popular sovereignty, perhaps the central motif of the democratic revolution, inspired the momentum of 1848 and the 'springtime of peoples', or the national question, as it was termed at the time.[4]

By the mid-nineteenth century two terrains of emancipation that were explicitly recognized were those concerned with the 'national question' and the 'social question'. For the generation between 1830 and 1848 it was not clear where the line between them was drawn or which was the most important. There was considerable cross-over between them; for instance, before the First International turned to Karl Marx it asked Giuseppe Mazzini, the leader of the Young Italy movement for the unification of Italy, to be its president (Billington, 1980: 148).

Table 1. *Emancipation projects over time (c. 1800 to present)*

| Emancipations | Subjects | Methods | Projects |
|---|---|---|---|
| Liberalism | Bourgeoisie | Democratic struggles | Liberal democracy |
| Marxisms | Proletariat | Class struggle Union, Party Proletarian revolution | Socialism |
| Anarchisms | Working class and anti-authoritarians | Syndicalism co-operatives insurgency terrorism | Co-operative society Libertarian socialism |
| Social democracy | Multiclass | Democratic struggles | Social democracy |
| Leninism | Working class and revolutionaries Anti-colonial movements | Vanguard party Agitprop, etc. Internationalism (Comintern) | Dictatorship of proletariat, Socialism World revolution |
| Maoism | Peasants and workers | Party, Mass line | Socialism |
| National liberation | Multiclass United/national front | armed struggle civil disobedience | Self-determination |
| Indigenous peoples | Indigenous | Multiple | Self-determination |
| Guevarism (Focismo) | Peasants, workers and revolutionaries | Foco Armed struggle | Socialism and self-determination |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gramsci | Workers, intellectuals and peasants | War of manoeuvre<br>War of position<br>Hegemonic struggle | Socialist hegemony |
| Frankfurt School | | Critique<br>Psychoanalysis | Authenticity |
| Habermas | | Communicative action | Democratic socialism |
| Feminisms | Feminists and women | Liberal: rights<br>Socialist: class<br>Radical: autonomy<br>Poststructuralist: symbolic struggles | Equality and socialism<br><br>Autonomy<br>Difference |
| Community organizing (US) | Community and labour | Power structure analysis, organization, lobbying | Empowerment |
| Liberation theology | Poor, people and clergy | Popular education<br>Conscientization | Peace and justice |
| Anti-racism | Minorities and people | Consciousness raising<br>Collective action | Autonomy or integration |
| Ecological movements | Plural | Democratic struggle | Survival, quality of life |
| Holistic humanism | Plural | Democratic struggle | Democratic socialism |
| Post-Marxism | Plural | | Radical democracy |
| Poststructuralisms | Plural<br>Plural | Local resistance<br>Deconstruction | Identity<br>Difference without domination |
| Postmodernisms | Plural | Little narratives<br>Struggle against totality | Piecemeal change<br>Resistance |

By the second half of the century the 'social question' and class-
based movements were widely considered to be the most important
in the eyes of participants as well as the powers that be, from
Bismarck to the Pope. Yet, particularly during the last quarter of the
century, nationalism was a growth industry and there were many
attempts to outflank the class struggle and the importance of
working-class parties and trade unions with the trappings of
nationalism, political anti-Semitism, popular imperialism and
racism. Discussions on class and nation loomed large through much
of the twentieth century: on the question of national self-
determination, taken up by Lenin and Stalin; the relationship
between socialism and nationalism, taken up by Kautsky, Luxem-
burg and the Austrian Marxists; and the anti-colonial movements
(e.g. Amin, 1980). What the movements based on the themes of
class and nation shared is that they set up formal organizations,
were organized on a national basis, focused on the state and on
acquiring state power and converged on revolution, in either social
or national guise (Wallerstein, 1990).

After the growing disillusionment with socialism in the Eastern
bloc, class and national liberation lived on as twin themes in 'Third
Worldism'. After liberation, the new nations were to transform
nationalist consciousness into a new social consciousness (e.g.
Fanon, 1967: Ch. 3). This meant that class served as the centre of
gravity in emancipation writ large. It was the centre of gravity
theoretically, as the chief instrument of analysis of national and
international situations, and in terms of praxis, as the main avenue
of mobilization. This generated a large literature of the 'and class'
variety which sought to establish the relationship to class of various
questions and subject positions: nation and class, state and class,
power and class, capital and class, gender and class, race and class,
caste and class, village and class, ideology and class, culture and
class, religion and class, and so forth. Besides being theoretically
meaningful in articulating a field of forces centred around class it
was politically meaningful in formulating a rank order of emancipa-
tions in terms of a 'line of march' led by class projects. International
relations were annexed into the class paradigm by equating imperial-
ism with capitalism.

All along, the representation of the 'old' social movements cen-
tred on and dominated by the tension between class and nation was
itself a highly ideologized definition of the terrain of forces that was
by no means undisputed. The emancipations grounded in ethnicity,

gender or religion were marginalized or excluded in the class-or-nation schema. The peasantry and the countryside were either left out or squeezed in. And where did democratic reform movements such as the Chartists in England belong? The class paradigm was disputed by anarchists, by third world nationalists such as Gandhi, and generally by those who were left out by the hegemony over emancipatory projects sought by organizations claiming to represent the working class.

By logic emancipation is a terrain highly susceptible to the politics of theory. Annexationist theories abound.[5] Each paradigm of emancipation turns emancipations plural into emancipation singular: it enlists the range and variety of emancipatory projects in the notion of a central momentum of progress. Ultimately, the question of emancipation hinges on the question of progress. It is a matter of the hierarchy among the projects challenging hierarchy. What is the spearpoint of emancipation considered as an overall project? The question of the 'privileged revolutionary subject' has long been dominated by the class paradigm. Politically this concerns the ranking of emancipations, which organization is to exercise leadership, what are the terms of co-operation in alliances, coalitions, fronts?

In the 1960s, in the wake of the embourgeoisement or 'privatization' of the Western working class, Third Worldism fulfilled the desire for a new historical subject. Marcuse, on the cusp of two eras, pinned his hopes on a combination of the disaffected in the West and the disinherited in the Third World (Marcuse, 1964). The disillusionment with post-revolutionary societies, not only in the socialist bloc but also in the Third World, again created a demand for a new historical emancipatory subject. For a while it seemed that the new social movements which came into focus from the 1970s fulfilled this role.

### EMANCIPATION AND THE NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

The new social movements (NSM) have been considered under several analytical models. They have been viewed in terms of social pathology — for instance, as expressions of an 'excess of democracy'. They have been annexed to the old movements and analysed in terms of the class paradigm — as in structural Marxism and variations on the 'and class' type of literature. Among the new

theoretical approaches formulated in relation to the NSM, we can distinguish perspectives which ignore or reject a notion of emancipation (resource mobilization theory and several forms of poststructuralism and postmodernism), those which uphold it with reservations (European social movement theories) and those which reconstruct emancipation (forms of poststructuralism, post-Marxism). While these approaches differ on the point of emancipation they converge on other points relevant to rethinking emancipation.

Resource mobilization theory departs from the social pathology or breakdown of the integration approach in regarding conflictual behaviour not as an abnormal condition in society but as normal and in viewing the actors in collective mobilization not as an irrational 'crowd' but as rational agents (e.g. Oberschall, 1973; Zald and McCarthy, 1979). Keynotes of this approach are rationality, organization and 'objective' variables such as interests, resources, opportunities and strategies. The framework of analysis is neo-utilitarian logic with actors engaging in cost–benefit analyses and following a 'Clausewitzian' understanding of politics. Social movements are the outcome of the strategic mobilization of resources in a political marketplace where actors perform rationally in pursuit of their interests.

It has been argued that this market model of social mobilization overemphasizes the role of rational calculation, leadership and formal organization in movements (Foss and Larkin, 1986). While the critique of the breakdown thesis is valid, excluding the analysis of values, ideologies, projects, culture and identity in other than instrumental terms is not (Cohen, 1985: 688). Resource mobilization theory may be relevant with respect to the bargaining strategies of organized groups capable of negotiating demands, but it does not account for the processes of identity formation, which involve non-negotiable demands or demands which are in the process of taking shape (Cohen, 1985: 692). Problems which this paradigm does not address are identity (how does a group identity come about?), consciousness (how do actors become aware of common interests?) and solidarity (how do collective interests command loyalty?).

By contrast, in the perspectives developed in Europe, the interests pursued by social movements are viewed not as givens but as constructions which take shape in the process of social action. The essentialism of the subject is replaced with the construction of identity. As historically new dimensions of NSM, Touraine (1981)

identifies the concern with democratization and the expansion of civil society, with cultural issues, reflexivity concerning identity and self-limitation. According to Melucci (1989: 205–6), while the contemporary social movements as such are not new, novel structural elements are information-orientation, process-oriented action, integration of the private and the public spheres and planetary consciousness. In these approaches the emphasis is not on structure or on agency, but on action itself.

Some exponents of European action sociology are quite sanguine about the emancipatory impetus of NSM, in particular those of the 1980s. According to Zsuzsa Hegedus (1989: 19), the 1980s have witnessed

> . . . the massive emergence throughout the world of collective actions which are non-violent and pragmatic in their methods, non-integrated and multiple in their structures, anti-hierarchical and networking in their organizations, heterogeneous (cross-class, cross-ideology, cross-age) in their constituencies, non-coercive in people participation and non-exclusive in their adherence . . .

This profile of organizational methods and structures can be supplemented with other tendencies. In most perspectives there is no longer a privileged subject for radical collective action. Class struggle as a general framework is left behind. Whether or not in specific conditions class-based movements are the most significant actors, depends not solely on objective conditions but on logics of identity formation and mobilization, part of which are cultural in character. In addition, the state is no longer the obvious target of transformative action. Social action tends to become 'movementist' rather than statist in orientation. The terrain is civil society as much as the state, and cultural as much as political. Transformation is no longer conceived as total. 'Self-limiting radicalism' (Touraine, 1981; Cohen, 1985) is the predominant note. In the imagery of social transformation revolution as total rupture is abandoned in favour of changing hegemony, and expanding civil society as against state and market along with structural reform.

A common query is what the relationship is, or should be, between the old and new movements. For instance: 'new social movements can coalesce with other political groupings much more easily when a new ideological common denominator is found. By that I mean a social project, a notion of a new ordering of the polity and the community that calls into play ideas of order and equity, of historical opportunity and cultural consensus. The discrete addition

of separate demands will not serve' (Birnbaum, 1988: 103). Accord-
ing to Michael Harrington (1987: 193), 'What is needed in the late
twentieth century is not just another program. What is needed is a
restatement of the basic moral vision of the Western Left.'

In these views fragmentation is posed as a problem and a return
to an overarching narrative as a solution. There are structural
reasons why class is unlikely to return as the central paradigm and
provide such a unified solution, the most significant being the onset
of post-Fordism or flexible accumulation (Harvey, 1989). Sivanan-
dan (1990) refers to this as the 'emancipation of capital from
labour'. The retreat of class and the dispersion of subject positions
is a tendency widely observed. Clark and Lipset (1991) document the
'fragmentation of stratification' in the Western world: the weaken-
ing of class stratification, the decline of economic determinism and
the increased importance of social and cultural factors, and the fact
that politics is less organized by class and more by other loyalties.
This does not mean that class loses relevance but that it is no longer
necessarily the single overriding dimension. Terms change in mean-
ing according to context; whether class is one feature among others
or the most salient, overdetermined, all-encompassing dimension
implies a world of difference: it is only the latter that constitutes a
'class society' (Laclau, 1990: 163–6).

Chantal Mouffe (1988: 98) cautions that 'it is both dangerous and
mistaken to see a "privileged revolutionary subject" constituted in
the new social movements, a subject who would take the place
formerly occupied by the now fallen worker class'.

> Like those of the workers, these struggles are not necessarily socialist or even pro-
> gressive. Their articulation depends on discourses existing at a given moment and
> on the type of subject the resistances construct. They can, therefore, be as easily
> assimilated by the discourses of the anti-status quo Right as by those of the Left,
> or be simply absorbed into the dominant system, which thereby neutralizes them
> or even utilizes them for its own modernization.

In this view the features of the NSM do not *per se* add up to a new
profile of emancipation, although there are common tendencies.
According to Melucci (see his article, pp. 67–8), concepts like libera-
tion or emancipation 'are too strictly connected to the conceptual
and linguistic horizon of industrial society to be used without meta-
communicating about them'. Social movements have 'enlightened
the new potential for democracy in the contemporary world,
together with new powers and new risks'.

## EMANCIPATION AND THE POSTMODERN TURN

The themes and sensibilities of the NSM overlap with those of post-structuralism and postmodernism. In postmodernism the plurality which is a matter of practice of the new movements has become a point of theory. If the grand theme of modernity is human beings taking responsibility for their own destiny, that is the conscious pro-gramming and production of society, poststructuralism and post-modernism may be considered as reflections upon that project. They are reflections on what really happened and what went wrong, and as such they are essentially pleas for self-reflexiveness, par-ticularly as regards the role of reason, knowledge and power, the exclusions of modernity, the dark side of the Enlightenment.

Since emancipation looms large in the project of modernity, poststructuralism and postmodernism are also reflections on eman-cipation — rejecting, deconstructing and redefining it. If moder-nity is about the logic of order produced as against order received, or custom replaced by reason, postmodernism is about the logics of producing order. If modernity is about the promise of power, postmodernism is about the problem of power. As such it represents heightened sensibilities. Unlike Marxism, it is not an 'in-house' criti-que of the Enlightenment project but it brackets the premises of modernity and the Enlightenment itself. It interrupts the familiar duets of liberals and radicals. Since it is concerned with para-digmatic transgression it generates irritability among paradigm par-tisans. Since its concerns are central to the question of the making and the makeability of society, they are also central to the questions of development, which is after all nothing but the Enlightenment applied or modernization operationalized.

This is not the occasion for a methodical engagement with post-structuralism and postmodernism, but only a very brief reflection on some of its findings in relation to emancipation, put in relief by comparison to past paradigms. The work inspired by linguistics, literary theory, psychoanalyis and culture studies which is grouped under the headings of semiotics, poststructuralism and deconstruc-tion is itself too heterogeneous, self-reflexive and self-critical to invite comfortable generalizations.

Part of the poststructuralist turn is the concern with culture as a terrain of politics. Evident already in the work of Gramsci and Walter Benjamin, this concern has been elaborated by Foucault, Raymond Williams and Edward Said and has resulted in different

understandings of power as hegemony (Gramsci), as discourse (Foucault) and as representation (Said). In this light the idea of a ruling class comes across as superficial and old-fashioned: 'the dominant social class is not the given order's master but its creature at least as much as the subordinate class is' (Cocks, 1989: 47). It follows that the relationship between power and emancipation can no longer be conceived as a simple adversarial relationship:

> There is not, on the one side, a discourse of power, and opposite it, another discourse that runs counter to it. Discourses are tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations; there can run different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy; they can, on the contrary, circulate without changing their form from one strategy to another, opposing strategy. (Foucault, 1981: 101-2)

Understanding power and emancipation as discursive contestations in a field of forces opens up terrains beyond conventional social theory. The boundary between power and emancipation itself becomes fluid. Poststructuralism is about the fluidity of boundaries, the unfixity of fixations, the partiality of totalities.

No doubt there is an emancipatory project underlying poststructuralism. But it is a kind of project that implies emancipation *from* the Enlightenment tradition and received notions of emancipation. With Foucault this is tied up with the question of transgression[6] and hinted at, for instance, in his statement that 'modern thought is advancing toward that region where man's Other must become the same as himself' (Foucault, 1970: 328). This concern ranges from the project of anti-psychiatry (or breaking down the barrier between madness and sanity, in other words, madness as a construction) to that of critical anthropology (or breaking down the barrier between savagery and civilization, in other words, savagery as a construction).

That poststructuralism is not just concerned with deconstructing emancipation but also with reconstructing it, is apparent, for instance, in poststructuralist feminism (e.g. Weedon, 1987; Nicholson, 1990; Diamond and Quinby, 1988). We can emphasize either the discontinuities or the continuities between Marxism and poststructuralism. One of the themes of poststructuralism is the 'question of the Other'. In Marxist terms the 'other' is the working class and in this reading Marxism is a project of disidentification with bourgeois political economy and élite culture, and identification with working-class aspirations. Thus, according to Amilcar

Cabral (1969: 110), petty bourgeois intellectuals who want to join the struggle of the subaltern classes have to commit suicide as a class 'in order to be reborn as revolutionary workers'. The others of poststructuralism and deconstruction are women, blacks, orientals, natives, gays, prisoners or mad people. The poststructuralist sensibility is one of disidentification with the dominant culture, whether in its imperial or 'white malestream' forms, and identification with the other. In this vein Sandra Harding (1991; see also her article on pp. 175–93) proposes that we 'reinvent ourselves as other'.

In this regard the overall movement in Marxism and poststructuralism is similar: it concerns the self-awareness and mobilization of subaltern identities by transgressing boundaries of exclusion and inverting hierarchies. The continuity comes across in Nancy Hartsock's (1987) proposal to reconstruct Marxism as a 'minority' project. In this light the poststructuralist turn implies the planetarization of emancipation (the conscientization of Western imperialism) and the inversion of the Enlightenment (the conscientization of its shadow side). The former matches the sensibilities of the post-imperial era and the latter the epistemology of constructivism.

The objection that deconstruction 'offers no alternative' cuts two ways. Deconstruction parallels the Marxist contradiction for it is likewise concerned with underlying tensions and conflicts, but differs from contradiction in that it is not part of a dialectical process which resolves the conflict in a synthesis. Therefore Marxism could give rise to 'real existing socialism'. Deconstruction provides no such unified solution. But if we reconsider Marxism, the difference, at least in theory, is slim: for the synthesis is the start of another dialectical round, the process does not cease. Therefore Marxism also gives rise to notions such as 'permanent revolution' and 'continuous revolution' (cf. Ryan, 1982).

The discontinuities lie in the epistemology — which is no longer that of determinist materialism but of multidimensionality and constructivism; in the terrain — no longer that of political economy but of the political writ large comprising civil society and culture; in the project — no longer that of the future dictatorship of the subaltern but of inclusive democratization; in the conception of the future — which begins with the 'end of the future'.

Emancipation has long been associated with transcendence and utopianism (as in Mannheim, Bloch, Buber, Marcuse, Ricoeur). The critique of utopianism is by no means new (Dahrendorf, 1967);

what is new is that the abdication from claiming the future recurs
as a left-wing theme. For Foucault the era of the universalist pro-
phetic intellectual is past. For Laclau, anti-utopia becomes the star-
ting point: 'Utopia is essentially asceptic, since it is a "model" of
society conceived independently of the struggles needed to impose
it' (Laclau, 1990: 232). In the perspective of post-Marxism the pre-
sent juncture is

> . . . a moment in which new generations, without the prejudices of the past,
> without theories presenting themselves as 'absolute truths' of history, are con-
> structing new emancipatory discourses, more human, diversified and democratic.
> The eschatological and epistemological ambitions are more modest, but the
> liberating aspirations are wider and deeper. (Laclau and Mouffe, in Laclau,
> 1990: 98)

It is not without irony that we find that this attitude of modesty and
anti-utopia brings us back to Popper's (1966) critiques of the radical
schemes and blueprints of utopianism and Marxism. In what way
does this anti-utopia differ from Popper's plea for 'piecemeal social
engineering'? In Lyotard we find a similar attitude: what remains
after the end of metanarratives in science and imagination are 'little
narratives'.

Postmodern sensibilities are plural, protean, not reducible to
a single view − not even to that most often cited assertion, that
postmodernism equals the 'incredulity towards metanarratives'
(Lyotard, 1984). Lyotard, in one reading, has produced 'the dark
night of the metanarrative to end all metanarratives' (Montag,
1988: 93). Postmodernism cannot simply be presented as the refuta-
tion of modernity's 'grand récits', without in turn exposing itself as
a total theory of postmodernity. It is difficult to avoid giving a
modern definition of the postmodern; in fact, virtually any defini-
tion of postmodernism will turn out to be modernist.

The postmodern involves a heightened sensibility to instability,
indeterminacy and transience. Rather than being the solvent of
modernity's woes, the postmodern is another terrain of contesta-
tion: indeed postmodernism is available in neo-conservative, liberal
or radical versions (Hudson, 1989). There are several attempts to
link the postmodern to radical politics, a relationship that has been
referred to as 'the most pressing problem of contemporary social
science' (Turner, 1990: 10). Postmodernism is, virtually per defini-
tion, a matter of looking in the rearview mirror: as postmodernism,
or a reflection on modernity. What matters is what it means to turn

one's back on modernity — whether the dominant note is one of relief or nostalgia.

Central preoccupations of the moderns have been causality and determination as the logics of producing order. The emerging paradigm is a reflection not on the determined (order received) but on the constructed (order produced) character of social realities and on the contingencies involved in the process. The epistemology of constructivism is as central to poststructuralism and postmodernism as the epistemology of causality, determinism and mechanical models of social change have been to modernity — the project of Bacon, Hobbes, Descartes, Condorcet and Comte makes place for the world of Wiener (cybernetics), Luhmann (systems theory), Bateson (ecology) and Bohr, Bohm and Prigogine (quantum physics).

Poststructuralism and postmodernism are not without their silences and exclusions. Criticisms advanced against poststructuralism are the tendency to 'theorrea' (Merquior, 1986), the predilection for high theory, ethnocentrism (see article by Slater, pp. 283–319), ignoring the Third World (Nederveen Pieterse, 1989/1990: Ch. 3) and actual relations of power, and the weakness of economic analysis, or 'throwing out the tool of economic analysis along with the ideological baggage of economism' (Sivanandan, 1990: 5).

Is poststructuralism an expression of the embourgeoisement of social theory? Is it not obvious that culturalism is to the disadvantage of subaltern groups who are better served by a materialist outlook? There seems to be little space indeed between the Scylla of economism and the Charybdis of culturalism. What is rightly being questioned, however, is the very dichotomy of base and superstructure, the material and the cultural, as, among other things, a variation on the dualism of body and mind (Mitchell, 1990). Materialism itself is a particular cultural politics, and one that provides for a very narrow understanding of the logics of political mobilization.

There are, in fact, numerous accounts of the political economy of the postmodern. A general observation is that postmodernity correlates with the condition variously termed post-Fordism, disorganized capitalism, just-in-time capitalism or flexible accumulation (Harvey, 1989). Others, like Jameson, interpret postmodernism as the culture of late capitalism and in terms of the commodification of culture (Lash, 1990; Featherstone, 1990).

Along with the relations of production the technologies too have changed, from strong power controls to weak power controls, which use much less energy relative to the processes they control (e.g.

compare mechanical machines to touch button power). Mulgan
(1988) argues that

> . . . the replacement of strong power by weak power controls in the physical
> machinery of post-Fordism is being matched by a parallel transformation of
> social organization and control, a transformation that is also one from strong to
> weak types of control. . . The weak power structures of the 'new times' . . . tend
> to be decentralised without a single point of leadership; communication is
> horizontal; structures are cellular rather than pyramid like, a shifting mosaic
> rather than the kind of structure that can be drawn as a diagram.

Strong power relationships of hierarchical command were the model
both for control and for emancipation in the industrial and Fordist
era. In this reading, according to Mulgan, the present crisis of
socialism is not a crisis of values but of structures.

Diverse and heterogeneous as these reorientations are, is there a
pattern which separates the 'modern' views on emancipation from
the 'postmodern'? Do the reorientations add up to the contours of
a new emancipatory perspective on the horizon? The question itself
may imply a 'modern' urge for a clear-cut inventory, a sense of direc-
tion, an order of change — a nostalgia for overdetermination.

The total theory and universal vision of emancipation may not be
succeeded by another total theory, but by an awareness of plurality.
There is no need to rush in the search for a new paradigm. A recent
volume on Third World politics argues for 'a more detached, eclectic
attitude towards paradigms' (Manor, 1991: 7). As Laclau (1990:
225) puts it, 'we would today speak of "emancipations" rather than
"Emancipation"'.[7] As an objection to Laclau it has been pointed
out that his perspective gives no indication which articulations
among movements are more possible than others (Mouzelis, 1988).
One question is whether open-endedness is to be taken as a problem
or as an opportunity, but still more basic a question is whether there
is an alternative at all.

Among the new perspectives there is no lack of dissonants. To
mention just one example, in most interpretations the postmodern
sense is one of fragmentation and the breakup of totalities, while
another sensibility, which is also in evidence among NSM, is holism.
Holism as a perspective is found in Green movements, in social
ecology (Bookchin, 1982) and as a theme uniting feminism and
ecology (Capra and Spretnak, 1984). Complementary holism, a
view inspired by developments in quantum physics, has also given
rise to a political theory (Albert et al., 1986).

To what extent are these reorientations 'universalizable' across the globe? A point often made with respect to the 'old' liberation theories is that they have been Eurocentric (Joshi, 1988). Furthermore, it is often made to appear that the NSM are specific to Western, post-industrial societies, or that if the NSM are planetary, they play only a marginal role in third world settings.

In India, for instance, the role played by NSM concerned with issues of ecology, health and gender is regarded as 'complementary to the more powerful class-based movements': 'Compared to class-based struggles — the trade union movement, peasant movements of the Sharad Joshi/Mahendra Tikait variety, and Naxalite-led movements of the landless agricultural labourers and tribals — the popular support enjoyed by the new social movements is negligible' (Guha, 1989: 15). The new movements are advised to retain their identity while being assigned 'a valuable role to play in *enlarging* the scope of lower class movements'. Kothari (1984), on the other hand, sees for the 'nonparty political formations' a role both more profound and more limited than the political parties.

A typology of social settings, along with the question of which are the leading types of collective action, would yield a simple ranking of emancipations. In agricultural settings, social agents tend to be defined by cultural criteria such as religion and ethnicity and by ascribed status such as kinship or caste, and collective action tends to be structured along these lines. In industrial settings social agents defined by class are the most salient and class-based movements take the lead, while in post-industrial settings new social movements would take the lead. A consequence of this approach is *stageism* with respect to agents of social change, in other words, an emancipation evolutionism, which means that we still toe the line of unilear progress. Obviously, the typologies themselves stem from prioritizing the relations of production and are predicated upon the class paradigm. We are reminded of Hegel's 'peoples without history' and Fukuyama's (1989) distinction between those 'mired in history' and those in the 'post-historical' stage.

While seeming commonsensical this approach is deceptive in several ways. An empirical objection is that post-Fordism and flexible accumulation affect all societies whether directly or indirectly. Besides, all societies, North and South, are programmed societies, in which planning and social engineering play an important part.[8] Furthermore, each setting, third world societies included, is a *mélange* of agricultural, industrial and post-industrial sectors. The

multisectoral quality of combined and uneven development affects the nature and dispersion of subject positions and the multiplication of sites of conflict. Quantitative assessments of the strengths of social forces bypass the unevenness in social networks. Judgements as to which movements are most numerous or powerful in a society may homogenize and simplify the social terrain and ignore its uneven and composite network character.

In fact, it should come as no surprise that some forms of action of NSM match those of peoples outside the Western framework, and that postmodern sensibilities have been voiced earlier or independently in non-Western points of view, as part of the critique of modernity-for-export. Thus, Ashis Nandy exposes the rendez-vous with power and control that is implicit in liberation as a project; the old liberation theories figure as a mode of control — 'the victim must first learn the oppressors language and world-view before qualifying as a proper dissenter' (Nandy, 1988: 167, 1987).

In comparing Gandhi's views to those of Habermas, Pantham notes the extra-rational elements in Gandhi's approach of truth-centred direct action. According to Gandhi, the 'attribution of omnipotence to reason is as bad a piece of idolatry as is worship of stick and stone believing it to be God' (quoted in Pantham, 1986a: 203). Gandhi's approach requires participation in action and involves the abdication of persuasion even by argumentation: 'everyone should follow his or her own inner voice'. These views overlap with other emancipatory perspectives. They match a widely shared understanding that liberation must first of all be the libera-tion of oneself (a theme in existentialism, Erich Fromm and the Freudian left). With his contemporary Gramsci, Gandhi shares the concern with popular religion and with merging the national and the popular (Pantham, 1986b). The latter concern we also find with other contemporaries, such as the Peruvian Mariátegui (see article by Slater, pp. 283–319). The shift from persuasion to dialogue is a matter of principle in Paulo Freire's (1972) popular education approach.

The sensibility of the postmodern is one of emancipation from emancipation, or emancipation from modernity. Part of what this entails is expressed by Ashis Nandy (1988: 171): 'Human nature being what it is, while everyone likes to be a social engineer, few like to be the objects of social engineering.'

## EMANCIPATIONS OR EMANCIPATION

Several episodes of emancipation have passed review: social move-
ments in the wake of the democratic revolution, class struggles and
national liberation (from the Young movements to the colonial
question), and new social movements, in the context of poststruc-
turalism and the postmodern. What comes across most strongly is
the impression of *movement* and ever shifting horizons: whichever
the social context, emancipation challenges the prevailing codes. A
theory of emancipation must be, above all, a theory of the relativity
of the social.

If we try to distil a minimum profile of emancipation as it emerges
from contemporary reorientations, it includes, as regards aims, the
concern with autonomy, in terms of organization, a tendency
towards network forms, and, in terms of mentality, a tendency
towards self-limitation. The main differences between the modern
and the postmodern emancipations appears to be that the former
situate themselves within the Enlightenment tradition and secondly
that they take an instrumental attitude to power, whereas the latter
problematize power to a much greater degree. How the politics of
autonomy work out depends on the way it relates to other political
dimensions. Autonomy takes on different forms ranging from self-
definition, self-determination, identity or difference.

At any rate it involves self-organization, and this relates to the
issue of democracy, which is another recurrent theme in the contem-
porary reorientations of emancipatory thought. Democracy has
become a central terrain of rethinking in critical liberal democratic
theory (McPherson, 1977), in merging democracy and socialism
(Cunningham, 1987), notions of radical democracy (Laclau and
Mouffe, 1985) and in development thinking (Kothari, 1988). Some
prefer to speak of 'new democratic movements' rather than NSM.[9]
The democratic theme can be interpreted as part of a wider trend
towards a reconvergence of liberalism and Marxism, of Tocqueville
and Marx — nineteenth-century enemy ideologies, both Enlighten-
ment offspring, separated by the Cold War, reborn as twins in the
late twentieth century. We further recognize this in the comeback of
classical liberal themes such as autonomy, citizenship and human
rights as part of the new politics.

While contemporary emancipations are framed against the hori-
zon of democracy, there are also tensions between democracy and

emancipation (see article by Apter, pp. 139–73). According to Laclau (1990: 169):

> The central obstacle preventing the democratization of emancipatory discourses is the fact that . . . while ambiguity and indeterminacy are central features of democracy, emancipatory discourses tend to manifest themselves as total ideologies which seek to define and master the foundations of the social.

This responds, according to Laclau, 'to a deep psychological need': it follows from the very process of constructing a collective will and a hegemony. 'Democratic universalism' as the 'universalism of indeterminacy' is cast as a way out of the dilemma because it means that no form of social organization 'can take on the paradigmatic value of a model' (Laclau, 1990: 170). This being the case, then, what is the content of radical democracy itself?

In some respects the minimum profile of emancipation also matches that of particularism, chauvinism and fundamentalism, which are likewise preoccupied with autonomy. There remains a fundamental tension between emancipations in a particularistic sense and emancipation in a general sense, or between emancipations and emancipation. If there is no guideline but 'universal indeterminacy', then what is the difference between a particular process of emancipation, in the sense of a new group entering into dominance, and the 'circulation of élites'? Emancipation in the sense of a new group entering into dominance without the 'rules of practice' being altered, may in the last instance not be distinguishable from the reshuffling of élites. Thus, a neo-fascist organization organizing local youth and the unemployed, gaining votes and entering legislative bodies might be considered a process of emancipation from the point of view of the group in question.

It follows that emancipations plural must in some fashion refer to emancipation in a general sense: not every process of empowerment is emancipatory. A working definition I propose is that emancipation refers to collective actions which seek to level and disperse power, or seek to install more inclusive values than the prevailing ones. This means that emancipation, postmodern turn or not, involves a moral horizon.

The articles in this publication span the terrains of social and political theory, social movements and development. Starting out from the central theme of rethinking emancipation, the overall

tendency is towards reflection and social theory. Together the contributions represent a variety of views on emancipation straddling modern and poststructuralist views. The distinction between old and new movements, old and new paradigms, modern and postmodern plays a part in most contributions.

Self-limiting understandings of rationality and emancipation are a thread running through several reflections. Reviewing developments in the study of social movements in terms of their wider implications, Alberto Melucci brings out the theme of self-limitation. The loss of certainties is the starting point and the potential foundation of a new awareness: 'if we can accept that in social relations everything is not subject to the calculus of an absolute rationality, diversity and uncertainty can become the basis for a new solidarity. From this condition of conscious fragility could come the changes in ethical values that form the basis for coexistence' (p. 53). This is the point of departure in rethinking emancipation: 'We need a self-limiting concept of emancipation, mindful of the dark side of the modern myths, like progress, liberation and revolution' (p. 73).

Sudipta Kaviraj turns to the 'dark' tradition of the Enlightenment to find a self-limiting or minimalist rationality. In this light he reviews Marxism as discourse and as a field of contestation. Rereading the Marxist theory of history leads to rereading of the history of Marxist theory and practice, one that shows the consequences of maximalist rationalism for instance as regards party and state structures, and views on the peasantry.

Reflecting on Marxism and the problem of violence, Bhikhu Parekh argues for a radical self-critique of Marxism if it is to remain a theory of emancipation. His reflections raise the question to what extent Marxist theory can be used to legitimize state terrorism, in the name of what has been termed the 'calculus of progress' and what might be regarded as the 'utilitarianism of the left'.

Likewise Ernesto Laclau's reflections concern the awareness of self-limitation and its ramifications: examining the logical claims made according to 'the classic concept of emancipation' they are found logically incompatible. 'The relation between particularity and universality is an essentially unstable and undecidable one' (p. 134). For Laclau the awareness of 'our own finitude' is 'the beginning of freedom'.

Collective actions, according to Melucci, act as 'revealers'; 'Collective mobilization forces power into the open and exposes the interests behind the apparent neutrality of its rationality' (p. 68).

This notion is also taken up by David Apter, who examines the
interplay of institutional democracy and emancipation movements.
Apter's centre ground and touchstone is democracy, which itself
represents an emancipation process as it emerges out of the evolu-
tion from an order model to a choice model. Apter emphasizes the
totalizing face of emancipation and its 'politics of the moral
moment'. Seeking to '"liberate" the mainstream from itself' and
favouring 'total uprooting', contemporary movements such as the
Situationists engage in the 'postmodern politics' of 'inversionary
discourse'. Hence the interplay between emancipation and demo-
cracy is precarious.

For Sandra Harding, the logic of difference developed by the new
social movements poses a different kind of problem. What kind of
knowledge, what kind of epistemology is needed to bring together
today's multiple subject positions in a 'rainbow politics'? Harding
argues that 'we must "reinvent ourselves as other" in order to develop
those kinds of doubly multiple subjectivites that are capable of
understanding objectively their own social location, not just imagin-
ing that they understand the social locations of others' (p. 190). This
contradictory position is the landscape of Virginia Vargas's reflec-
tions on the development of feminism in Latin America, where, in
addition, modernization has only been an incomplete, truncated pro-
cess. Vargas analyses the recent development of the feminist move-
ment in Latin America by looking, from the inside, at the series of
Feminist Encounters which have been held every two or three years
since 1981. The observations made by others, in particular Melucci
and Harding, in generic terms are concretized and driven home in
Vargas's article, which is thus a vivid illustration and discussion of
the precarious transition and interaction between old and new,
modern and postmodern emancipations in Latin America.

Several discussions of emancipation and development conclude
this volume, some of which elaborate modern and one engages post-
modern views. Taking a Marxist-feminist perspective on the ques-
tions of women in development, Valentine Moghadam argues that
in the 'belt of classic patriarchy', which stretches from North Africa
across the Middle East and the northern plains of the Indian subcon-
tinent to rural China, development has been beneficial to women —
genuine development, that is, as against distorted development.
Development erodes classic patriarchy and in providing women with
education, paid employment and a wider range of life-options, con-
tributes to women's emancipation. In other words, in this particular

context modernization furthers women's emancipation.

Expanding on his previous work on emancipation, Wim Wertheim turns to the role of the state in development and to the question of the dialectic of the state and emancipation: under what circumstances do states act as allies of emancipation and when do they become a brake upon emancipation? In criticizing the tenets of neoliberalism he reviews the historical role states have played in the development of Western countries and the neo-mercantilist policies of communist states and highlights the underlying need for developing countries to protect themselves from foreign economic and political domination. This, along with the pressing problems of development, creates the demand for a strong state; the state however is likely to become an end in itself and thus a brake upon further emancipation.

No doubt the ramifications of poststructuralist and postmodern thought for the questions of development will become an area of major debate. If development follows the logic of modernity, operates within the framework of modernity, postmodernity is likely to affect the practice and theory of development quite profoundly. With David Slater this project itself is undergoing redefinition. Slater's concern is to 'open up Marxist development theory so that new territory can be explored' and he does so by exploring the relevance of the poststructuralist and postmodern turn for critical development theory. The postmodern sense is emancipatory in relation to the certitudes of modern universalism and modernization theory and 'enabling in its destructuring of Marxist totality', but when the realities of oppression and subordination in global politics are occluded or anaesthetized, postmodern politics becomes a barrier to emancipation (p. 290). While criticizing postmodern authors for residual universalism and ethnocentrism, Slater argues for taking the postmodern in its enabling sense – for the sake of its iconoclasm, openness and reproblematization of fixities.

## NOTES

Roosmalen, in particular for his editorial support; and to Paula Bownas for her patient assistance.

1. These distinctions play an important role in Wertheim's work (e.g. Wertheim, 1974), but his concept of emancipation is open ended on these points.

2. More critical is the definition of popular participation used by the Popular Participation Programme of the UN Research Institute for Social Development: 'the organized efforts to increase control over resources and regulative institutions in given social situations, on the part of groups and movements hitherto excluded from such control' (Pearse and Stiefel, 1979, quoted in Turton, 1987: 3).

3. For instance, Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 152–3) note: 'Only in certain cases do these forms of resistance take on a political character and become struggles directed toward putting an end to relations of subordination as such.'

4. Several of these movements and their interdependence are discussed in Nederveen Pieterse 1989/1990. On links between black and women's emancipation concerns and movements see, for example, Lerner (1979) and Nederveen Pieterse (1992: Ch. 14).

5. Thus, in presenting social movements as 'antisystemic movements', world-system theorists prioritize their world-system definition of the global situation (Arrighi et al., 1989). Here capitalism has been renamed the 'world-system' and class struggle 'antisystemic struggle'.

6. Foucault's transgression is not the same as transcendence but more akin to Nietzsche's 'beyond' as in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (see Boyne, 1990: 84).

7. 'While the socialist project was presented as the global emancipation of humanity and the result of a single revolutionary act of institution, such a "fundamentalist" perspective has today gone into crisis. Any struggle is, by definition, a *partial* struggle – even the violent overthrow of an authoritarian regime – and none can claim to embody the "global liberation of man"' (Laclau, 1990: 225).

8. For this point I am indebted to Michael Chai (see Touraine, 1977).

9. 'Democratic discourse questions all forms of inequality and subordination. That is why I propose to call those new social movements "new democratic struggles" because they are extensions of the democratic revolution to new forms of subordination. Democracy is our most subversive idea because it interrupts all existing discourses and practices of subordination' (Mouffe, 1988: 96; cf. Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 159–60).

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