

Routledge Innovators in Political Theory



CHANTAL MOUFFE

*Hegemony, radical democracy,
and the political*

EDITED BY
JAMES MARTIN



Chantal Mouffe's writings have been innovative with respect to democratic theory, Marxism and feminism. Her work derives from, and has always been engaged with, contemporary political events and intellectual debates. This sense of conflict informs both the methodological and substantive propositions she offers. Determinisms, scientific or otherwise, and ideologies, Marxist or feminist, have failed to survive her excoriating critiques. In a sense she is the original post-Marxist, rejecting economisms and class-centric analyses, and also the original post-feminist, more concerned with the varieties of 'identity politics' than with any singularities of 'women's issues'.

While Mouffe's concerns with power and discourse derive from her studies of Gramsci's theorisations of hegemony and the post-structuralisms of Derrida and Foucault, her reversal of the very terms through which political theory proceeds is very much her own. She centres conflict, not consensus, and disagreement, not finality. Whether philosophically perfectionist, or liberally reasonable, political theorists have been challenged by Mouffe to think again, and to engage with a new concept of 'the political' and a revived and refreshed notion of 'radical democracy'.

The editor has focused on her work in three key areas:

- *Hegemony: From Gramsci to 'Post-Marxism'*
- *Radical Democracy: Pluralism, Citizenship and Identity*
- *The Political: A Politics Beyond Consensus*

The volume concludes with a new interview with Chantal Mouffe.

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HEGEMONY AND NEW POLITICAL SUBJECTS

Toward a new concept of democracy (1988)¹

It is incomprehensible that equality should not ultimately penetrate the political world as it has elsewhere. That men should be eternally unequal among themselves in one single respect and equal in others is inconceivable; they will therefore one day attain equality in all respects.

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*

Despite Tocqueville's remarkable insight into the potential implications of the 'democratic revolution,' it is unlikely that he could have imagined its leading, today, to our questioning the totality of social relationships. He believed, in fact, as his reflections on women's equality testify, that the ineluctable drive toward equality must take into account certain real differences grounded in nature. It is precisely the permanent alterity based on such a conception of natural essences that is contested today by an important segment of the feminist movement. It is not merely that the democratic revolution has proven to be more radical than Tocqueville foresaw; the revolution has taken forms that no one could have anticipated because it attacks forms of inequality that did not previously exist. Clearly, ecological, antinuclear, and antibureaucratic struggles, along with all the other commonly labeled 'new social movements' – I would prefer to call them 'new democratic struggles' – should be understood as resistances to new types of oppression emerging in advanced capitalist societies. This is the thesis my essay will develop, and I shall try to answer the following questions: (1) What kind of antagonism do the new social movements express? (2) What is their link with the development of capitalism? (3) How should they be positioned in a socialist strategy? (4) What are the implications of these struggles for our conception of democracy?

Theoretical positions

Within every society, each social agent is inscribed in a multiplicity of social relations – not only social relations of production but also the social relations, among others,

of sex, race, nationality, and vicinity. All these social relations determine position-alities or subject positions, and every social agent is therefore the locus of many subject positions and cannot be reduced to only one. Thus, someone inscribed in the relations of production as a worker is also a man or a woman, white or black, Catholic or Protestant, French or German, and so on. A person's subjectivity is not constructed only on the basis of his or her position in the relations of production. Furthermore, each social position, each subject position, is itself the locus of multiple possible constructions, according to the different discourses that can construct that position. Thus, the subjectivity of a given social agent is always precariously and provisionally fixed, or, to use the Lacanian term, sutured at the intersection of various discourses.

I am consequently opposed to the class reductionism of classical Marxism, in which all social subjects are necessarily class subjects (each social class having its own ideological paradigm, and every antagonism ultimately reducible to a class antagonism). I affirm, instead, the existence in each individual of multiple subject positions corresponding both to the different social relations in which the individual is inserted and to the discourses that constitute these relations. There is no reason to privilege, *a priori*, a 'class' position as the origin of the articulation of subjectivity. Furthermore, it is incorrect to attribute necessary paradigmatic forms to this class position. Consequently, a critique of the notion of 'fundamental interests' is required, because this notion entails fixing necessary political and ideological forms within determined positions in the production process. But interests never exist prior to the discourses in which they are articulated and constituted; they cannot be the expression of already existing positions on the economic level.

I am opposed to the economic view of social evolution as governed by a single economic logic, the view that conceives the unity of a social formation as the result of 'necessary effects' produced in ideological and political superstructures by the economic infrastructures. The distinction between infra- and superstructure needs to be questioned because it implies a conception of economy as a world of objects and relations that exist prior to any ideological and political conditions of existence. This view assumes that the economy is able to function on its own and follow its own logic, a logic absolutely independent of the relations it would allegedly determine. Instead, I shall defend a conception of society as a complex ensemble of heterogeneous social relations possessing their own dynamism. Not all such relations are reducible to social relations of production or to their ideological and political conditions of reproduction. The unity of a social formation is the product of political articulations, which are, in turn, the result of the social practices that produce a hegemonic formation.

By 'hegemonic formation', I mean an ensemble of relatively stable social forms, the materialization of a social articulation in which different social relations react reciprocally either to provide each other with mutual conditions of existence, or at least to neutralize the potentially destructive effects of certain social relations on the reproduction of other such relations. A hegemonic formation is always centred

around certain types of social relations. In capitalism, these are the relations of production, but this fact should not be explained as an effect of structure; it is, rather, that the centrality of production relations has been conferred by a hegemonic policy. However, hegemony is never established conclusively. A constant struggle must create the conditions necessary to validate capital and its accumulation. This implies a set of practices that are not merely economic, political and cultural as well. Thus, the development of capitalism is subject to an incessant political struggle, periodically modifying those social forms through which social relations of production are assured their centrality. In the history of capitalism we can see the rhythm of successive hegemonic formations.

All social relations can become the locus of antagonism insofar as they are constructed as relations of subordination. Many different forms of subordination can become the origin of conflict and struggle. There exists, therefore, in society a multiplicity of potential antagonisms, and class antagonism is only one among many. It is not possible to reduce all those forms of subordination and struggle to the expression of a single logic located in the economy. Nor can this reduction be avoided by positing a complex mediation between social antagonisms and the economy. There are multiple forms of power in society that cannot be reduced to or deduced from one origin or source.

New antagonisms and hegemonic formations

My thesis is that the new social movements express antagonisms that have emerged in response to the hegemonic formation that was *fully* installed in Western countries after the Second World War, a formation in crisis today. I say *fully* installed because the process did not begin at that time; these hegemonic forms were evolving, were being put into place since the beginning of this century. Thus, we also had social movements before the Second World War, but they really fully developed only after the war in response to a new social hegemonic formation.

The antagonisms that emerged after the war, however, have not derived from the imposition of forms of subordination that did not exist before. For instance, the struggles against racism and sexism resist forms of domination that existed not only before the new hegemonic formation but also before capitalism. We can see the emergence of those antagonisms in the context of the dissolution of all the social relations based on hierarchy, and that, of course, is linked to the development of capitalism, which destroys all those social relations and replaces them with commodity relations. So, it is with the development of capitalism that those forms of subordination can emerge as antagonisms. The relations may have existed previously, but they could not emerge as antagonisms before capitalism. Thus, we must be concerned with the structural transformations that have provided some of the objective conditions for the emergence of these new antagonisms. But you cannot automatically derive antagonism and struggle from the existence of these objective conditions – they are necessary but not sufficient – unless you assume people will necessarily struggle against subordination. Obviously I am against any

such essentialist postulate. We need to ask under what conditions those relations of subordination could give birth to antagonisms, and what other conditions are needed for the emergence of struggles against these subordinations.

It is the hegemonic formation installed after the Second World War that, in fact, provides these conditions. We may characterize this formation as articulating: (a) a certain type of labour process based on the semi-automatic assembly line; (b) a certain type of state (the Keynesian interventionist state); and (c) new cultural forms that can be described as 'mediating culture'. The investiture of such a hegemonic formation involved a complex process, articulating a set of transformations, each of which derived from a different logic. It is impossible to derive any one of these from another in some automatic fashion, as in an economic logic. In fact, the transformations of the labour process that led to Taylorization and finally to Fordism were governed by the need to destroy the autonomy that workers continued to exercise in the labour process and to end worker resistance to the valorization of capital. But the Fordist semi-automatic assembly line made possible a mass production for which, given the low salary level, there were insufficient outlets. Thus, the working class's mode of life had to change significantly in order to create the conditions necessary for accumulation to regain its ascendancy. However, the fact that certain conditions were necessary for the accumulation and reproduction of capitalist social relations to function in no way guaranteed that these conditions would come about. The solution was to use worker struggles, which were multiplying in response to the intensification of labour, to establish a connection between increased productivity and increased wages. But this required a state intervention with a double purpose: it was just as urgent to counter the capitalist's inclination to lower wages as it was to set up a political framework in which workers' demands could be made compatible with the reproduction of capitalism. This provides significant evidence that this new hegemonic formation resulted from a political intervention.

These changes in the labour process can also be defined as a transformation of an extensive regime of accumulation into an intensive regime of accumulation. The latter is characterized by the expansion of capitalist relations of production to the whole set of social activities, which are thereby subordinated to the logic of production for profit. A new mode of consumption has been created that expresses the domination of commodity relations over non-commodity relations. As a consequence, a profound transformation of the existing way of life has taken place. Western society has been transformed into a big marketplace where all the products of human labour have become commodities, where more and more needs must go through the market to be satisfied. Such a 'commodification of social life' has destroyed a series of previous social relations and replaced them with commodity relations. This is what we know as the consumer society.

Today, it is not only through the sale of their labour power that individuals are submitted to the domination of capital but also through their participation in many other social relations. So many spheres of social life are now penetrated by capitalist relations that it is almost impossible to escape them. Culture, leisure, death, sex,

everything is now a field of profit for capital. The destruction of the environment, the transformation of people into mere consumers – these are the results of that subordination of social life to the accumulation of capital. Those new forms of domination, of course, have been studied by many authors, but there has been a tendency, especially at the beginning of the 1960s – you will remember Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* – to believe that the power of capital was so overwhelming that no struggle, no resistance, could take place. Yet a few years later it became clear that those new forms of domination would not go unchallenged; they have given rise to many new antagonisms, which explains the widening of all forms of social conflict since the middle of the 1960s. My thesis is that many of the new social movements are expressions of resistances against that commodification of social life and the new forms of subordination it has created.

But that is only one aspect of the problem; there is a second aspect that is extremely important. You remember that we have defined the hegemonic formation not only in terms of Fordism but also in terms of the Keynesian welfare state. The new hegemonic formation has been characterized by growing state intervention in all aspects of social life, which is a key characteristic of the Keynesian state. The intervention of the state led to a phenomenon of bureaucratization, which is also at the origin of new forms of subordination and resistance. It must be said that in many ways commodification and bureaucratization are articulated together, as when the state acts in favour of capital. Thus, while it might be difficult to distinguish between them, I think it is extremely important to do so and analyze them as different systems of domination. There may be cases in which the state acts against the interests of capital to produce what Claus Offe has called 'decommodification'. At the same time, such interventions, because of their bureaucratic character, may produce new forms of subordination. This is the case, for example, when the state provides services in fields of health, transportation, housing, and education.

A third aspect of the problem is that some new types of struggle must be seen as resistances to the growing uniformity of social life, a unity that is the result of the kind of mass culture imposed by the media. This imposition of a homogenized way of life, of a uniform cultural pattern, is being challenged by different groups that reaffirm their right to their difference, their specificity, be it through the exaltation of their regional identity or their specificity in the realm of fashion, music, or language.

The profound changes brought about by this construction of a hegemonic formation gave rise to the resistances expressed in the new social movements. However, as I have said, one should not blame new forms of inequality for all the antagonisms that emerged in the 1960s. Some, like the women's movement, concerned long-standing types of oppression that had not yet become antagonistic because they were located in a hierarchical society accepting certain inequalities as 'natural'.

Whether antagonism is produced by the commodification of all social needs, or by the intervention of state bureaucracy, or by cultural levelling and the destruction of traditional values (whether or not the latter are themselves oppressive) – what all these antagonisms have in common is that the problem is not caused by the

individual's defined position in the production system; they are, therefore, not 'class antagonisms'. Obviously this does not mean that class antagonism has been eliminated. In fact, insofar as more and more areas of social life are converted into 'services' provided by capitalism, the number of individuals subordinated to capitalist production relations increases. If you take the term 'proletarian' in its strict sense, as a worker who sells his or her labour, it is quite legitimate to speak of a process of proletarianization. The fact that there are an increasing number of individuals who may suffer capitalist domination as a class does not signify a new form of subordination but rather the extension of an already existing one. What is new is the spread of social conflict to other areas and the politicization of all these social relations. When we recognize that we are dealing with resistances to forms of oppression developed by the post-war hegemonic formation, we begin to understand the importance of these struggles for a socialist programme.

It is wrong, then, to affirm, as some do, that these movements emerged because of the crisis of the welfare state. No doubt that crisis exacerbated antagonisms, but it did not cause them; they are the expression of a triumphant hegemonic formation. It is, on the contrary, reasonable to suppose that the crisis was in part provoked by the growing resistance to the domination of society by capital and the state. Neoconservative theoreticians are, therefore, not wrong to insist on the problem of the ungovernability of Western countries, a problem they would solve by slowing down what they call the 'democratic assault'. To propose the crisis as the origin of the new social movements is, in addition, politically dangerous: it leads to thinking of them as irrational manifestations, as phenomena of social pathology. Thus, it obscures the important lessons these struggles provide for a reformulation of socialism.

New antagonisms and democratic struggle

I have thus far limited my analysis to the transformations that have taken place in Western societies after World War II and to the resulting creation of new forms of subordination and inequality, which produced in turn the new social movements. But there is an entirely different aspect of the question that must now be developed. Pointing to the existence of inequalities is not sufficient to explain why they produce social unrest. If you reject, as I obviously do, the assumption that the essence of humankind is to struggle for equality and democracy, then there is an important problem to resolve. One must determine what conditions are necessary for specific forms of subordination to produce struggles that seek their abolition. As I have said, the subordination of women is a very old phenomenon, which became the target of feminist struggles only when the social model based on hierarchy had collapsed. It is here that my opening reference to de Tocqueville is pertinent, for he was the first to grasp the importance of the democratic revolution on the symbolic level. As long as equality has not yet acquired (with the democratic revolution) its place of central significance in the social imagination of Western societies, struggles for this equality cannot exist. As soon as the principle of equality

is admitted in one domain, however, the eventual questioning of all possible forms of inequality is an ineluctable consequence. Once begun, the democratic revolution has had, necessarily, to undermine all forms of power and domination, whatever they might be.

I would like to elaborate on the relationship between antagonism and struggle and to begin with the following thesis: An antagonism can emerge when a collective subject – of course, here I am interested in political antagonism at the level of the collective subject – that has been constructed in a specific way, to certain existing discourses, finds its subjectivity negated by other discourses or practices. That negation can happen in two basic ways. First, subjects constructed on the basis of certain rights can find themselves in a position in which those rights are denied by some practices of discourses. At that point there is a negation of subjectivity or identification which can be the basis for an antagonism. I am not saying that this *necessarily* leads to an antagonism; it is a necessary but not sufficient condition. The second form in which antagonism emerges corresponds to that expressed by feminism and the black movement. It is a situation in which subjects constructed in subordination by a set of discourses are, at the same time, interpellated as equal by other discourses. Here we have a contradictory interpellation. Like the first form, it is a negation of a particular subject position, but, unlike the first, it is the subjectivity-in-subordination that is negated, which opens the possibility for its deconstruction and challenging.

For example, consider the case of the suffragist movement, or, more generally, the question of why it is that, although women's subordination has existed for so long, only at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century did subordination give rise to a feminist movement. That has led some Marxist feminists to say that there was no real women's subordination before; women's subordination is a consequence of capitalism and that is why feminism emerged under capitalism. I think this is wrong. Imagine the way women were constructed, as women, in the Middle Ages. All the possible discourses – the church, the family – constructed women as subordinate subjects. There was absolutely no possibility, no play, in those subject positions for women to call that subordination into question. But with the democratic revolutions of the nineteenth century the assertion that 'men are equal' appears for the first time. Obviously 'men' is ambiguous because it refers to both men and women, so women found themselves contradictorily interpellated. As citizens, women are equal, or at least interpellated as equal, but that equality is negated by their being women. (It is no coincidence that Mary Wollstonecraft, one of the important English feminists, was living with William Godwin, who was an important radical; this demonstrates the influence of radicalism on the emergence of the suffragist movement.) So that is what I understand by contradictory interpellation – the emergence of a section of equality at a point of new subjectivity, which contradicts the subordination in all other subject positions. That is what allows women to extend the democratic revolution, to question all their subordinate subject positions. The same analysis could be given for the emergence of the black liberation movement.

I should emphasize here the importance of actually existing discourse in the emergence and construction of antagonisms. Antagonisms are always discursively constructed; the forms they take depend on existing discourses and their hegemonic role at a given moment. Thus, different positions in sexual relations do not necessarily construct the concept of woman or femininity in different ways. It depends on the way the antagonism is constructed, and the enemy is defined by the existing discourses. We must also take into account the role of the democratic discourse that became predominant in the Western world with the 'democratic revolution'. I refer to the transformation, at the level of the symbolic, that deconstructed the theological-political-cosmological vision of the Middle Ages, a vision in which people were born into a specific place in a structured and hierarchical society for which the idea of equality did not exist.

People struggle for equality not because of some ontological postulate but because they have been constructed as subjects in a democratic tradition that puts those values at the centre of social life. We can see the widening of social conflict as the extension of the democratic revolution into more and more spheres of social life, into more social relations. All positions that have been constructed as relations of domination/subordination will be deconstructed because of the subversive character of democratic discourse. Democratic discourse extends its field of influence from a starting point, the equality of citizens in a political democracy, to socialism which extends equality to the level of the economy and then into other social relations, such as sexual, racial, generational, and regional. 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.

Now I want to make a distinction between democratic antagonism and democratic struggle. Democratic antagonisms do not necessarily lead to democratic struggles. Democratic antagonism refers to resistance to subordination and inequality; democratic struggle is directed toward a wide democratization of social life. I am hinting here at the possibility that democratic antagonism can be articulated into different kinds of discourse, even into right-wing discourse, because antagonisms are polysemic. There is no one paradigmatic form in which resistance against domination is expressed. Its articulation depends on the discourses and relations of forces in the present struggle for hegemony.

Stuart Hall's analysis of Thatcherism enables us to understand the way popular consciousness can be articulated to the Right. Indeed, any democratic antagonism can be articulated in many different ways. Consider the case of unemployment. A worker who loses his or her job is in a situation – the first one described above – in which, having been defined on the basis of the right to have a job, he or she now finds that right denied. This can be the locus of an antagonism, although there are ways of reacting to unemployment that do not lead to any kind of struggle. The worker can commit suicide, drink enormously, or batter his or her spouse; there are many

ways people react against that negation of their subjectivity. But consider now the more political forms that reaction can take. There is no reason to believe the unemployed person is going to construct an antagonism in which Thatcherism or capitalism is the enemy. In England, for example, the discourse of Thatcherism says, 'You have lost your job because women are taking men's jobs.' It constructs an antagonism in which feminism is the enemy. Or it can say, 'You have lost your job because all those immigrants are taking the jobs of good English workers.' Or it can say, 'You have lost your job because the trade unions maintain such high wages that there are not enough jobs for the working class.' In all these cases, democratic antagonism is articulated to the Right rather than giving birth to democratic struggle.

Only if the struggle of the unemployed is articulated with the struggle of blacks, of women, of all the oppressed, can we speak of the creation of a democratic struggle. As I have said, the ground for new struggles has been the production of new inequalities attributable to the postwar hegemonic formation. That the objective of these struggles is autonomy and not power has often been remarked. It would, in fact, be wrong to oppose radically the struggles of workers to the struggles of the new social movements; both are efforts to obtain new rights or to defend endangered ones. Their common element is thus a fundamental one.

Once we have abandoned the idea of a paradigmatic form, which the worker's struggles would be obliged to express, we cannot affirm that the essential aim of these struggles is the conquest of political power. What is needed is an examination of the different forms that democratic struggles for equality may take, according to the type of adversary they oppose and the strategy they imply. In the case of resistances that seek to defend existing rights against growing state intervention, it is obvious that the matter of autonomy will be more important than for those resistances that seek to obtain state action in order to redress inequalities originating in civil society. This does not change the fact that they are of the same nature by virtue of their common aim: the reduction of inequalities and of various forms of subordination. That the vast extension of social conflict we are living through is the work of the democratic revolution is better understood by the New Right than by the Left. This is why the Right strives to halt the progress of equality. Starting from different viewpoints, both neo-liberal theoreticians of the market economy and those who are called, in the United States, 'neoconservatives' are variously seeking to transform dominant ideological parameters so as to reduce the central role played in these by the idea of democracy, or else to redefine democracy in a restrictive way to reduce its subversive power.

For neoliberals like Hayek, the idea of democracy is subordinated to the idea of individual liberty, so that a defence of economic liberty and private property replaces a defence of equality as the privileged value in a liberal society. Naturally, Hayek does not attack democratic values frontally, but he does make them into an arm for the defence of individual liberty. It is clear that, in his thinking, should a conflict arise between the two, democracy should be sacrificed.

Another way to stop the democratic revolution is offered by the neoconservatives, whose objective is to redefine the notion of democracy itself so that it no longer

centrally implies the pursuit of equality and the importance of political participation. Democracy is thus emptied of all of its substance, on the pretext that it is being defended against its excesses, which have led it to the edge of the egalitarian abyss.

To this purpose, Brzezinski, when he was director of the Trilateral Commission, proposed a plan to 'increasingly separate the political systems from society and to begin to conceive of the two as separate entities'. The idea was to remove as many decisions as possible from political control and to give their responsibility exclusively to experts. Such a measure seeks to depoliticize the most fundamental decisions, not only in the economic but also in the social and political spheres, in order to achieve, in the words of Huntington, 'a greater degree of moderation in democracy'.

The attempt is to transform the predominant shared meanings in contemporary democratic liberal societies in order to rearticulate them in a conservative direction, justifying inequality. If it succeeds, if the New Right's project manages to prevail, a great step backward will have been taken in the movement of the democratic revolution. We shall witness the establishment of a dualistic society, deeply divided between a sector of the privileged, those in a strong position to defend their rights, and a sector of all those who are excluded from the dominant system, whose demands cannot be recognized as legitimate because they will be inadmissible by definition.

It is extremely important to recognize that, in their anti-egalitarian crusade, the various formations of the New Right are trying to take advantage of the new antagonisms born of commodification, bureaucratization and the uniformization of society. Margaret Thatcher's success in Great Britain and Ronald Reagan's in the United States are unmistakable signs: the populist Right has been able to articulate a whole set of resistances countering the increase in state intervention and the destruction of traditional values and to express them in the language of neoliberalism. It is thus possible for the Right to exploit struggles that express resistance to the new forms of subordination stemming from the hegemonic formation of the Keynesian welfare state.

This is why 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. I think this is the current thinking represented by Alain Touraine in France and by some of the people linked with the peace movement in Germany. They tend to see new social movements in a much too simplistic way. Like those of the workers, these struggles are not necessarily socialist or even progressive. 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.

It is, in fact, evident that we must give up the whole problematic of the privileged revolutionary subject, which, thanks to this or that characteristic, granted

a priori by virtue of its position in social relations, was presumed to have some universal status and the historical mission of liberating society. On the contrary, if every antagonism is necessarily specific and limited, and there is no single source for all social antagonisms, then the transition to socialism will come about only through political construction articulating all the struggles against different forms of inequality. If, in certain cases, a particular group plays a central role in this transition, it is for reasons that have to do with its political capacity to effect this articulation in specific historical conditions, not for *a priori* ontological reasons. We must move beyond the sterile dichotomy opposing the working class to the social movements, a dichotomy that cannot in any case correspond to sociological separation, since the workers cannot be reduced to their class position and are inserted into other types of social relations that form other subject positions. We must recognize that the development of capitalism and of increasing state intervention has enlarged the scope of the political struggle and extended the effect of the democratic revolution to the whole of social relations. This opens the possibility of a war for position at all levels of society, which may, therefore, open up the way for a radical transformation.

The new antagonisms and socialism

This war for position is already underway, and it has hitherto been waged more effectively by the Right than by the Left. Yet the success of the New Right's current offensive is not definitive. Everything depends on the Left's ability to set up a true hegemonic counteroffensive to integrate current struggles into an overall socialist transformation. It must create what Gramsci called an 'expansive hegemony', a chain of equivalences between all the democratic demands to produce the collective will of all those people struggling against subordination. It must create an 'organic ideology' that articulates all those movements together. Clearly, this project cannot limit itself to questioning the structural relations of capitalist production. It must also question the mode of development of those forces endemic to the rationale of capitalist production. Capitalism as a way of life is, in fact, responsible for the numerous forms of subordination and inequality attacked by new social movements.

The traditional socialist model, insofar as it accepts an assembly line productivity of the Fordist type, cannot provide an alternative within the current social crisis and must be profoundly modified. We need an alternative to the logic that promotes the maximum production of material goods and the consequent incessant creation of new material needs, leading in turn to the progressive destruction of natural resources and the environment. A socialist programme that does not include the ecological and antinuclear movements cannot hope to solve current problems. The same objection applies to a socialism tolerant of the disproportionate role given to the state. State intervention has, in fact, been proposed as a remedy for the capitalist anarchy. But with the triumph of the Keynesian state, the bourgeoisie has in large part realized this objective. Yet it is just this increase in

state intervention that has given rise to the new struggles against the bureaucratization of social life. A programme wishing to utilize this potential cannot, therefore, propose increased state intervention but must encourage increased self-determination and self-government for both individuals and citizens. This does not mean accepting the arguments of the New Right, or falling back into the trap of renewed privatization. The state ought to have charge of key sectors of the economy, including control of welfare services. But all these domains should be organized and controlled by workers and consumers rather than the bureaucratic apparatus. Otherwise, the potential of this anti-state resistance will simply be used by the Right for its own ends.

As for the women's movement, it is apparent that it needs an even more thoroughgoing transformation. Such a transformation is not utopian. We are beginning to see how a society in which the development of science and technology is directed toward the liberation of the individual rather than toward his or her servitude could also bring about a true equality of the sexes. The consequences of automation – the reduction of the workday and the change in the very notion of work that implies – make possible a far-reaching transformation of everyday life and of the sexual division of labour that plays such an important role in women's subordination. But for this to occur, the Left would have to abandon its conservative attitude toward technological development and make an effort to bring these important changes under its control.

We hear, all too often, as a reaction to the apologists of postindustrial society, that we are still in a capitalist society and that nothing has changed. Though it is quite true that capitalism still prevails, many things have changed since Marx. We are, today, in the midst of an important restructuring. Whether the outcome will strengthen capitalism or move us ahead in the construction of a more democratic society depends on the ability of existing forces to articulate the struggles taking place for the creation of a new hegemonic formation.

What is specific to the present situation is the proliferation of democratic struggles. The struggle for equality is no longer limited to the political and economic arenas. Many new rights are being defined and demanded: those of women, of homosexuals, of various regional and ethnic minorities. All inequalities existing in our society are now at issue. To understand this profound transformation of the political field we must rethink and reformulate the notion of democracy itself, for the view we have inherited does not enable us to grasp the amplitude of the democratic revolution. To this end, it is not enough to improve upon the liberal parliamentary conception of democracy by creating a number of basic democratic forms through which citizens could participate in the management of public affairs, or workers in the management of industries. In addition to these traditional social subjects we must recognize the existence of others and their political characters: women and the various minorities also have a right to equality and to self-determination. If we wish to articulate all these democratic struggles, we must respect their specificity and their autonomy, which is to say that we must institutionalize a true pluralism, a *pluralism of subjects*.

A new conception of democracy also requires that we transcend a certain individualistic conception of rights and that we elaborate a central notion of *solidarity*. This can only be achieved if the rights of certain subjects are not defended to the detriment of the rights of other subjects. Now it is obvious that, in many cases, the rights of some entail the subordination of the rights of others. The defence of acquired rights is therefore a serious obstacle to the establishment of true equality for all. It is precisely here that one sees the line of demarcation separating the Left's articulation of the resistances of the new social movements from the utilization of these same by the New Right. Whereas the Left's programme seeks to set up a system of equivalences among the greatest possible number of democratic demands and thus strives to reduce all inequalities, the Right's solution, as a form of populism, satisfies the needs of certain groups by creating new inequalities. This is why the politics of the latter, instead of extending democracy, necessarily widens an already deep social split between the privileged and the nonprivileged.

The progressive character of a struggle does not depend on its place of origin – we have said that all workers' struggles are not progressive – but rather on its link to other struggles. The longer the chain of equivalences set up between the defence of the rights of one group and those of other groups, the deeper will be the democratization process and the more difficult it will be to neutralize certain struggles or make them serve the ends of the Right. The concept of solidarity can be used to form such a chain of democratic equivalences. It is urgent that we establish this new democratic theory, with the concept of solidarity playing the central role, to counter the New Right's offensive in the field of political philosophy.

Faced with an effort like Hayek's to redefine freedom individualistically, what the Left needs is a postindividualist concept of freedom, for it is still over questions of freedom and equality that the decisive ideological battles are being waged. What is at stake is the redefinition of those fundamental notions; and it is the nature of these relations that will determine the kinds of political subjects who will emerge and the new hegemonic bloc that will take shape.

To combine equality and liberty successfully in a new vision of democracy, one that recognizes the multiplicity of social relations and their corresponding subject positions, requires that we achieve a task conceived at the beginning of the democratic revolution, one that defines the kind of politics required for the advent of modernity. If to speak of socialism still means anything, it should be to designate an extension of the democratic revolution to the entirety of social relations and the attainment of a *radical, libertarian, and plural democracy*. Our objective, in other words, is none other than the goal Tocqueville perceived as that of democratic peoples, that ultimate point where freedom and equality meet and fuse, where people 'will be perfectly free because they are entirely equal, and where they will all be perfectly equal because they are entirely free'.

Note

- 1 This chapter was translated by Stanley Gray.