

For Whom an Inclusive Democracy? Class divisions and the liberatory subject today*

THE EDITORIAL COMMITTEE[^]

Introduction

In today's postmodern conditions, 'grand narratives', like Marx's dialectical materialism, or more recently, Bookchin's dialectical naturalism, are out of fashion. This is not necessarily illegitimate because it is indeed impossible to substantiate today any such grand narratives.[1] What is utterly illegitimate is the stand adopted by many in the Left, (even the ex-Marxist Left!) to draw the conclusion out of the above position that, in the interest of the politics of 'difference' and 'identity', we should also abandon any notion of class divisions and, consequently, any universal project of human emancipation and submit instead to the 'inevitability' of the market economy.[2] For this sort of analysis the notion of dominant and subordinate social groups and, correspondingly, of the need for a universal project of human emancipation, does not make sense anymore. It seems that in this argument the post-industrial era swept aside not just the notion of a particular type of class society based on economic relations but also any notion of a society split by class divisions in the sense of anti-systemic social divisions[3], replacing it with a 'post-class society', i.e. a society that is 'internally differentiated in terms of access to economic resources, political power and prestige.'[4] The obvious conclusion is that in a 'post-class' society there are neither dominant social groups and a 'ruling elite' based on them, nor an institutional framework which gives rise to and reproduces them. Therefore, there is no need also to develop an emancipatory politics or to attempt to identify the subject for such a politics. All that is needed is a kind of politics which would explicitly take into account the above 'differentiations' in an effort to achieve progressive equalisation and social harmony.

However, today, more than ever, we need not just a new type of politics which would embrace the politics of difference as part of a general project for human emancipation, but also a new kind of analysis that would interpret the class divisions which characterise today's internationalised market economy.[5] This new type of analysis and politics could be based on the Inclusive Democracy (ID) project which, founded on a conception of democracy in terms of individual and collective autonomy, offers an ideal focus to discuss the politics of difference and identity. Furthermore, the ID project, albeit a general project for human emancipation which explicitly recognises the importance of the institutional framework and of the 'dominant social paradigm,[6] does not involve any grand narrative. An inclusive democracy is conceived as the result of a self-reflective choice for individual and collective autonomy[7], rather than as the outcome of a historical process which creates the possibility for it.

The Marxist conception of class

Marx and Engels' Communist Manifesto is based on an abstract model of class in which class refers primarily to differences in the ownership of 'the means of social production' and class membership is crucial in determining political preferences, lifestyle choices, access to health and educational opportunity, levels of income and wealth. However, differences in ownership of the means of production and the consequent differences in the distribution of wealth and income constitute only the 'objective' element in the Marxist conception of class which for several Marxist writers (Thompson,^[8] Poulantzas^[9] and Arrighi, Hopkins and Wallerstein^[10] among others) represents only what we may call the necessary condition defining class membership. Class consciousness, i.e. the active awareness of class identity, constitutes the 'subjective' element which is the sufficient condition defining class membership as it is only to the extent that classes consciously struggle against other classes that they become the collective actors who can make history.

Another important element in the Marxist conception of class, which is emphasised by 'orthodox' Marxist writers, is that class is not just a form of stratification, a layer in the hierarchical structure, differentiated according to 'economic' criteria such as income, market chances or occupation, but a social relation i.e. 'a relation between appropriators and producers, in which, to use Marx's phrase, "surplus labour is pumped out of the direct producers".^[11] This distinction between class as a form of stratification and class as a social relation is important because the trend today among neo-Marxists, post-Marxists etc is to move away from class as a form of power relation to class as a form of inequality – something alien of course to Marx's thought, as Anne Phillips^[12] rightly stresses. Thus, 'Rational Choice' Marxists talk about the distribution of 'assets' or 'endowments' where the emphasis is on inequality per se, despite the fact that inequality is only the effect of an unequal distribution of power rather than its cause.

We will not discuss here the evolution of class divisions (defined in economic terms) in modernity, from the time of their emergence during the liberal phase of marketization, their restructuring in the statist phase of modernity and finally their development in the present neoliberal phase of modernity.^[13] Instead, we will try to develop an abstract theoretical model of class divisions, which is based on the hypothesis that anti-systemic social divisions can no longer be adequately defined on the basis of economic categories alone. But, the immediate question that arises, given the postmodern critique, is the following one:

Are class divisions dead today?

The economic and technological developments that took place during the last stages of the statist phase of marketization and the present neoliberal phase have led several analysts to conclude that what we face today is the death of classes. We will argue here that although classes in the Marxist sense may be dead today this in no way implies the end of class divisions in general. Thus, not only class divisions defined in economic terms (though not necessarily in strict Marxist terms) still exist today, as we saw above, but also new class divisions, defined as anti-systemic social divisions, have been added, as we shall see in the next section.

The "death of class" thesis is based on a number of arguments that we will assess below.

Some of these arguments express real changes whereas others are of a 'mixed' nature, i.e. although they may contain germs of truth they are basically of ideological nature. In the former category we should mention the following arguments :

First, as a result of the decimation of the working class and its organisations which we mentioned above, class identities, class ideologies and therefore class politics have been waning during the neoliberal phase. This is manifested by a series of events like the decline of class voting and class-based alliance to parties,^[14] the decline of class based organisations like the Trade Unions, as well as the weakening of class consciousness which is indicated by the eclipse of class conflict that followed the defeat of British miners in their conflict with Thatcherite neoliberalism in the 1980s –an event that marked the last major industrial battle in the advanced capitalist world. These developments make it obvious that classes in the Marxist sense are indeed phased out today, although class divisions in a broader sense are far from waning. In fact, the growing concentration of power created by the present form of the internationalised market economy and representative 'democracy' have made such class divisions stronger than ever.

Second, as mentioned in the last section, gender, race, ethnicity and nationality maintained their transclass character throughout the period following the emergence of classes. However, a new development, the ecological crisis, which was the inevitable outcome of the growth economy, added one more transclass problem: the problem of the environment and quality of life. This development and the parallel rise of the 'new social movements' (ecological, feminist, 'identity' movements and so on) made even more clear the inadequacy of Marxist class categories to incorporate the conflicts arising out of these transclass problems into the general scheme of anti-systemic social divisions.

But, let us now come to the arguments of 'mixed' nature which have been used to support the death of class thesis.

It is argued first that developments like massive privatisations and the consequent creation of a 'people's capitalism', as well as a more equal distribution of housing property,^[15] have led to a wide redistribution of property in the last few decades giving rise to a proliferation of indirect and small ownership. The conclusion is always the same: capital property can no longer secure domination of the society since property is now a decreasing source of power. However, apart from the fact that several of these allegations are obvious exaggerations, if not distortions of the truth,^[16] the point is that, even if they were true, a more equal distribution of property does not imply a more equal distribution of power which depends on the actual control over the productive resources. The fact for instance that the explosion of pension funds, in parallel with the massive privatisations, have converted a significant part of the population into direct or indirect investors in major companies does not mean that this segment of the population can now exercise more power over company decisions than before. Similarly, a more equitable distribution of housing property does not affect class divisions given that housing property is not a major determinant of economic power in a market economy. Particularly so if this better distribution of housing property arises because of the growth of owner occupation, as a result of easier lending schemes to finance house purchases.

Second, it is argued that the consumer society, which has developed in the West as a result of the expansion of the 'growth economy',^[17] gave rise to an increasing role for consumption as a status and a life style generator. In this culture, consumption becomes

the main form of self-expression and the chief source of identity. The status of an individual is mainly determined in this problematic by its capacity to consume rather than by its social contribution in production, its class.^[18] However, one may counter-argue here that the capacity to consume is not an independent variable since it is clearly determined by the economic position of the individual, i.e. its economic class.

Third, it is argued that the intensification of competition in the neoliberal phase and a number of parallel technological changes has led to a differentiation of demand, a more flexible specialisation and a corresponding multiple segmentation of markets (what has been called 'post-Fordism'). This implies the dissolution of giant companies into networks of relatively small but skilled-up production companies that engage in product innovation on a competitive basis and can rapidly and flexibly respond to niche-market opportunities in a way that maximises 'economies of scope' (producing the widest possible range of products) in place of the old economies of scale. The outcome of such developments is supposed to be that 'capital property can no longer secure domination of the society for those who control it precisely because their own accumulation possibilities are vulnerable to competition from firms whose owner-employees have better ideas that can penetrate markets more effectively'.^[19] However, as it was shown elsewhere, the present differentiation of production, which is consistent with the requirements of post-industrial society, although it influences the size of production unit it does not affect the degree of concentration of economic power at the company level--a fact which is indicated by the growing concentration of such power in the hands of a few corporations.^[20]

Fourth, it is argued that, as a consequence of the above changes in production technology, the present post-industrial, or service economy (or 'knowledge economy') has led to the professionalisation of occupations and the creation of a 'technical-scientific' knowledge class which constitutes the core of the new middle class. Technical skill becomes a new 'basis of power and position, with education as the necessary route of access to skill'.^[21] Therefore, the class system of post-industrial society, in this problematique, is 'open and meritocratic, although it does not dispose of the disparities of power and wealth, it nevertheless makes these disparities consistent with visions of classless inequality'.^[22] However, there is almost overwhelming evidence that economic class divisions (not necessarily defined in Marxist terms) are still reproduced. It is indicative that even in Britain, where during the statist phase of marketization there was a systematic attempt by successive Labour governments to increase class mobility through education (creation of comprehensives in secondary education, polytechnics in tertiary education etc), the results were poor, to say the least.^[23] And, of course, as expected, the neoliberal phase reversed a lot of whatever little progress was made in the previous phase.^[24] Bourdieu,^[25] through his notion of 'cultural capital', has gone a step further and theorised the way in which education, far from ameliorating class divisions, actually serves to reproduce them. This is because the greater the extent to which one has access to what is conventionally described as 'high culture' the greater the possibility of obtaining further access to high culture. It is therefore logical to conclude, on the basis of the above analysis, that, as access to education, particularly good quality education, is differentially distributed according to class origin, education serves today to reproduce class divisions, particularly those not related to property relations, rather than to ameliorate them –as supporters of the death of class thesis argue.

Finally, it is argued that the present globalisation is leading to the development of an informal international capitalist class that consists of a network of big companies linked

together by interlocking directorates and cross-shareholdings. However, this hypothesis is so far fetched that even supporters of the death of class thesis do not accept it, on the grounds that such an international capitalist class presupposes a world state and UN hardly qualifies as such.^[26] Furthermore, according to the same analysts, the present internationalisation of the market economy, has not as yet led the countries in the South to such an advanced social, political and economic stage as to transcend classes. Therefore, class divisions, even in the Marxist sense, still remain in less developed countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America which are still characterised by structures based on productive industrial property.^[27]

The Inclusive Democracy approach on class divisions

The importance of class divisions today and the rationale for a new class model

The discussion in the last section makes it clear that, on the basis of the existing empirical evidence, there is little doubt that class divisions still exist today, despite the significant developments of the last quarter of a century or so. This is not of course unexpected given that the fundamental divisions between society and economy, (which is perpetuated by the market economy institutions), and between society and polity, (which is reproduced by the institutions of representative democracy), not only are still maintained but in fact were enhanced after the collapse of socialist statism.

However, it is true that today, as supporters of the death of class thesis argue, dominance and conflict are being socially constructed around such diverse focuses as racism, sexual preferences, gender discrimination, environmental degradation, citizen participation, ethnic self-determination, religious commitments rather than class issues. Furthermore, class in the Marxist sense was the dominant stratification only in the liberal and statist phase of marketization. However, classes, if redefined to denote power relations in general rather than just economic power relations, not only are still important today but, in fact, could be used to explain today's dominance and subordination. This is because today, the class struggle (which may perhaps better be called "the social struggle" to take into account the conflict arising from all forms of unequal distribution of power), is not anymore about ownership of the means of production but about control of oneself at the economic but, also, at the political and the broader social level – a matter which, directly or indirectly, raises the issue of democracy.

One may mention in particular the following reasons why a new conception of class divisions, in the sense of anti-systemic social divisions, appropriate to today's conditions, is necessary:

- Class divisions are a key determinant not only of the conflicts over material interests (which in today's society, for the reasons to be examined below, are dominant) but also over non-material interests. However, this does not mean that such divisions would lead to the formation of 'monolithic' classes, consisting of all the dominant social groups on the one side and all subordinate social groups, on the other, to bring about social transformation, through class conflict, as Marxists used to believe. For the reasons we shall see below such monolithic classes are impossible today, although this does not rule out the possibility that, when the subordinate social groups develop

a shared consciousness about the values and institutions which create and reproduce structures of unequal distribution of power, they may unite, primarily, not against the dominant social groups as such but against the hierarchical institutional framework and those defending it.

- The material and non-material interests forming the basis of today's class divisions condition, in turn, the way in which the members of the dominant and subordinate social groups behave, given that their value systems and world-views differ according to these interests. For instance, the 'new middle class' responds differently to the present ecological crisis than the 'overclass' or the 'underclass'. This is because the overclass draws a direct economic advantage from marketization which by far outweighs its concerns about the environmental effects, whereas the underclass, and to some extent the petty bourgeoisie, do not see the ecological crisis as their first priority, particularly in the neoliberal climate of job insecurity.
- Given the existence of a multiplicity of hierarchical totalities defined on the basis of economic, political and social criteria --each totality with its own dominant and subordinate social groups-- the class position of an individual is determined by its membership in a number of such groups, either in a dominant or in a subordinate position. So, the 'class' position of an individual is determined by its position within the ensemble of social groups constituting society. However, as the economic element is the dominant one in a market economy, we may assume that although material interests alone are not enough in determining identities, still, the individual's position within the economic sphere is the necessary condition in determining one's own identity, whereas its position within the other sub-totalities, defined on the basis of race, gender, ethnicity etc, is the sufficient condition. Furthermore, the class position of an individual affects its life chances, its access to education, health, housing etc, as well as its general social status.
- The class position affects the politics of individuals in the sense that the way women, racial or ethnic minorities etc behave is determined not by their gender, racial, or cultural identity alone but by their overall position within the ensemble of social groups. So, the fact that there are no class parties in the Marxist sense anymore is due to the phasing out of economic classes in the Marxist sense rather than to the disappearance of class divisions, (in the sense of anti-systemic social divisions), themselves. As regards the relative decline in the political significance of economic class divisions in particular, this may be explained by the fact that parliamentary politics today is mainly about the redistribution of power between the elites and the middle classes and refers primarily to disputes about how to accommodate the marketization and internationalisation (promoted by the elites) with the aims of the middle classes.
- Finally, the class position affects cultural patterns and creates corresponding divisions between the members of the various social groups.

So, classes are still needed, perhaps more than ever before, although they have to be redefined to take into account the obvious deficiencies of the Marxist concepts we saw in the previous section. This means that we have to attempt to develop new concepts which, although they would not depend on the Marxist category of the mode of production, would be 'holistic' in the sense that they would locate class divisions into the power structures of the socio-economic system itself and not just to some aspects of it like gender relations^[28], identity politics, values and so on —a practice which has rightly attracted the title of 'single-issue' movements to the corresponding movements. Needless to add that, in this problematic, stratification theories are completely inadequate to deal with today's class

divisions, since they only deal with differences and inequalities and not with relations like dominance and subordination that characterise the relations between and within social groups.

However, such an attempt would be against the trend of today's postmodernist analyses which, as Anne Phillips^[29] points out, hardly refer to the incompatibility between capitalism and democracy, or the illusory nature of political inequality in an unequal world. Instead, such analyses focus on what has come to be described as a politics of difference and/or politics of recognition i.e. the idea that liberal democracy has repressed recognition of differences by gender, ethnicity, race, religion, language or culture and that this repression means people are not being treated as equals. The inevitable result, as the same author stresses, has been that discussions of civic republicanism or cultural pluralism or equal citizenship for women and men often proceed as if these had nothing to do with economic arrangements or the distribution of income and wealth. In other words, the shift from an understanding of inequality predominantly based on class to one that focuses on gender, ethnicity and race meant a move from the case in which every inequality was thought to be mainly a matter of economics to the case in which every inequality is thought to be a matter of politics or culture as much as (if not more than) a matter of economics.

It is therefore obvious that what we need today is a new paradigm which, while recognising the different identities of the social groups which constitute various sub-totalities (women, ethnic minorities etc), at the same time acknowledges the existence of an overall socio-economic system which secures the concentration of power at the hands of various elites and dominant social groups within society as a whole. Such a paradigm is the Inclusive Democracy paradigm which does respond to the present multiplicity of social relations (gender, ethnicity, race, and so on) with complex concepts of equality in the distribution of all forms of power, which acknowledge people's different needs and experiences. The class model which will be developed below not only is consistent with the Inclusive Democracy paradigm but it also attempts to fill the gap created by the fact that the new pluralism has failed to confront the present socio-economic system as a totality, with its own totalising logic and dynamics that inevitably lead to a huge concentration of power at all levels.

Autonomous and heteronomous totalities

It should be stressed at the outset that the analysis which follows is not based on any 'general' theory or any universal interpretation of 'laws' of history or Nature which supposedly condition social evolution. Therefore, the aim of the model below is not to formulate a new 'grand' theory of anti-systemic social divisions applying in all times and places. The central hypothesis on which this model is based is that History is always a creation —a hypothesis which precludes any attempt to discover any 'rules of motion' of society— involving a basic choice between the two main traditions that have always characterised social development: that of autonomy and heteronomy. The autonomy tradition aims at a type of social organisation which presupposes the abolition not just of exploitation but of dominance and its opposite subordination, it involves therefore the abolition of hierarchical structures, whereas the heteronomy tradition involves the reproduction of a hierarchical status quo.

A good starting point in defining the concepts of dominance and subordination which are central in this model is the notion of a hierarchical totality which is derived from the general notion of totality. At a high level of abstraction, a total of social units (which may

consist of social individuals, social groups or nation-states) defines a totality (social group, nation-state or world system, respectively). The totality consists of an integral complex of practical and intellectual activities, moral and aesthetic stands, a total in other words which includes *praxis*, as defined below, and also the 'social significations' and institutions which determine it historically. Depending on the way power is distributed we may distinguish between autonomous/non-hierarchical totalities and heteronomous/ hierarchical totalities.

An autonomous totality is characterised by the equal distribution of power between the members of the totality, i.e. by the negation of power and the lack of hierarchical structures. In this form of totality the conscious activity of social individuals is the source of a constant self-institutioning of social life.

On the other hand, a heteronomous totality is characterised by the unequal distribution of power and takes the form of a hierarchical structure. Historical societies were mostly heteronomous societies with only partial exceptions (Athenian democracy), or short-lived forms of self-determination – usually during revolutionary periods. A heteronomous totality consists of several sub-totalities defined on the basis of various criteria: type of work, sex, race, ethnicity and so on. Each of those sub-totalities forms a hierarchical totality of its own in which the fundamental division between dominant and subordinate units is reproduced in various forms. However, the very fact that dominant as well as subordinate social groups are always defined in terms of a particular sub-totality and that an individual is a member of several sub-totalities and social groups, makes clear that today we can no longer talk about 'monolithic' classes. At most, given that the dominant element in a market economy is the economic, we may talk about a 'dominant' class division, which refers to the economic sub-totality, without assuming that the class divisions which are defined with respect to other sub-totalities are somehow reducible to the economic classes division.

The hierarchical totality does not have a centre but only a dominant element which is not determined, for all time, by the economic base, or any other base. The dominant element is always determined by a creative act, i.e. it is the outcome of social *praxis*^[30], of the autonomous activity of social individuals. Thus, the dominant element in theocratic societies like that of Iran or Afghanistan is cultural, in a 'socialist' country like China is political and so on. Similarly, the dominant element in market economies is economic, as a result of the fact that the introduction, during the Industrial Revolution, of new systems of production within the framework of a commercial society in which the means of production were under private ownership and control, inevitably led to the transformation of the socially-controlled economies of the past (in which the market played a marginal role in the economic process) into the present market economies.^[31] This is why the members of the ruling elite in market economies are basically drawn from the economic sphere whereas in pre-market economies they were drawn from other spheres (political-military, cultural etc). By the same token, the social groups which emerged as the dominant ones in the countries of the now defunct 'actually existing socialism' were those drawing their power to control the political and economic process out of their position in the communist parties and, correspondingly, the element that emerged as the dominant one in the state socialist society was the political.

Still, the existence of a dominant element does not preclude autonomy of the other elements. The relation between the various elements is asymmetrical (in the sense that in

market economies the economic element conditions the political element and vice versa in actually existing socialism) but it is also a relation of autonomy and interdependence. In other words, culture, economics and politics are not independent 'spheres'. In fact, they are interdependent even in market economies where the separation into spheres is obvious. On the other hand, in pre-market economies, it is not even possible to distinguish between the various spheres which constitute an integrated totality and the only reason we make such distinctions here is for systematic reasons. Thus, there was no division between polity and society in classical Athens, nor was there any division between economy and society in feudal pre-market economies. This is also why an inclusive democracy is seen as a form of social organisation which re-integrates society with economy, polity and nature . So, although one may agree that ontologically such divisions between social spheres were not always present, methodologically, it makes sense to distinguish between the various 'elements' in every society and attempt to explain social divisions in them on the basis of which particular element constituted the dominant one, which in turn defines the dominant social groups.

Power structures and relations

Power relations and structures play a crucial role in the present conception of class divisions. The overriding characteristic in every type of inequality (economic, political social) is the unequal distribution of a form of power^[32] —a characteristic which marks every hierarchical society. We may distinguish various forms of power: political and economic power, which will be defined below, as well as various forms of social power based on sex, race, ethnicity and so on. Each of those forms of power defines a different type of inequality (political, economic, gender etc.), i.e. a different type of 'class division'. Therefore, power relations are not assumed to be the outcome of class positions in the Marxist sense, i.e. related to the unequal distribution of ownership of the means of production. Instead, power relations are assumed to be the outcome of the unequal distribution of any form of power between social units. The element which unites individuals in a dominant social group within a totality is the similar degree of political, economic and/or social power they exercise versus the other members of the totality that allows them to take an effective part in decision-taking and in determining the ends/means of it. Correspondingly, the element which unites individuals in a subordinate social group is defined in terms of their lack of access to the sources of power.

We may define political power as the capacity of a set of social groups to control the political process, which is defined in a broad sense to include political institutions (government, parliament etc) as well as cultural/ideological institutions (education, church, mass media, art, publishing) and repressive institutions (army, police, prisons and so on). The ideological and cultural institutions play a particularly important role in the creation/change of the social significations which characterise a totality. The power to influence the process of creating social significations is perhaps the most significant form of power as it allows the ruling elite to determine even the problems that are legitimised to be in the agenda of the political process. It is in this way that the ruling elite influences the subjective perception of subordinate groups and adjusts it to an 'objective' reality which presupposes acceptance of the existing hierarchical structure of the totality.

However, political power is not enough to explain anti-systemic social divisions, as for instance supporters of the elite theory attempt to do when they use political power as the core aspect of stratification and identify the key division as one between a small organised

and powerful elite and an unorganised powerless 'mass'. Nor it is right to assume, as Mills [33], one of the main exponents of this theory does, that power grows out of corporate hierarchies and state-military-industrial bodies and not out of the institutional framework of the market economy and representative democracy. So, economic power has to be brought into the picture and redefined.

To start with, economic power is not considered in this framework as the basis of any other form of power, as it is in the Marxist framework. Although economic power is invested a special significance in a market economy this was not the case in societies which were not based on market economies. Economic power would have to be identified not with concentration of income and wealth but with the capacity of a set of social groups to control the economic process and particularly the production and distribution processes. Thus, the social groups which control directly the economic process, through their ownership and/or control of the means of production and distribution (capitalists, managers, top technocrats etc), constitute the dominant economic groups. However, economic power may also be exercised indirectly, through the control of income and wealth. This is because in a market economy the allocation of resources takes place on the basis of the economic decisions of consumers, who express their preferences through the exercise of their purchasing power. Therefore the greater the control over income and wealth that a particular social group exercises, the greater the degree of indirect economic power. This means that the new middle class exerts a significant amount of indirect economic power, through its significant control over income and wealth.

But, apart from the differences which arise from inequalities in the distribution of political and economic power, and interlinked with them, are differences in the distribution of social power arising from identity differences. In fact, one important aspect of the proposed new conception of class divisions is that it allows us to integrate into the model the various forms of inequality on which the new social movements have focused their attention, i.e. all those inequalities which were left out of the traditional Marxist conception of classes and, as a result, received a transclass status (gender, racial and ethnical inequalities etc). Thus, women are in an inferior position at home, when some sort of patriarchal relations still prevail, or at work, when their work is not recognised at all as part of the social product, or it is underpaid. Racial, ethnic or religious minorities are in an inferior social position in societies whose institutions and value systems discriminate between first and second class citizens. Such 'identity' differences cannot be 'reduced' to class differences in the Marxist sense, or generally to differences in the distribution of economic power.

The subordination of some social groups vis-à-vis other social groups belonging to the same or other sub-totalities is based on the unequal distribution of political, economic or social power in general. It is therefore obvious that one may distinguish various degrees of dominance and subordination as well as degrees of inter-dependence. In this problematique, subordination is defined as a situation of heteronomy where the boundaries of action, the type of development as well as the strategic aims/tactical means of the subordinate units are conditioned by the dominant units within the totality. Subordination is therefore seen as the consequence of unequal power relations among the social units comprising a hierarchical totality.

Furthermore, we may distinguish various forms of subordination on the basis of the origin and character of the relations between dominant units. However, every form of subordination is grounded, in the last instance, on a power relationship, is determined

unilaterally by the dominant social units and is legitimised by the political/legal/ideological system into a relationship of rights and obligations. The case for instance of subordination relations developed in market economies constitutes a different form of subordination from that of subordination relations in pre-market economies or the economies of 'actually existing socialism' as the former is founded in the economic sphere whereas the latter in the political sphere. The degree of subordination is determined by the degree of concentration of power (i.e. the higher the degree of concentration of power within the totality, the greater the degree of subordination on dominant units) which in turn is determined as the historical outcome of the social struggle (see below). Finally, the form of subordination which is dominant at each historical 'moment' determines also the way in which subordinate units are developed, as well as the consequences of the subordination relation.

So, in today's market economy, where economic subordination is the dominant form of subordination, exploitation and inequality are seen as the main consequences of subordination. It should be stressed however that the relation of dominance/subordination does not refer only to economic exploitation. The concentration of income/wealth constitutes only part of the privileges of the dominant social groups which act also with psychological, ideological and other incentives. In other words, economic dominance is only one form of dominance and the other forms of *dominance* (political, military, ideological etc.) can not simply be reduced to *means* in exploiting the subordinate units; they constitute ends in themselves and important components of the privileged position of the dominant social groups. Therefore, the concepts 'exploitation' 'class struggle' etc constitute the particular in comparison to the much broader concepts of dominance/subordination and social struggle used here.

Autonomous and heteronomous societies

It is clear that in this model subordination takes a universality which may be reduced not to the formal relations of ownership of the means of production but to the general hierarchical organisation of society including that of the production system. Subordination is therefore a phenomenon which refers to every system of social organisation which involves the negation of human autonomy at the individual or collective level.

Today, all collective activity is controlled by impersonal, hierarchically organised and socially privileged minorities. Thus:

- Producers of goods and services are controlled by those controlling the means of production;
- consumers are conditioned by those controlling the means of production through their control of technology, the mass media etc;
- citizens are conditioned by those controlling the mass media and particularly television which determines what the average citizen's perception of reality will be and so on.

On the other hand, in an autonomous society which takes the form of an inclusive democracy, the dominant social paradigm is self-determination and all sectors of social life are self-managed by the individuals who take part in the corresponding activities. Society in this case exists and is legitimised only to the extent that it materialises its content: self-management.

Praxis and social struggle

Praxis should be distinguished from social struggle which refers to the conflict between social groups. Social groups consist of individuals who share common ends or interests (which are not necessarily of economic nature), ideas, feelings and ambitions. A social group is therefore a broader concept than that of the Marxist class that is primarily defined by its position in the economic sphere which, however, is only one part of the hierarchical totality and takes a special significance only in the market economy. Therefore, whether at a particular 'moment' of History the dominant social groups (i.e. those in strategic positions within the social pyramid and therefore in a position to initiate social changes which coincide with their own interests) should be found within the economic, the political, or the cultural sphere depends on whether it is the political, the economic or the cultural element which is the dominant one in a specific hierarchical totality.

Although it is often the struggle between social groups which leads to the formation of a new totality this is not always the case. The notion of Praxis is therefore broader than that of the social struggle. Still, the notion of social struggle used here is a broader concept than the Marxist concept of the class struggle which refers exclusively to the conflict of economic interests and therefore is defined on the basis of economic categories alone. In other words, the social struggle is always multidimensional, both from the viewpoint of its content and also from that of the composition of the social groups participating in it.

From the viewpoint of its content, the social struggle may refer to the struggle between social groups over economic, political, cultural or ecological issues. On the other hand, from the viewpoint of the composition of the social groups participating in such struggles, the social struggle may refer to:

- the struggle between dominant and subordinate social groups, the former aiming to reproduce the conditions of dominance over the latter and the latter aiming to improve their social position within the status quo and, in revolutionary situations, to replace it
- the internal struggle within (dominant or subordinate) social groups as a result of their hierarchical organisation and the contrasting special interests of their members
- the struggle between dominant social groups at the international level, which in a market economy usually refers mainly to the economic level
- the struggle between subordinate social groups at the international level which may refer to the economic or other levels (nationalist, religious and other conflicts)

The outcome of the social struggle determines some important socio-economic variables (e.g. the way income is distributed) but when there is a significant restructuring of the social structure not only a number of variables but even the system parameters themselves change, in which case a new form of subordination is created, as it happened for instance in the case of the emergence of actually existing socialism after the Soviet revolution. Alternatively, if the social struggle has as its aim the heteronomous structure itself, an autonomous society may follow, as it happened in the case of the emergence of the Athenian democracy.^[34]

Hierarchical totalities change over time. The way in which the hierarchical structure of the totality (i.e. the form of subordination) changes depends on the outcome of the interaction

between praxis and the totality's existing structure. However, the existing structure, though significant in conditioning the character of praxis and social struggle in given historical circumstances, cannot prejudge the outcome of such activity, not even guarantee the development of a specific type of consciousness and therefore of a specific type of Praxis and historical evolution. At every instance, Praxis creates the concrete structure of the totality, its institutions and social significations. In other words, praxis is conditioned by the existing structure of the totality but it is also itself a creation, which embodies social significations. It is for this reason that the view according to which it is possible to derive 'scientific laws' determining the dynamics of History, Society or Economy, is both wrong and—given the historical consequences of scientism in History—socially undesirable.^[35] It is also on account of the same creative element in History that one could explain the historical occurrence of non-hierarchical structures.

So, the crude Marxist hypothesis that praxis is determined in the last instance by the level of technological development or the degree of scarcity is an oversimplification which ignores the complex psycho-social content of the subordination/dominance relationship. Of course, all this does not mean that if scarcity is not the ultimate cause of subordination then it should be located in human nature. This is a pseudo-dilemma which ignores the social factors that condition development as from day one of a human being's life, i.e. the fact that human nature is conditioned by a social organisation, which has taken the form it did within a particular hierarchical totality, as a result of the values and significations which were created by the praxis of people who, by their nature, were unequal.

Relations between the institutions of a heteronomous totality

A useful way to examine the relationship between the various political and economic institutions within a heteronomous totality is to consider the preconditions of subordination. At the outset we should make a distinction between the 'subjective' conditions of subordination which refer to the process of internalisation of the hierarchical structure of totality and the 'objective' conditions which refer to the social institutions that maintain and reproduce the relations of subordination. In the following we will refer only to the 'objective' conditions, i.e. the social institutions which secure the control of the subordinate units and not to the ways through which the significations/values of the dominant minority are internalised^[36]. Furthermore, we would refer only to the direct control that dominant units exercise over the subordinate units, through the concrete institutions which secure the production/reproduction of the hierarchical totality, and not to the indirect control which they may exercise through tradition.

However, it should be stressed that subordination /dominance is essentially a psycho-social dialectic between objective conditions and subjective reaction. Therefore, the internalisation of an authoritarian conception of reality (i.e. of the hierarchical structure of the totality) constitutes a fundamental element of the subordination relations. The degree of stability of power is always dependent on the degree that it is accepted as legitimate by the social units which are subject to it. In fact, the real basis of any power in a hierarchical totality is not the hierarchical organisation as such but the habits, opinions, values, in general the social significations which unite the members of a totality in accepting the hierarchical structure, as well as the psychological processes which create the psychological capability of subjection to the power/decisions of others.

Therefore, although the process of creating/amending social significations is heavily

influenced by ideological/cultural institutions controlled by the dominant minority it will be an oversimplification to assume that the ideology is part of the superstructure which, 'in the last instance', is determined by production relations, as Marxists assumed. In fact, if we define a social group's world-view as the ideas, feelings, ambitions shared by its members there is no reason to assume the existence of a one-to-one correspondence between world-views and social groups. Instead, it is logical to assume that the world view of a social group is determined not just by its position in the totality and as an integral part of the social struggle but also, independently, within the process of the creation of ideas, values and significations—a process which has its own autonomy. In other words, the process of the formation of ideas, values, significations is a creative part of Praxis as it is determined historically whereas the economic structure is only one part of the totality, not always significant.

The relations of dominance/subordination are not only a structural problem, i.e. a problem of the social institutions which constitute the social/economic/ political structure of the totality. They are primarily a matter of practice. But, the change of social institutions is a basic precondition for the possibility of practicing relations of interdependence and it is this practice which, in turn, will lead to the development of autonomous social units. It is in this sense that we shall examine below the social institutions which constitute the necessary preconditions of subordination.

We may distinguish between two sets of objective conditions.

- The first set consists of all those Institutions which secure general dominance in a hierarchical totality
- The second set of objective conditions consists of the institutions which secure in particular the economic dominance of the dominant units in the totality. The main economic institutions (which secure economic dominance of the dominant groups, through guaranteeing their control over the way resources are allocated and, consequently, over income and wealth) are, in a market economy, the system of private ownership of the means of production and the market system and, in a state socialist economy, the system of State ownership of the means of production and central planning.

As we have dealt elsewhere^[37] with the economic institutions, we will focus here on the institutions securing general dominance in a hierarchical society. We may distinguish the following categories of such institutions:

- the State, which in a hierarchical totality is separate from society and consists of a set of social relations that secure a system of political, economic and social dominance through ideological and repressive institutions. The role of the state is particularly important in institutionalising and legitimising class divisions in the broad sense defined above (i.e. not necessarily based in the economic sphere)
- the hierarchical organisation of society. An organisation is characterised as hierarchical when it consists of members/organs which are not equal to each other but instead some (lower units) are subject to the will of others, to which they are in a position of subordination. It should be noted here that the hierarchical organisation of the totality does not just refer to production relations^[38] where the boundaries between authority (which is linked to experience, age etc) and power (which is implied by the hierarchical organisation) are easily drawn. It refers also to

institutions where these boundaries are not easily drawn: patriarchal family, schools etc. It should be clear that it is only the power implied by a hierarchical organisation that is incompatible with an autonomous totality and not just the authority derived from age, experience etc.[39] Similarly, the principle of self-determination is not in conflict with the temporary ‘power to order’ which may be exercised by some social units with the approval of those at the receiving end.[40] The hierarchical organization of the totality not only makes possible the control of the lower units in the pyramid by those higher up but —provided there is a significant degree of social mobility[41]— it offers also the incentive to the subordinate units to tolerate the entire system. However, apart from the above typical definition of hierarchy which assumes a system that functions primarily on the basis of orders, one may adopt a broader definition of it which would classify as hierarchical every organisation in which some social units are subject to the power of others because of the concentration of power at the top—irrespective of whether there is a right to give orders and an obligation to execute them. This broader definition would have the advantage that it would also cover the case of ‘objective’ hierarchy which is established by the unequal distribution of economic power within the market economy when the weaker social units are hetero-determined by the stronger ones. In contrast, a non hierarchical economic organisation, i.e. an economic democracy,[42] functions on the basis of an equal distribution of economic power within an institutional framework in which all social units are self-managed. Furthermore, this broader definition of hierarchy highlights the fact that its essence lies in concentration of power and not just in the way decisions are taken, which simply determines the type of hierarchy.

- the institutionalised and minute division of labour that precludes any effective rotation of social functions and duties and leads to a fixation of social activity. The various historical types of division of labour may be classified according to content and form. On the basis of its content we may distinguish between *technical division of labour* which refers to the division of tasks within a concrete productive activity and *social division of labour* which refers to functional and occupational specialisation. On the basis of its form we may distinguish between the pre-industrial division of labour, the industrial division of labour which was based on mass production and a high degree of specialisation in the industrial sector and the present post-industrial one which is based on a high degree of specialisation in the services sector and the information technology. It should be stressed here that the industrial division of labour was not only due to the development of productive forces i.e. to the fact that during the industrial era there was an increase of concentration of production in bigger economic and social units which inevitably led to greater specialisation and alienation. In fact, the institutioning of the detailed division of labour and of the hierarchical organisation of production which accompanied the Industrial Revolution was not the result of an attempt for a technologically better organisation of production but rather, as several studies have shown,[43] of a systematic attempt to introduce an organisation which would secure an essential role in the productive process to those controlling the means of production. It is not therefore surprising that the process of growing specialisation continues in today’s post-industrial division of labour even though the latter is characterised by smaller production units[44] (although concentration at the company level continues unabated[45]). The institution therefore which the hierarchical totality presupposes is not the division between tasks and functions, which is conceivable in every social organisation, but the institutionalisation of these tasks and their non-rotation, as well as their hierarchical implications.[46] This is particularly important in explaining the subordinate position

of women or other subordinate social groups, given the fixation of their social activity within the present division of labour. In fact, the social division of labour ceases to have hierarchical implications when the social individuals are really capable of selecting/changing their position in it and when this position does not imply any special social or economic privileges. Finally, It should be stressed that the abolition of division of labour, in this problematique, is not related to the level of development of productive forces and the issue of scarcity. The abolition of scarcity, as it was shown in *Towards An Inclusive Democracy*, as well as the division of labour, are not preconditions for freedom in the sense of an equal distribution of power.[47]

The logical relationship between the above two sets of objective conditions should be thought of as one of equivalence, which implies that the one set of conditions constitutes a necessary and sufficient condition for the other, rather than one of implication, as both the Marxist and anarchist traditions assume, although from different causation viewpoints. Thus, for Marxists, private ownership of the means of production is the sufficient condition for the historical and functional existence of the state etc, whereas for anarchists the reverse is true. The equivalence view of the relationship between the two sets of objective conditions is particularly useful with respect, first, to the question of the composition of the dominant social groups allowing us to use a broader concept than that of the ruling class in describing them. Second, it is useful in discussing the issue of the autonomy of the State and, finally, it may be used to discard the idea of a necessary general correspondence between economic classes and the forces involved in political struggle.

In more detail, as regards the composition of the dominant minority, the discussion in the previous section makes it clear that the concept of the 'ruling class', which is defined primarily in the economic sphere, is insufficient. Instead, we may assume that the dominant social units are those which possess the top positions in the main economic, and/or political and cultural institutions (e.g. the mass media). It is well known that concentration of economic power at the hands of multinationals, of political power at the hands of those controlling the political institutions and of the power to control information at the hands of those controlling TV networks has increased significantly in the last hundred years or so, in pace with the bureaucratisation of society (corporations, state, political parties, trade unions etc)[48]. However, as it was mentioned above, today's power structure is not cantered anymore around a monolithic class (landlords or capitalists etc) but around an institutional complex which establishes an impersonal power. In other words, the essence of the hierarchical totality is power itself and not a particular social group. The limits of the power of the dominant social groups, as well as that of the subordinate ones, are determined by the degree of their self-organisation and also by the degree in which the dominant group's ends/means are internalised by the subordinate ones. In other words, the limits of power of the dominant social groups are determined by the outcome of the social struggle.

As regards the issue of the autonomy of the state, the main controversy has always been centred around the issue whether the state should be conceived fully autonomous, as a consequence of its role to balance the interests of the competing social groups (pluralist model[49]) or, whether instead it should be thought of as lacking of any autonomy, as a consequence of its commitment to the elite's interests (elitist model). An intermediate position was taken by the Marxist views on the state[50] which, attempted to interpret its role in relation to the economic 'base' of the mode of production and assigned a role of relative autonomy to it, in which the objective function of the state was the maintenance of

social cohesion, so that the accumulation of capital process is made possible.

However, if we assume a relation of equivalence between the two sets of preconditions of subordination then the issue of the absolute vs. relative autonomy of the state does not arise. This is because the relationship between the dominant social units --either they draw their power in the political sphere, the economic, or the broader social sphere-- is always one of interdependence as regards their primary antithesis to the subordinate units, i.e. the antithesis referring to the production/reproduction of the socio-economic privileges implied by their position in the social pyramid. According to the view of the state proposed here, its function consists in securing/guaranteeing the conditions of production/reproduction of the hierarchical totality. In this problematique, the various institutions which comprise the first set of preconditions of subordination are in a complex process of interdependence with the type of ownership/control over the means of production.

Therefore, if we adopt this problematique then the hypothesis that these institutions are 'in the last instance' determined by the type of ownership/control becomes irrelevant. Instead, we may assume that society is always a creation^[51] and that its institutions combine in various forms the functional with the imaginary element. So, the very existence of both categories of institutions, as an ensemble, which secure the preconditions of subordination, as well as their concrete content at every historical moment, is a matter of creation, the outcome of praxis, which, in turn, is determined by the limits that the existing institutions impose on it, as well as by the imaginary element. But, taking for granted the concrete content that such institutions take in today's hierarchical society, the hypothesis made in this paper about the existence of an interdependence relationship between them implies that a minority control over the means of production presupposes the existence of institutions like state power, hierarchy and the institutionalised division of labour, and vice versa. Furthermore, this hypothesis is consistent with the assumption we made above that the dominant social groups, as well as the subordinate ones, are not monolithic entities but consist of antagonistic members, at least as far as their special interests/ends/means are concerned. Such a hypothesis implies that within the 'superstructure' of the hierarchical totalities there are always antagonistic forces which condition the form and the content that the institutions constituting the first set of the preconditions of subordination assume at each moment of time.

Finally, the hypothesis of interdependence helps to make clear that there is no general and necessary correspondence between economic classes and the forces involved in political struggle.^[52] In this light, we may explain the 'transclass' character of the new social movements (feminist, ecological etc), which is not determined even 'in the last instance' by the capitalist relations of production. However, if we see the social divisions arising out of the activity of the new social movements within the broader sense of class divisions adopted here then their politics could be easily integrated within the present model of class divisions.

The subject of emancipatory politics today

Before we proceed to discuss the social actors that, according to the Inclusive Democracy paradigm, could potentially function as the subject of emancipatory politics today it may be useful to examine the present position of the Left on the matter. To classify the main views we may distinguish between the statist and the libertarian Left, although even this

old distinction looks blurred today. In the past, the statist Left was divided between social democrats and Marxists, the former adopting the view that radical social change could take place through the parliamentary take over of state power and its use for reforms within the framework of a market economy and the latter believing in a revolutionary take over of state power and its use for a transitional socialist period as a means to bring about the communist society. On the libertarian side, the state was always seen as part of the problem and it was thought that radical change would have to come about 'from below', would have to be revolutionary and would have to involve the immediate abolition of the state.

However, the general shift of the political spectrum to the Right during the neoliberal phase of marketization has blurred these well known old divisions. Thus, on the side of the statist Left, the old social democratic Left has moved to social-liberalism whereas most of the old Marxist Left has moved to various forms of support for a 'social market' and parliamentary democracy. On the other hand, on the libertarian side, there are several voices (notably Noam Chomsky) arguing for direct action to press the State to take action against big corporations and globalisation, whereas some supporters of the commune movement (notably Ted Trainer) see a role—even a limited one—for both the state and the market in a future society. But, let us see in more detail the above trends in the Left.

Emancipatory politics and Statist Left

The main trend in the old social democratic Left today is the one represented by ex socialdemocratic parties like the British Labour party, the French Socialist party, the German socialdemocratic party, or even ex-communist parties like the Italian PDS. All these parties, as well as other minor socialdemocratic parties in Europe, Australasia etc, as soon as they moved to government in the past decade or so, have joined the neoliberal consensus mentioned above, moving from social democracy to social liberalism[53].

The theoretical case for social liberalism was made by Anthony Giddens in his *Third Way*. Starting point in his analysis is the undisputable fact that whereas a quarter of a century ago a majority of the working population were in manual jobs, mostly in manufacturing, technological developments have led to the present situation in which less than 20 percent of the workforce in most of the advanced market economies is in manufacture and the proportion is continuing to fall 'leading to the conclusion that the traditional working class has largely disappeared'. [54] However, Giddens takes a step further and sees the end of class divisions in Marxist terms as the end of class divisions generally drawing the conclusion that 'no one any longer has any alternatives to capitalism—the arguments that remain concern how far, and in what ways, capitalism should be governed and regulated'. [55]

So, the problem, as defined by Giddens, is one of devising a 'Third Way' in the sense of an attempt to transcend both neoliberalism and old style social democracy. The former has to be transcended because of its support for unfettered markets and its assumption that today we live in a borderless world in which the nation-state has become a fiction and politicians have lost all effective power. The latter has to be transcended because, in the present conditions of globalisation, the state has lost the powers it used to have during the statist phase, despite the silly attempts of some Palaeolithic socialdemocrats—who today include among their ranks many ex- Marxists(!)—to deny globalisation! For Giddens, the nation state is not disappearing and the scope of government taken overall expands rather than diminishes as globalisation proceeds, although its role, under conditions of globalisation, would be very different from before.

However, when Giddens comes to define the new state role and the sort of ‘new’ social democracy which is feasible today he comes about with such ‘radical’ demands as ‘keeping welfare spending high’ (although redirected towards ‘human capital investment’, i.e. support for entrepreneurial initiatives),^[56] rejecting a ‘blanket endorsement of free trade’^[57] and adopting a ‘new mixed economy’ which in effect means a balance of regulation and deregulation.^[58] In other words, all main demands of the Third Way amount to the introduction of the sort of ‘regulatory controls’ discussed elsewhere^[59] which are perfectly compatible with the neoliberal consensus but irrelevant to the sort of effective social controls required to protect labour (like some of the controls which had been introduced during the statist phase of marketization by old social democrats) or the environment.

Coming now to the Marxist side of the statist Left, the usual trend among analysts is to keep increasing the number of classes by implicitly or explicitly accepting that property is not the only form of domination and subordination possible.^[60] Others, including also some analysts from the democratic^[61] camp, keep redefining the working class in tautological ways which classify almost everybody under the category of a worker (workers, ex-workers, disabled workers, future workers, tertiary workers, artists etc) ignoring present realities. It is therefore obvious that this part of the Left is in a dead end, unable to recognise the basic fact that the proletariat is not in a position to play alone the role of the liberatory subject anymore.

However, there have been some recent trends within the Marxist Left which, recognising present realities, come close to proposing the development of a comprehensive democratic project, like the Inclusive Democracy project. Thus, Ellen Meiksins Wood^[62] questions whether the abolition of sexual or racial equality would mean the end of capitalism —as the abolition of class inequality by definition would do— given that sexual and racial inequality are not in principle incompatible with capitalism. She rightly points out that today the totalising unity of the system is conceptualised away by diffuse conceptions of civil society and by the submersion of class to catch-all categories like identity, which disaggregate the social world into particular and separate realities. As she stresses, the postmodern pluralism that has developed in today’s society has replaced an old pluralism acknowledging the existence of an inclusive political totality like the ‘political system’ with a new one insisting on the irreducibility of fragmentation and difference. This has inevitably led to a situation where the systemic unity of capitalism, or its very existence as a social system, is denied and ‘instead of the universalist aspirations of socialism and the integrative politics of the struggle against class exploitation, we have a plurality of essentially disconnected particular struggles which ends in a submission to capitalism’.^[63] Her conclusion is that there is still a need for a universal project of human emancipation, which would involve a pluralism that recognises the systemic unity of capitalism and could distinguish the constitutive relations of capitalism from other inequalities and oppression. Thus, she rightly calls for a comprehensive economic democracy,^[64] like the one developed by the Inclusive Democracy paradigm:^[65]

Democracy needs to be reconceived not simply as a political category but as an economic one. What we mean is not simply ‘economic democracy’ as a greater equality of distribution. We have in mind democracy as an economic regulator, the *driving mechanism* of the economy.

Emancipatory politics and Libertarian Left

In view of present realities, the most significant writers in the libertarian space of the last quarter of a century or so have abandoned, in various degrees, the idea of the proletariat as the liberatory subject. Thus, Murray Bookchin, as early as the late sixties, gives the following answer to the question 'Who will be the 'agent' of revolutionary change' aiming at a non-hierarchical society?

It will be literally the great majority of society drawn from all the different traditional classes and fused into a common revolutionary force by the decomposition of the institutions, social forms, values and lifestyles of the prevailing class structure.[66]

Similarly, Castoriadis stresses that 'to say that everyone, or almost everyone has become a wage earner does not mean that everyone has become proletarian with the content one used to give this term. To be a wage earner is virtually the general condition in modern capitalist society; it is no longer the situation of a 'class'. Quite evidently there are from several standpoints sizeable differentiations among wage earners but they do not furnish us with a division into classes'.[67] Furthermore, retreating from the dividing line he had stressed in earlier works between directors and executives and admitting that this dividing line is tending to become less and less relevant because the categories of pure directors and pure executives are, numerically speaking, less and less sizeable, he concludes that :

The sole criterion of differentiation within the mass of wage earners that remains relevant for us is their attitude towards the established system. That boils down to saying that one must abandon 'objective criteria' of whatever kind they may be. With the exception of the tiny minority at the summit, the whole of the population is just open-or closed-to a revolutionary outlook. It is possible that, conjuncturally speaking, this or that strata or category plays a larger role; but one can no longer maintain the idea that the proletariat is 'the' depository of the revolutionary project.[68]

Similar views are adopted, albeit implicitly, by the two main forms of libertarian 'movements' today: the anti-globalisation and the commune movements. As it was shown elsewhere[69] both these two 'movements' are based mainly on the 'middle groups' and only to a small degree on the underclass.

Emancipatory politics and Inclusive Democracy

The main point of the Inclusive Democracy approach, as we saw in the previous section, is that the present class divisions between dominant and subordinate social groups in the political sphere (professional politicians and the rest of citizenry), the economic sphere (company owners, directors, managers and workers, clerks etc) and the broader social sphere (men and women, black and whites, ethnic majorities and minorities and so on) are based on structures that institutionalise an unequal distribution of power in all its forms and the corresponding cultures and ideologies -- what we called above the 'dominant social paradigm'. In today's society, the main structures which institutionalise the unequal distribution of power are the market economy and representative democracy, although other structures which institutionalise the unequal distribution of power between sexes, races, ethnicities etc cannot just be 'reduced' to these two main structures. So, the replacement of these structures by institutions securing the equal distribution of political, economic and social power within an inclusive democracy is the necessary condition (though not the sufficient one) for the creation of a new culture that would eliminate the

unequal distribution of power between all human beings, irrespective of sex, race, ethnicity etc. Therefore, the attempt by feminists and other supporters of the politics of difference and identity to change culture and values first, as a way of changing some of the existing power structures, (rather than being engaged in a fight to replace all the structures which reproduce the unequal distribution of power and, within this fight, create the values that would support the new structures) is doomed to marginalisation and failure, with (at most) some reforms being achieved on the way.

The second point, which follows from this analysis, is that the unifying element which may unite members of the subordinate social groups around a liberatory project like the ID project is their exclusion from various forms of power —an exclusion which is founded on the unequal distribution of power that characterises today's institutions and the corresponding values. At the same time, the differentiating element which differentiates members of the various social groups is not just the attitude of their members towards the established system, as Castoriadis argues, but also the very basis of their subordination, i.e. whether their subordinate position is founded on the unequal distribution of political, economic, or social power in general. In this problematique, given the broad perspective of the project for an inclusive democracy, a new movement aiming at an inclusive democracy should appeal to almost all sections of society, apart of course from the dominant social groups, i.e. the ruling elites and the overclass.

Thus the economic democracy component of the project should primarily appeal to the main victims of the internationalised market economy, i.e. the underclass and the marginalised (the unemployed, blue collar workers, low-waged white collar workers, part-timers, occasional workers, farmers who are phased out because of the expansion of agribusiness), as well as the prospective members of the professional middle classes, the students, who also see their dreams for job security disappearing fast in the 'flexible' labour markets being built. It should also appeal to a significant part of the new middle class which, unable to join the 'overclass', lives under conditions of constant insecurity.

The political component of the ID project should appeal to all those who are presently involved in local, single-issue movements for the lack of anything better. As the theoreticians of social liberalism recognise, although confidence in professional politicians and government institutions is in drastic decline, the decay of parliamentary politics is not the same as depoliticisation. This is obvious by the parallel growth of new social movements, NGOs, citizens' initiatives etc. As Giddens, referring to an American study, points out the 'small group movement' (i.e. small numbers of people meeting regularly to promote their common interest) is thriving with 40 percent of the population —some 75 million Americans— belonging to at least one small group, while in the UK self-help and environmental groups have in recent years expanded rapidly.^[70] Although the expansion of the 'civil society' celebrated by social liberals is concentrated in the new middle class, still, this is an indication of a thirst for a genuine democracy in which everybody counts in the decision-taking process. Given that the scope for citizen participation is presently restricted to single issues, it is not surprising that it is single issue movements and organisations which flourish. In other words, one may argue that the expansion of the small group movement indicates, in fact, a move from pseudo-democracy at the national level--in which the system of representation nullifies collective participation-- to pseudo-democracy at the local level--in which important political and economic decisions are still left to the political and economic elites but citizen bodies in the 'active' civil society claim a right to take decisions on side issues or local issues, in a kind of 'sub-politics'.

Finally, the ‘democracy at the social realm’, as well as the ecological components of the project should appeal to all those oppressed by the patriarchal and other hierarchical structures in today’s society and those concerned about the effects of concentration of power on the environment.^[71]

So, to sum it up, an inclusive democracy should appeal to the following social groups who could potentially be the basis of a new ‘liberatory subject’ for systemic change:

- the victims of the market economy system in its present internationalised form, i.e. the unemployed, low-waged, farmers under extinction, occasionally employed etc;
- those citizens, particularly in what we defined above as the ‘middle groups’, who are alienated by the present statecraft which passes as “politics” and already claim a right of self-determination through the various local community groups;
- workers, clerks etc who are exploited and alienated by the hierarchical structures at the workplace;
- women who are alienated by the hierarchical structures both at home and the workplace and yearn for a democratised family based on equality, mutual respect, autonomy, sharing of decision-making and responsibilities, emotional and sexual equality
- ethnic or racial minorities who are alienated by a discriminatory ‘statist’ democracy which divides the population into first and second class citizens
- all those concerned about the destruction of the environment and the accelerating deterioration in the quality of life who are presently organised in reformist ecological movements, marginalised eco-communes etc

There is no doubt that several of these groups may see at the moment their goals as conflicting with those of other groups (middle groups vis-à-vis the groups of the victims of the internationalised market economy and so on). So, the problem in emancipatory politics today is how all the social groups which potentially form the basis of a new liberatory subject would be united by a common worldview, a common paradigm, which sees the ultimate cause of the present multidimensional crisis in the present structures, which secure the concentration of power at all levels, as well as the corresponding value systems. The ID project does offer such a paradigm consisting of an analysis of the present situation (which sees the ultimate cause of the present multidimensional crisis in the present structures which secure the unequal distribution of power) and the consequent ends and corresponding means. The fight to build a movement inspired by this paradigm, which to be successful has to become an international movement, is urgent as well as imperative, so that the various social groups which form the new liberatory subject could function as the catalyst for a new society that would reintegrate society with polity and the economy, humans and Nature.

* This article is based on Takis Fotopoulos’ article "[Class Divisions Today: The Inclusive Democracy approach](#)" published in *Democracy & Nature*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (July 2000).

^ Pantelis Arapoglou, Takis Fotopoulos, Panayotis Koumentakis, Nikos Panagos, John Sargis.

- [1] See Takis Fotopoulos, *Towards An Inclusive Democracy* (London: Cassell 1997), ch. 8.
- [2] See e.g. Jan Pakulski and Malcolm Waters, *The Death of Class* (London: Sage, 1996).
- [3] Anti-systemic social divisions are defined as those social divisions which explicitly or implicitly challenge the legitimacy of a hierarchical system that creates and reproduces the unequal distribution of power which is the ultimate cause of such divisions.
- [4] Jan Pakulski and Malcolm Waters, *The Death of Class*, p. 5.
- [5] The market economy is defined as the self-regulating system in which the fundamental economic problems --*what, how, and for whom* to produce-- are solved "automatically", through the price mechanism, rather than through conscious social decisions (see Takis Fotopoulos, *Towards An Inclusive Democracy*, pp. 4-8).
- [6] The dominant social paradigm is defined as the system of beliefs, ideas and the corresponding values, which is associated with the political, economic and social institutions (see for further analysis of the dominant social paradigm in relation to culture, T. Fotopoulos, "[Mass media, culture and democracy](#)", *Democracy & Nature*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (March 1999), pp. 33-64.
- [7] Takis Fotopoulos, *Towards An Inclusive Democracy* (London: Cassell 1997), chs. 5, 6 & 8.
- [8] E. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), pp. 8-9.
- [9] N. Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1974), p. 14.
- [10] G. Arrighi, T.K. Hopkins & I. Wallerstein, *Antisystemic movements* (London: Verso, 1989), p. 23.
- [11] Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995), p. 76.
- [12] Anne Phillips, *Which Equalities Matter?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), p. 47.
- [13] See for the evolution of classes in modernity, T. Fotopoulos, "[Class Divisions Today: The ID approach](#)", *Democracy & Nature*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (July 2000), pp. 211-252.
- [14] This is manifested for instance by the Alford index of party-class voting which was on the average almost halved between the 1960's and the 1980's in five advanced capitalist countries (USA, UK, France, Germany, Sweden), Jan Pakulski and Malcolm Waters, *The Death of Class*, p. 134.
- [15] Jan Pakulski and Malcolm Waters, *The Death of Class*, pp. 77-78.
- [16] See, for instance, about the myth of "people's capitalism", Takis Fotopoulos, *Towards An Inclusive Democracy*, p. 36.
- [17] See Takis Fotopoulos, *Towards An Inclusive Democracy*, ch. 2.
- [18] Jan Pakulski and Malcolm Waters, *The Death of Class*, p. 121-2.
- [19] Jan Pakulski and Malcolm Waters, *The Death of Class*, p. 75.
- [20] See Takis Fotopoulos, *Towards An Inclusive Democracy*, pp. 67-73.
- [21] D. Bell, *The Coming of the Post-Industrial Society* (New York: Basic/Harper, 1976), p. 361.
- [22] Jan Pakulski and Malcolm Waters, *The Death of Class*, p. 37.
- [23] See for instance the study by John H Goldthorpe, *Social Mobility & Class structure in Modern Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980).
- [24] See for example the results of the General Household Survey 1993, *The Times* (29/4/1993).
- [25] P. Bourdieu, "Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction" in J. Karabel and A. Halsey (eds) *Power and Ideology in Education* (Oxford: OUP, 1977), pp. 487-510.
- [26] Jan Pakulski and Malcolm Waters, *The Death of Class*, p. 109.
- [27] Jan Pakulski and Malcolm Waters, *The Death of Class*, p. 4.
- [28] A typical example is Ariel Salleh's ecofeminist model ("The Meta-Industrial Class and Why We Need it", *Democracy & Nature*, vol. 6 no. 1 (March 2000), pp. 27-36) which attempts to integrate class, gender, race and species domination not through an analysis of the power structures involved but through an analysis of the Eurocentric and industrial values, cognitive styles and so on. No wonder that in the former case the analysis leads to the need for a new liberatory project, whereas in the latter it inevitably leads to reformist proposals like the ones suggested by Vandana Shiva, another ecofeminist, on globalisation ["The round to the citizens", *The Guardian* (8/12/1999)].
- [29] Anne Phillips, *Which Equalities Matter?*, pp.13-18.
- [30] We follow here the Castoriadian definition according to which praxis is that doing that "intends the development of autonomy as its end and, for this end, uses autonomy as its means". C.

Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997), p. 75.

- [31] See Takis Fotopoulos, *Towards An Inclusive Democracy: the crisis of the growth economy and the need for a new liberatory project* (London: Cassell, 1997), pp.8-14.
- [32] We may define power, following Castoriadis [*Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy* (Oxford: OUP, 1991), p. 149] as the capacity for a personal or impersonal instance to bring someone to do (or abstain from doing) that which, left to him/herself, s/he would not necessarily have done (or would possibly have done).
- [33] C. Mills, *The Power Elite* (Oxford: OUP, 1956).
- [34] See Takis Fotopoulos, *Towards An Inclusive Democracy*, pp. 185-94.
- [35] See Takis Fotopoulos, *Towards An Inclusive Democracy*, pp. 340-45.
- [36] See for this, T. Fotopoulos, "Mass media, culture and democracy".
- [37] See Takis Fotopoulos, *Towards An Inclusive Democracy*, pp. 248-55.
- [38] As regards hierarchical relations in production in particular, see S. Marglin, "The origin and functions of hierarchy in capitalist production," *Union of Radical Political Economics Review* (Summer 1974).
- [39] See for this important distinction between authority and power A. Carter, *Authority and Democracy* (London: Routledge, 1979), ch. 2.
- [40] See R.P. Wolf, *In Defense of Anarchism* (Harper, 1970), ch. 1.
- [41] As regards the Weberian argument [W.C. Runciman, *Max Weber, Selections in Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978)] that the power to control decision-taking in today's social organisations is grounded in positions/roles and not on persons and that therefore in a rational society all members of a totality potentially have the power to occupy such positions. One could counter argue that , even if this was true, given the informal mechanisms of reproduction of the dominant minority's privileges, the issue is not WHO occupies these positions and whether they are open to everybody but the very existence of such positions/roles which express an unequal distribution of power. In other words, it is the hierarchical organisation of social relations which, in combination with a division of labour that does not allow rotation of functions and tasks, leads to the concentration of power.
- [42] See for a definition of economic democracy, Takis Fotopoulos, *Towards An Inclusive Democracy*, pp. 209-11 & 237-70.
- [43] See e.g. R. Edwards, *The Transformation of the Workplace in the 20th Century* (London: Heinemann, 1979) and S. Marglin 'The origin and functions of hierarchy in capitalist production.'
- [44] See eg. D. Bell, *The Coming of post-industrial society* (London: Heinemann, 1974); J. Gerschuny, *After Industrial Society* (London: Macmillan, 1978); F. Blackaby, *De-industrialisation* (London: Heinemann, 1979); F. Froebel et. al., *The New International Division of Labour* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); S. Antonopoulou, "The process of globalisation and class transformation in the West," *Democracy & Nature*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (March 2000) pp. 37-54.
- [45] See Takis Fotopoulos, *Towards An Inclusive Democracy*, p. 68.
- [46] Marcuse gives a similar meaning to the abolition of division of labour in a communist society, H. Marcuse, *Soviet Marxism* (London: Routledge, 1958), p. 183.
- [47] See Takis Fotopoulos, *Towards An Inclusive Democracy*, pp.196-99, 237-8.
- [48] See C. Castoriadis, *Political and social writings*, pp. 271-81.
- [49] See A. Whitt, "Three competing models of political power", *American Sociological Review* (Feb. 1979) and, also, H. Erlich, *Re-inventing Anarchy* (London: Routledge, 1979).
- [50] See for a review of the Marxist views on the state, Bob Jessop, "Recent Theories of the capitalist state," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* Vol. 1, Issue 4 (1977), pp. 353-73.
- [51] See C. Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, particularly part I.
- [52] See e.g. A. Cutler et. al., *Marx's Capital and Capitalism Today* (London: Routledge 1978), Vol 1, part III.
- [53] For the move from social democracy to social liberalism see Takis Fotopoulos, *Towards An Inclusive Democracy*, pp. 85-91.
- [54] Anthony Giddens, *The Third Way* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1998), pp 103-104.
- [55] Anthony Giddens, *The Third Way*, pp. 43-44.
- [56] Anthony Giddens, *The Third Way*, p. 46 & 122.

- [57] Anthony Giddens, *The Third Way*, p. 65.
- [58] Anthony Giddens, *The Third Way*, pp. 99-100.
- [59] Takis Fotopoulos, *Towards An Inclusive Democracy*, pp. 4-7.
- [60] See e.g. Erik Olin Wright, *Classes* (London: Verso, 1985/1997).
- [61] See for an example by a Castoriadian, D. Ames Curtis, "[On the Bookchin/Biehl resignations and the creation of a new liberatory project](#)", *Democracy & Nature*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (March 1999), pp. 163-74.
- [62] Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism*, p. 259.
- [63] Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism*, p. 262.
- [64] Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism*, p. 290.
- [65] See Takis Fotopoulos, *Towards An Inclusive Democracy*, chs. 5-6.
- [66] Murray Bookchin, *Post-scarcity anarchism* (London: Wildwood House, 1974), p. 191.
- [67] C. Castoriadis' introductory interview in *The Castoriadis Reader*, edited by David Ames Curtis (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), pp. 26-27.
- [68] C. Castoriadis' introductory interview in *The Castoriadis Reader*, p. 27.
- [69] See T. Fotopoulos, "[The limitations of Life-style strategies: The Ecovillage "Movement" is NOT the way towards a new democratic society](#)", *Democracy & Nature*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (July 2000).
- [70] Anthony Giddens, *The Third Way*, pp. 80-81.
- [71] See Takis Fotopoulos, *Towards An Inclusive Democracy*, chs. 5-7; see also Murray Bookchin, "The Ghost of Anarcho-Syndicalism", *Anarchist Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring 1993).