

CHAPTER 7: THE THEORY OF AUTONOMY

Never before in the history of humanity has the pace of social change been so rapid. In one year today, our species consumes more of the planet's non-renewable resources than we did in any five centuries of antiquity, and in that same year today, over 14 million children under the age of 5 die from easily preventable causes, more than twice the number of Jews killed in the Holocaust.¹ Under such dire conditions, some of the principal undertakings of social theory should be to understand the character of society, to consider the values it should embody and to discuss alternative directions we might take. The character of everyday life today in the advanced capitalist societies militates against such "qualitative thinking." Overwhelmed with the information explosion and the demands of homes, automobiles, and consumer gadgets, many individuals have ceased to think at all, at least in the sense of "negative thinking" that goes beyond the given reality.

Assuring us that we have never had it better, that we have arrived at the "end of history," the system's intellectual representatives seek to stifle "political correctness," as they refer to any form of critical and transcendental thinking. Lumping progressive social criticism with exaggerations about small groups' actions, they seek to portray white males as a beleaguered minority in danger of losing their rights. Championing the cause of these "victims," neo-conservatives have begun abolishing affirmative action and attacking the rights of minorities and women as they take control of Congress, an ominous step on the road toward a renewal of conservative hegemony not achieved since McCarthyism.

Largely denied access to public discourse, critical social theorists can scarcely agree on the character of contemporary society. As Fred Block summarized this confusion:

This is a strange period in the history of the United States because people lack a shared understanding of the kind of society in which they live. For generations, the United States was understood as an industrial society, but that definition of reality is no longer compelling. Yet no convincing alternative has emerged in its absence.²

Block limited his remarks to the U.S., but his insight can be applied throughout the world system. Do we live in a postindustrial society, late capitalism, information society, a service society, technetronic society, multinational capitalism, society of the spectacle, consumer society, one-dimensional society, postmodern society, state monopoly capitalism, imperialism, the world system, or consumer society? Even this list is far from complete, and yet, it is continually expanding. Joachim Hirsch adds "post-Fordist" and Alain Touraine prefers "programmed society."

Two problems come immediately to mind. First, anyone approaching social analysis -- to say nothing about those who simply wish a bit of intellectual insight -- would naturally wonder why so many different descriptions are needed to name contemporary reality. Theory is supposed to aid us, yet the proliferation of terms masks rather than illuminates reality's essential features. Secondly, adopting one or another of the above descriptions is too often a sign of allegiance to the theorist who developed the term (and simultaneously a means of differing with others). When I use the term "postmodern," for example, many people automatically assume I agree with postmodernists' disbelief in any "grand narrative."³ Clearly I disagree with that view, yet I find the term "postmodern" useful. Like Fredric Jameson, I posit a reading of it that understands that:

...postmodernism is not the cultural dominant of a wholly new social order (the rumor about which, under the name of 'postindustrial society,' ran through the media

a few years ago), but only the reflex and concomitant of yet another systemic modification of capitalism itself.⁴

To avoid the difficulty of becoming identified with any one particular school of thought, I use several descriptions of society. When discussing the architecture of civil society, I often use postmodernist terminology since that vocabulary is most appropriate. If I am discussing global economic relationships, I employ world systems theory, and in relation to culture, I employ the terminology of critical theory. The scholastic mind seeking thinly sliced certainty will no doubt react negatively to the simultaneous use of a variety of specialized vocabularies, yet I consider each of these traditions significant resources.

To this point, this book has been concerned with actions of social movements, but in this chapter, I consider theories about them and their social context. There are several levels of analysis here. I begin by examining some of the fundamental features of contemporary society. Autonomous movements are collective responses to rapid social transformation, and I seek to uncover the contours of these changes. I believe that on the basis of the analysis of social movements in the first six chapters, a great deal about society can be learned. My analysis of the contradictions that help produce social movements articulates three levels:

1. Within production, automation coupled with capitalist social relations dictates increasing unemployment and marginalization for a large fraction (perhaps) one-third of the population of advanced capitalist societies (as well as untold millions at the periphery of the world system).

2. The system's increasing need for arenas of profitable activity spurs colonization of the life-world, destroying autonomous domains previously governed by symbolic reason -- particularly in relation to women, youth and senior citizens -- and uniformly subjecting these dimensions of everyday life to instrumentalized rationality that stimulates movements for decolonization of these domains.

3. The system's disregard for "externalities" coupled with the insatiable structural imperative of increasing profitability leads to the destruction of natural habitat and the unreasonable production of infrastructure like giant nuclear power plants, megabridges and tunnels that are part of socially unnecessary and environmentally destructive highway systems.

After considering these objective structural imperatives of the existing system, I use the concrete standpoint of autonomous movements to evaluate current theories of social movements, particularly identity politics and new social movement theory. Unlike most analysts, I neither embrace nor reject identity politics but see them as contradictory formations. While I find potential universality contained within particular forms of identity politics (like feminism), I also understand constraints upon such universality and ways they can create new lacunae. Too often, social theorists develop categories of analysis that they project as universally valid. One of the functions of social movements play is to oblige theorists to rethink these categories. In the case of autonomous movements, they pose the need to reconceptualize traditional notions derived from western philosophy, especially the individualistic conception of autonomy and the relation of theory and practice. I discuss these issues in the course of a detailed textual examination of the feminist theory of Seyla Benhabib. She insists that the often invisible domain of everyday life from be analyzed from within the same framework used to delineate standards of political justice. In so doing, however, she fails to consider the problems attached to extending the power of the existing control

center. The inadequacy of her understanding of autonomy and her distance from the practical action of autonomous movements are additional constraints on the efficacy and coherence of her theoretical project. As a result, her feminism (like the workerism of Antonio Negri) fails to realize a universal critique of the existing system.

It is my contention that the deep structures of social movements revealed in an empirical analysis of the participatory patterns and aspirations of (tens of) thousands of people (such as I seek to provide in this book) define emergent forms of social relations and new values that future generations will inherit and implement. As such, social movements are not only vitally important for expanding democracy and liberty; they are also key to understanding society. They are a lens clarifying our vision and helping remove distorted images we carry from previous epochs. They attune us to new dynamics and inject fresh insight into tired analysis.⁵ Very often, social movements transform "objective facts" or illuminate new meaning for them. What surprised every Italian in the 1970s, for example, was how fluidly Southerners and Northerners came together in the movement, a unity that transcended traditional north-south antagonisms. The dialectical relationship of theory and practice, of human factors and social facts, is vital to understanding social movements. Seldom in the world of theories of social movements, a world with hundreds (perhaps a few thousand) researchers employed full-time, does the idea of changing society get discussed. For most social researchers, social movements are not something they are part of, but merely an object of study. Some of their theories immobilize us, others make us less attuned to dimensions of our lives we know to be significant. Rarely do they help liberate us from unconscious structures shaping our thinking. Social movements bring these hidden structures to consciousness, and when successful, they quickly make longstanding categories of domination (like slavery, segregation, anti-Semitism) into anachronisms. Even when sporadic episodes define the life of a movement, they can reveal essential issues for people left out of decision-making by the control center.

Late Capitalism's Postmodern Features

Despite the apparent disagreement embedded in the above list of more than a dozen terms used as analytical tools to dissect contemporary society, broad agreement does exist that current reality should be demarcated from the epoch of factory-based industrial capitalism. Production itself has been transformed by automation and global communications and transportation. Henry Ford's assembly lines have been superseded by new techniques of production (robotics, quality circles, just-in-time production, CAD/CAM and computer integrated manufacturing), a transformation of production that led to the term "post-Fordist" as a description of such societies. Productivity gains have been astounding. To name just one example, in the seven years from 1970-1977, the output of German computer and office equipment manufacturing rose 48.9% while the workforce declined by 27.5%.⁶

The dispersal of production, sometimes called the "diffuse factory," meant that while the number of production sites has grown, their size shrank dramatically. Contemporary craft-specialty factories typically employ 100 to 200 workers.⁷ In the city of Industry (part of greater Los Angeles), the average number of workers in fabricated metal product plants is 113. In Germany, the automobile industry has undergone a transition from assembly lines to "flexible specialization" involving small component manufacturers and suppliers operating on a "just-in-time" basis. The proportion of car production in plants owned by the major car corporations has fallen from as high

as 80 percent in the 1970s to less than half that today.⁸

Increasingly, production of information is central to the post-Fordist economy (education, advertising, computer programmers, accounting and financial data, sales, technical knowledge, etc.). The preponderant importance of the service sector means that previously marginalized groups become central to the functioning of society while previously integrated groups become dispersed and surpassed. Within the wealthy countries, as Sharon Zukin observed:

Those places that remain part of a production economy, where men and women produce a physical product for a living, are losers. To the extent they do survive in a service economy, they lack income and prestige, and owe their souls to bankers and politicians. By contrast those places that thrive are connected to real estate development, financial exchanges, and entertainment -- the business of moving money and people where consumer pleasures hide the reins of concentrated economic control.⁹

Based on "deregulation" and "flexible accumulation," the new mechanisms of social control involve the increasing fragmentation of production and deconcentration of the working class, the very force which, for more than a century, was expected by conservatives and liberals alike to be the basis of revolutionary change. Spatial deconcentration in the post-Fordist city is reflected in its diffuse character, its destruction of neighborhoods and community ties. Unlike the centrifugal forces driving the industrial city outward from a central business district through concentric zones defined by economic class, the post-Fordist city has multiple nuclei.¹⁰ Dynamics like the global relocation of production, the transformation of cities through gentrification and migration, the millions of homeless people in urban areas, and increasing automation signal the types of rapid changes that define postmodern capitalism.

The performance principle of factory-based capitalism ("the obligation to work") has been transformed into the post-Fordist struggle for the "right to work." To understand this dimension of post-Fordist reality, one need only realize that in the 1950s, the FRG had virtually eliminated unemployment. Only 271,000 people were counted as jobless in 1960.¹¹ During the 1960s, the "economic miracle" meant unprecedented affluence and political stability (referred to as *Modell Deutschland*). Unemployment never rose above 2%, and GDP which had grown by an average of 8% in the 1950s, expanded by an average of 5%.¹² In 1970, the unemployment rate was 0.7%; in 1974, it was 2.6%; in 1975, 4.8%; GDP decreased to an average of 1.7% from 1970-1975, a first sign of the end of the long wave of post-war expansion. In the 1980s, although GDP per capita had surpassed that of the U.S., unemployment remained over 10%, and it has not decreased to previous levels. In 1994, the German government counted more than four million unemployed, a record number for the post-World War 2 epoch (albeit a number that understates the real number of unemployed by as many as an additional 2.5 million people).¹³ In 1992, conservative estimates placed the number of unemployed workers in the European Community at 18 million.¹⁴ Some guessed the number at more than double that figure.¹⁵

The situation only worsens as new technology makes it possible to produce more output with less labor. As German corporations cut back tens of thousands of jobs in the steel industry in the 1990s during a wave of European Community economic restructuring designed to deal with overproduction, steel workers responded with warning strikes and protests. On February 17, 1993,

in one of their most militant actions in decades, 30,000 steel workers and miners blocked autobahns in the Ruhr to protest job cuts.¹⁶ The next month, nearly 100,000 workers turned out for a union demonstration in Bonn. In order to avoid massive layoffs, Volkswagen unilaterally reduced the work-week to four days (28.8 hours), and in the steel industry, strikes compelled management to comply with an agreed reduction in the work-week. BMW and Hewlett-Packard shortened their workers' week to 31 hours while continuing to pay them for 37.¹⁷ German workers already enjoy one of the shortest work weeks (an average of 37.5 hours/week) of all industrialized countries. Excluding vacations and holidays, German workers labored a total of 1667 hours/year in 1992, far below the average in the U.S. (1912 hours) or Japan (2080) and significantly less than in Italy (1788).¹⁸ Unionized German industrial workers were entitled to 40 paid vacation days annually (compared with a U.S. average of 23 and Japanese of 25).¹⁹

While the service sector was growing most rapidly, manufacturing jobs continue to be an especially important component of Germany's economy (the world's leading net exporter). In the 1970s, Germany and Italy had the lowest percentage of employment in the service sector among all industrialized countries,²⁰ and well into the 1990s, Germany had a higher percentage of workers employed in manufacturing than other industrialized countries -- nearly double (31%) that of the U.S. (16%) in 1993.²¹ As the chart below details, Germany's occupational structure, while becoming more oriented to the service sector, retained a significant sector of blue-collar workers:

OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE OF WEST GERMANY (in %)

Occupational Group	1950	1961	1970	1980	1988
Self-employed	29.2	19.5	17.6	12.0	11.1
Civil Servants	4.0	7.1	5.5	8.4	8.7
Employees	16.0	22.4	29.5	37.2	42.1
Blue-collar workers	50.8	51.0	47.4	42.4	38.1

Source: Thomas Scharf, *The German Greens: Challenging the Consensus* (Berg Publishers, 1994) p. 45; *Datenreport* 1989, p. 85.

A higher percentage of German workers than Italians were engaged in manufacturing, yet participation in autonomous movements by factory workers was rare in Germany. Part of the reason is undoubtedly to be found in the "one plant-one union" structure of Germany, and the system of codetermination (*Mitbestimmung*) that gives trade unions in Germany considerably more power than their Italian counterparts.²² Those workers who were active in Italy (and in the early 1970s in Germany) were semi-skilled factory workers, not their elders with secure skilled jobs and craft unions. They were women who mobilized both on the job and, as the self-reduction movement and the campaigns in both countries to legalize abortion showed, throughout the society.

Within post-Fordist Germany, prosperity for two-thirds of the society exists at the expense of the bottom one-third, a new split called "selective corporatism" by Joachim Hirsch.²³ Trade unions, political parties, employers' organizations and the government work together to regulate economic integration and political stability for this majority.²⁴ The interests of the integrated top two-thirds of the society are thereby mediated within the established structures while those marginalized from these benefits are increasingly isolated.²⁵ New social conditions like homelessness, the growing sector of part-time low-paying jobs, declining real wages, and the

dismantling of the welfare state are all indications of this transition. Post-Fordist conditions of production meant that while European corporations were expanding their international operations, young people faced a shrunken structure of opportunities in their own countries, unable to find either a job or a place to live. As Elmar Altvater put it: "On the one side, the abundance of capital and its export predominate, and on the other side, there was an industrial reserve army in the millions."²⁶ The world system's subservience to the profit needs of transnational corporations has produced a shift of factory production to areas of the globe where labor-power could be more cheaply purchased and where taxes and government regulations are minimal.²⁷

In post-Fordist societies, young people, women and minorities increasingly function as economic shock absorbers smoothing out the system's inability to generate sufficient numbers of jobs. Tens of millions of people are relegated to the periphery of consumer society: denied the right to full-time, decently paying jobs and housing fit for human beings. (Of course, far worse are the living conditions of those confined to the margins of survival in the rural areas of the underdeveloped countries.) The entry of young people into the labor force (and housing market) is delayed long past the point at which they are ready to support themselves (and move away from their parents). In 1993, 1 in 5 of all 16-24 year-olds in the European Community were unemployed, nearly double the rate for the population as a whole.²⁸ Although young people are intelligent enough and physically capable of taking responsibility for themselves, the existing system simply is incapable of providing enough jobs and apartments for them (to say nothing of houses big enough for groups to live in). This contradiction is a continuing source of massive dissatisfaction among European youth. In 1994, the deputy director of the French Institute for International Relations put it in a nutshell: "Seen from Europe, unemployment is the biggest security problem facing the Western world today...if we don't find answers to that problem, our entire system will collapse on itself."²⁹

Unemployment is not a unique cause of youth movements, since in Britain and France, countries where youth have not been nearly as active as in Germany or Italy in the time frame studied here, estimates of youth unemployment for most of the 1980s were over 20% (over 30% in 1986 in France), compared with only about 10% in Germany.³⁰ On the other hand, Italy's "two societies" and Germany's "two cultures," phrases used to describe youth milieus in the 1970s, evidently had an economic basis, and different dynamics resulted from the way in which youth are marginalized. Key institutions of post-Fordist society are the vastly expanded universities. Fewer than one in three youths go to college in Germany, and fewer than one in four in Italy (compared to three in five in the U.S.). In Italy, college students in the 1970s were generally compelled to live at home and work full-time, leaving them little time to attend their already overcrowded classes. In Germany, students generally attended courses regularly, lived away from their parents, and had independent means of support (either from their parents or the government). This difference meant that while both Italy and Germany had a generation gap, the phrase "two societies" was used to describe the phenomenon in Italy (reflecting the youth culture's greater impoverishment and distance from the possibility of participation in consumerist lifestyles) while the term "two cultures" expressed the same divide in Germany. To enforce discipline the Italian movement had to be heavily repressed, while in Germany, students and youth remained a subcultural part of consumer society. In both societies, the emergence of autonomous movements coincided with the post-World War 2, baby-boom bulge in the youth age cohort, a bulge that will become slimmer as time goes

on.³¹

To be sure, contradictory forms of youthful reaction to marginalization are possible, depending upon the constellation of a variety of social conditions. In the 1990s, a revival of racist and anti-immigrant sentiment, not new forms of international solidarity, took place among some sectors of the youth population in both Italy and Germany. Should we therefore regard youth as a "new kind of lumpenproletariat"³² whose political orientation depends upon cultural values and opportunist leaders? In the formerly fascist societies, the governments simply did not have the longstanding loyalty of the population. Moreover, since remnants of the feudal aristocracy ruled Germany and Italy well into the 20th century, regional variations in culture were not homogenized as thoroughly as in other countries where the capitalist market had decades to penetrate and transform outlying areas. These regional identities might be part of the sources for autonomous movements.

At the same time as their economic future seems bleak, youth's values are increasingly informed by postmodern culture. The weakening of the Protestant ethic, countercultural need for group living, and concerns for international justice, environmental harmony, and democratic participation appear to be ascendent new values. As Klaus von Dohnanyi observed:

During the 1960s and 1970s, in particular, youth in the Federal Republic, as in most industrial societies, developed a measure of independence, self-assurance, and joy of living that was unknown before. A changing system of values placed love, friendship, and comradeship in the foreground. Work and making a living became secondary. Authority and achievement were questioned by critical self-awareness and the drive for the quality of life.³³

If autonomous movements are any indication, youth will remain a continuing source of ethical opposition and enlightened action.³⁴ As I discuss below, such values are contradicted by the structures of consumer society.

Colonization of Everyday Life

Periods of economic decline, like that currently experienced by the industrial workers in the advanced capitalist societies, are not favorable for generating progressive movements. Italian and German autonomous movements illustrate how, under post-Fordist conditions, the locus and content of social movements assume new forms. While the traditional working class's role in social conflict has been relatively quiescent and their union organizations have been integrated into the functioning of the corporate-state structures, women and youth have emerged as key participants in contemporary movements in these two countries. Explaining the causes of this empirical observation involve two levels of analysis besides their economic and political marginalization: the penetration of the commodity form into previously private domains (referred to as the "colonization of the life-world"³⁵) and the systematic destruction of the conditions of life.³⁶ The accelerating destruction of Nature, intensifying degradation of minority rights, attacks of women's autonomy and gay rights, and marginalization of youth have generated opposition movements rooted in dimensions of social relations outside the site of production. Habermas described these movements in new terms:

In the last ten to twenty years, conflicts have developed in advanced Western

societies that, in many respects, deviate from the welfare-state pattern of institutionalized conflict over distribution. These new conflicts no longer arise in areas of material reproduction; they are no longer channeled through parties and organizations; and they can no longer be alleviated by compensations that conform to the system. Rather, the new conflicts arise in areas of cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialization. They are manifested in sub-institutional, extra-parliamentary forms of protest...In short, the new conflicts are not sparked by problems of distribution, but concern the grammar of the forms of life.³⁷

Habermas refers to the new movements as defending the life-world against the system's increasing assaults on the organic foundations of life as in "the destruction of the countryside, by bad residential planning, industrialization and pollution, health impairments due to the side effects of civilization-destruction...military destruction, nuclear power plants, atomic waste, gene manipulation, storage and central utilization of private data."³⁸

As a self-expanding value, capital permeates the private sphere, colonizing everyday life, turning it into an arena of profitable activity. The economy has expanded to include within it many aspects of life previously not part of the system of commodity production. Alberto Melucci explained the new situation:

In comparison with the industrial phase of capitalism, the production characteristic of advanced societies requires that control reach beyond the productive structure into the areas of consumption, services, and social relations. The mechanisms of accumulation are no longer fed by the simple exploitation of the labour force, but rather by the manipulation of complex organizational systems, by control over information and over the processes and institutions of symbol-formation, and by intervention in interpersonal relations.³⁹

The extension of commodity relations into everyday life and the rapid integration of millions of women into the workforce are two sides of the same coin, each of which feed capital's insatiable needs. Declining real wages compelled women to take jobs, and the new mandate that is essentially a double shift (at home and at the work) has effectively given women economic independence and brought them out of the isolation of the family, thereby undermining previous forms of patriarchal control. Increasing opportunities for women lead to financial independence from men, a material basis of feminist autonomy. Simultaneously, old social relations remain in force. Sexism in everyday life, political impotence, male control of medicine and the bodies of women, and patriarchal hierarchies at work all demand a feminist response facilitated by women's increasing economic participation.

The trend today is for increasing government regulation of previously autonomous arenas of life: childrearing practices, family relations, reproduction and divorce, and individual consumption of everything from food to drugs. What Habermas and Offe call the "refeudalization" of society (i.e. the increasing intervention of governments in private life, a dynamic like medieval Europe) dramatically affects young people. Runaways, underage drinking, sexual repression and all kinds of abuse are indications of the breakdown of the social regulatory mechanisms and, at least for some, the concomitant need for families to be managed by the political system. Yet the more government intervenes in private affairs, the more resistance it encounters from those opposed to its paternity.

According to the logic of this cycle, as families break down, autonomous movements will continue to be generated as a means of recreating some form of group and individual control over the conditions of everyday life.

The systematic assault on the family is undeniable. Increasingly two adult incomes are needed to meet the household expenses of a typical family. The effects of work on family life are ruinous. Children grow up without parents while senior citizens are segregated into nursing homes and retirement communities. As segregation by age-group is enforced by all major institutions, teenagers are especially impacted, tracked into peer groups by age and denied full adult status (money and independence) even though they are more than intelligent enough to be treated as adults and physically capable of autonomy. Seniors and children would each benefit from more contact with the other, yet segregation by age proceeds along with the continuing deterioration of family relations. As Harry Braverman summarized: "...the ruined and dispersed U.S. family also forms a major source for the modern working class."⁴⁰

Since the imperative of capital is to grow, pressure on corporations continually to expand profits means that mundane activities revolving around basic needs (food, clothing and shelter) are severed from group contexts, increasingly mechanized and made into arenas for financial gain. The life-world in which humans participate as members of families further breaks down under the pressures (and allure) of consumer society as human relations are increasingly instrumentalized. As the table below summarizes, nearly all traditionally private functions of the family have become public and often part of the system of monetary exchange.

COLONIZATION OF EVERYDAY LIFE		
SOCIETY	TRADITIONAL SOCIETY	CONSUMER
Food	grown at home cooked at home eaten at home	grown by agribusiness cooked by fast food eaten in public
Clothing	made at home	bought in a store
Shelter	built by residents	built by professionals
Health Care	family members	corporate hospital
Education	home	public/private
Employment	home	corporations
Childcare	home	paid daycare
Socialization	parents/family	television/schools/peers
Seniors	at home	retirement communities/nursing homes

With so many functions of the family having been appropriated by profit-making corporations and state programs, little has been left to the family. There are distinct benefits for some, however, particularly in a society where time spent at work leaves precious few hours free. Ironically, fast food is a partial solution to the issue of wages for housework.⁴¹ Yet the costs to the quality of our lives include increasing atomization and alienation. As family life is degraded or becomes intolerable because of cultural incongruities between parents and children, participation in autonomous movements is one way to create new group ties. As discussed in relation to squatters, communal living expands the potential for individual life choices, creates the possibility of new

types of intimate relationships, and new models for child-rearing. As the table below summarizes, the oppositional culture of autonomous movements often negates dominant patterns of the established social system.

OPPOSING VALUES

THE SYSTEM	THE COUNTERCULTURE
Individual Accumulation of Wealth	Shared Wealth
Competition	Cooperation
Patriotism	Humanism
Hierarchy	Equality
Patriarchal monogamy	Open relationships
Careers	Personal growth
Nuclear family/singles	Group houses

Although there is abundant anthropological evidence that humans thrive in groups, our lives are increasingly contained in privatized spaces void of communal bonds and collective endeavors. The contradiction between the need for group affiliation and the reality of atomization is one motivation for participation in social movements. While postmodernism sometimes means a reinvigoration of groups in comparison to the atomization of modernism, the underlying capitalist structure denies the postmodernist impulse its full expression. The need for profit (hence the logic of building single-family homes and condominiums rather than group houses -- particularly for youth without money) is a fetter on the human need for self-constructed collectivity. This dimension of the questioning of the premises of industrial civilization grows out of its already having shattered traditional family structures -- whether tribal, extended or nuclear. Simultaneously, it may have created social strata capable of taking advantage of their autonomy from traditional structures of everyday life.

Without any clear sense of their future, however, many people are unable to find themselves in the flux of rapid change and the postmodern transvaluation of values. If there are those who doubt that civil society needs to be defended and protected from its systematic commodification, they need only contemplate the thousands of people who disfigure their bodies to conform to beauty standards dictated by corporate image-makers: breast implants, penis extensions, hair transplants, liposuction and plastic surgery. The heteronomous determination and standardization of individual self-image has never been so extreme as within the mediated culture of the contemporary world system. With a John Wayne model for masculinity, men react in predictably unfortunate ways in a variety of situations while many women's orientation in the material world is equally skewed by consumerism. Having long ago penetrated pre-teen age-groups, image-makers' influence over school children often exceeds that of parents and family. Increasingly social movements are expressions of group identity in a world being changed more rapidly than ever before in history.

New Social Movements and the Politics of Identity

The above observations might offer some insight into why women, minorities, and youth are the constituencies of radical social movements in post-Fordist societies. While it is extremely problematic to treat social movements as simply conditioned by the form and circulation of capital

and the structure of social relations, my analysis suggests that the autonomous movements discussed in this book were partially conditioned by impersonal economic forces and political dynamics. Postmodernists generally sever analysis of social movements from such categories, regarding notions of structure as vestigial modernist relics. For postmodernists, "society" is a construct; we live in multiple and decentered contexts. Using the language of postmodernists, simulacra (mediated semblances of life) are more important than history in determining our actions. Once understood from this perspective, social movements are no longer vehicles for the transformation of the social order as a whole (since that is simply a phantom) but are "new social movements"⁴² oriented around specific contested sites and questions of identity (like race, gender and age).

Locked in debate, the more that postmodernists and Marxists contest each other's assumptions and ideas, the less likely they are to elicit what could be mutually beneficial insights offered by those they define as their intellectual opponent. At their extremes, both become mechanical responses, not dialectical ones, to rapid change. As the adherents of each position become rigid, prospects for clarification of reality dim. Postmodernism is often written off as an academic fad replete with a jargon of discourse inaccessible to all but a select few, and Marxists are dismissed as dinosaurs. While mechanical Marxists fail to appreciate the radical gap between modernity and postmodernity, crippling their capacity to understand the contemporary world, many postmodernists are unable to link their empirical understanding of the decentered autonomy of local contexts to history, leaving them incapable of articulating a transcendental vision for the future.⁴³

In the current atmosphere of recrimination and contestation for hegemony, it is difficult to criticize the politics of identity while simultaneously retaining a sense of their radical potential. Many Marxists lament the appearance of identity politics. They see it as shattering the promise of proletarian universalism, but they miss the latent universality present in new social movements. Identity construction can be a form of enacting the freedom to determine one's conditions of existence, to create new categories within which to live. While the many dimensions of this dynamic are fragmentary, a totality of such quests can eventually become a radically new concrete universal -- a reworking of the meaning of human being.

Unlike economic categories imposed by production and social relations, these new categories can be autonomously formulated -- or, at a minimum, they are vehicles for the autonomy of groups oppressed by existing structures. The logic of the established system is to enforce particularisms as a means of social control. By bringing control and power to minorities and women, identity politics can be a form of self-defense. As Anthony Appiah expressed it:

And if one is to be Black in a society that is racist then one has to deal constantly with assaults on one's dignity. In this context, insisting on the right to live a dignified life will not be enough. It will not even be enough to require being treated with equal dignity despite being Black, for that will require a concession that being Black counts naturally or to some degree against one's dignity. And so one will end up asking to be respected *as a Black*.⁴⁴

When Republicans assault affirmative action and abortion rights, they condition responses from minorities and women reinforcing their group's freedom from encroachment of outside interests.

No matter how much they respond to intrusive outsiders, each form of identity politics

contains a latent universality. Gender equality is a universal aim, benefitting all of us. The celebration of racial diversity and mutual recognition of our humanity is in all our interests. Unlocking sexual repression and an end to the compulsory channelling of libido into exclusive heterosexuality benefits all. Cleaning up the environment and disarming the world's nation-states is in the interest of all humanity. At their best, autonomous movements bring these latent connections to consciousness and accentuate the universal content of single-issue identity politics. The function of revolutionary theory is not to persuade feminists and nationalists to give up their particularisms but to aid the development from within these streams of a new concrete universalism, one produced by immanent critiques -- not imposed from the outside. As part of the struggle for the reformulation of the concrete universal, members of autonomous movements must be willing to risk being called racist for challenging the exclusivity of black oppression, sexist for challenging women to confront class reality, anti-Semitic for demanding that Jews do not treat themselves as a chosen people.

The present fragmentation of social movements preconditions a universal identity of human beings as a species -- not as nations, genders or races -- an end point that can only be achieved by going through, not ignoring or treating as "secondary," categories of oppression imposed upon us by a system based on heteronomous control (externally inflicted). The road from the abstract universal of "modernist" thought (the positing of a proletarian or other form of universality which corresponded to that of white males) to the future formulation of a concrete multicultural universal necessarily passes through identity politics. Unlike the proletariat, no one identity is the vast majority of society, nor is one by itself able to stop the functioning of the system and reconstruct it. Therefore multiple centers of revolutionary thought and action are historical necessities posing the features of a decentered future society in the making. Identity politics begin the process of unlocking the structures of domination, a process which might eventually result in deconstructing ascriptive identities entirely and reformulating ourselves as autonomous human beings essentially free of externally imposed shackles.

Most analysts of new social movements entirely miss this point. One of the distinguishing characteristics of new social movements, at least as the term is commonly used in academic and research circles, is their specialization, their existence as a fragmentary critique of society, as little more than interest-group politics conducted by non-traditional means. Accordingly, the anti-nuclear power movement, for example, deals exclusively with the issue of nuclear power plants and nuclear waste disposal. Attempts to link that movement with the feminist movement's call for a new technology based not on the domination and destruction of the environment but on a harmonious relationship with Nature are thought to combine mistakenly two different movements.⁴⁵ The Black movement similarly is understood as having little to do with ecology when in fact, in the 1990s in the U.S., it took the lead in green activism.⁴⁶

New social movement theory may be accurate in describing the forms that actions take when observed by outsiders, but it fails to comprehend the sources of protests and the ways in which synchronic movements can form an organic whole.⁴⁷ Most significantly, its compartmentalization of new social movements theoretically obliterates in advance the possibility of transforming society as a whole, thereby insidiously maintaining the status quo. Within the vast domain of the literature on "new social movements" in the U.S., fragmented pressure groups become real, and the universal reality of revolutionary social movements "untrue." As Margit Mayer described social movement research in the U.S.:

Disaggregated and issue-specific movements that refrain from totalizing their demands flourish all over this country, but movements demanding radical societal change have always remained relatively marginal. Such radical or socialist currents were once even more marginalized by their omission in social movement research. Questions pertaining to their development and dynamic hardly appear in recent American social movement research.⁴⁸

In my view, the current fragmentation of social movements is a transitional phenomenon, a response both to the conservative character of these times and to the historic restructuring of global capitalism. The most salient feature of identity politics, the fragmentation of constituency, arose after the popular movement of the 1960s had disintegrated. As the unifying effects of the revolutionary upsurge subsided and the forces set in motion continued along separate paths, the system's logic of compartmentalization and atomization asserted itself within the opposition. The distance from the New Left -- the myriad of organizations and individuals that converged in 1968 to form what I've called a world historical movement -- to identity politics is precisely the difference between the existence of a popular movement challenging the world system and the defeat of that upsurge and dispersal of its many components.

In manifestos like the Port Huron statement, the early New Left spoke of universal needs like increasing democracy but framed its discussions abstractly -- without any real understanding of racism and sexism. Like Soviet Communists, they were incapable of integrating racism and patriarchy into their analysis of society. When SNCC expelled white activists in 1965, they sang the first stanza in the contemporary chorus of identity politics. Passing through the phase of Black Power -- the prototypical formulation of identity politics -- a new concrete universal was formulated at the Black Panther Party's Revolutionary Peoples Constitutional Convention.⁴⁹

To Todd Gitlin, identity politics is an unfortunate consequence of this later phase of the New Left. Like other historians whose roots are in the early phase of the movement, he fails to comprehend this history entirely, in part because he dropped out of the movement when it entered its radical phase. For Gitlin and others, identity politics is a term used to establish a hierarchy of importance that prioritizes new social movements over those defined as universalistic. For Gitlin:

...the proliferation of identity politics leads to a turning inward, a grim and hermetic bravado which takes the ideological form of paranoid, jargon-clotted postmodernist groupthink, cult celebrations of victimization, and stylized marginality."⁵⁰

To be sure, identity politics contains their own internal contradictions: Within every form they take are both a universalistic promise and a particularistic chauvinism (Malcolm X contained both within himself). A failure to comprehend the contradictory character of identity politics unites both their advocates and opponents. Identity politics can keep the movement divided against itself (as Gitlin understands) or point to one structure of domination and overlook another. They can also obscure the existence of a common class enemy -- the wealthiest families, top managers and their corporations and governments. By themselves, identity politics are not sufficient to transform qualitatively problematic political-economic structures. Indeed, not only are they insufficient for the formulation of a revolutionary transcendence of the class-structured multinational corporate world system, they often obscure that very system by seeking to treat as identical actors with very different positions within that system.⁵¹

In an epoch when capital's velocity and mobility are at unprecedented levels, identity politics reflect the fragmentation of the proletariat's universal subjectivity. To the extent that material conditions affect social consciousness, the dispersal of production, the adaptation of capitalist principles to all the major institutions of society, and the commodification of everyday life condition the fragmentation of proletarian subjectivity.⁵² Under post-Fordist conditions, capital's global nature makes the seizure of national political power increasingly superfluous (as the fates of Cuba, Vietnam and Nicaragua indicate). Immanuel Wallerstein has formulated this notion as the transition from the state to civil society as object of transformation. Even within the world of corporations, the demographic reconstruction of the working class calls for a multicultural analysis. The working-class does not consist predominantly of white, European males (since production is increasingly global and everywhere involves women and non-whites). They understand cooperation as global and multicultural, not simply "social" in terms of the immediate community. To the extent they become revolutionary, their international commitment will be to ecology, feminism, racial solidarity and peace, not any nation-state. Seen in this context, identity politics provide the basis for a free society worthy of the name. They are a necessary step in the development of a new universality that recognizes race and gender as significant domains of a broader historical framework. They are necessary to deconstruct structures of domination in everyday life.

Making the case for the potential universality of identity politics does not mean that I project their categories as eternally valid. I have already commented on how racial categories are socially constructed by referring to my experiences in Germany. Recognizing the social dimension of categories of identity is a step in their transformation. Time and again, theorists mistake ideas relevant to specific contexts for universal truths, and recent social movement research is no exception. While movements are increasingly international and even synchronically connected across national borders, analysis of them largely remains within the nationalistic framework of government funding agencies and language-communities. In France, where political action is so state oriented, Alain Touraine insists that social movements be analyzed by their impact on the state.⁵³ In the United States, where fragmented activism possessing immense resources abounds, analysis of social movements has been based on the resource mobilization paradigm.⁵⁴ In Germany, where the government's response to social movements was to label them as "terrorists," Habermas puts forth the view that societies could resolve their crises if their members addressed each other with respect in an ideal free speech situation.⁵⁵ Habermas's analysis is unmistakably German insofar as he seeks to enhance democratic discourse in a society that for most of the twentieth century has marginalized (if not murdered) its radical critics.⁵⁶

Few theorists attempt to pose methods by which we can universally understand social movements and the historical trends that produce them. In my opinion, one of the few thinkers to do so is Habermas's student, Seyla Benhabib. Benhabib engages feminists, postmodernists and modern communitarians in a philosophical discourse encompassing themes of Western thought dating to the ancient Greeks. By responding critically to a wide range of contemporary theorists, she hopes to stimulate ongoing debates and exchanges leading to "reasoned argument as a way of life."⁵⁷ She believes that such dialogues are themselves both the means and the goal of a freer society, and she therefore adapts Habermas's method of immanent critique of disparate thinkers regarding the very issues they are discussing within their subfields. Benhabib begins with Habermas's work in universal pragmatics and develops it in a feminist direction. She represents one of the most

important responses to the changed constellation of civil society after 1968. Her theoretical work is an attempt to ground a notion of autonomy as part of the project of rationally remaking social geography. Essentially, her philosophy represents social democracy as it will appear in the 21st century, as a social democracy of everyday life. Like Habermas, Benhabib seeks to make the existing system live up to high ethical standards. In so doing, she propels insurgent impulses into the established forums for justice. At best, her effort leads in the direction of reforming nation-states and empowering international organizations like the European Community, NATO, the World Court and the UN, not toward the construction of forms of dual power and direct democracy. Will her theory lead toward such desired goals? Or will it only empower vast national and international bureaucracies? No doubt Benhabib's world of reasoned argumentation as the basis for social life should be exalted. But can we demilitarize international relations, clean up the planet and end poverty (to say nothing of stopping racist attacks) without social movements compelling policymakers to do so? An international general strike would certainly provide a major stimulus to dismantle nation-states' militaries, but that long discussed idea does not resonate anywhere in her theory.⁵⁸

Since she is one of the most prominent theorists to use the term "autonomy" and feminism as goals, I pause to here to consider her theory in detail. In the preceding chapter, I showed how the workerist theory of Antonio Negri fails to comprehend patriarchy and the centrality of autonomy to freedom and therefore limits the capacity of autonomous movements to realize their own universal potential and maintain their impetus. My goal in discussing Benhabib is similarly to illustrate how her feminist theory limits discussion of collective autonomy and constrains movements to reformist procedures and goals. By exploring her ideas in depth, I also hope to integrate her insights with those gleaned from my understanding of the practical action of autonomous movements.

From the Invisibility of the Private to its Rationalization: A Reasonable Project?

For Benhabib "ordinary moral conversations" themselves have "implicit structures of speech and action" that, if universally practiced, would lead to resolution of social problems. The main project of her book is to integrate her "interactive universalism" with feminism's insights that patriarchal gender-based power relations permeate virtually all dimensions of our lives. In order to accomplish that, she deals with both modernist and postmodernist notions of the relation between the personal and political. In a devastating critique of postmodernism, Benhabib concludes that it is incompatible with feminism: "Social criticism without some form of philosophy is not possible, and without social criticism the project of a feminist theory which is at once committed to knowledge and to the emancipatory interests of women is inconceivable."⁵⁹

Using her feminism as a background, she simultaneously critiques Hegelian and Kantian notions of justice (pertaining to political affairs) as comprising a domain above that of everyday life. To her, "life in the family no less than life in the modern constitutional state" must be lived according to ethical standards that would emerge from "participatory politics in a democratic polity."⁶⁰ Her optimism regarding the unfinished democratic potential of modern political forms is one of her debts to Habermas. While Benhabib extends his method of immanent critique and derives her model of interactive universalism from Habermas's discourse ethics, she criticizes him for "gender blind" theories that ignore the "difference in the experience of males versus female subjects in all domains of life" as well as for treating power relations in everyday life (in the

intimate sphere) as non-existent.⁶¹ For her, women's liberation is the crowning force of modernism's impetus toward egalitarianism and discursive will formation.⁶² By subjecting the private sphere to public examination and transformation, feminism questions boundaries established by male western philosophers that treat everyday life as fundamentally separate from issues of justice in the state. As a device to articulate this position, Benhabib distinguishes what she calls the "generalized other" (those with whom we interact at the level of government) from the "concrete other" (those with whom we share our everyday lives and intimacy). She is then able to appropriate much recent feminist theory (like the work of Carol Gilligan that insists upon the integration of the voice of the "excluded others" (women and children) into universalist theory).

Here Benhabib's position becomes difficult because her justification of the opening of the intimate sphere is premised on the primacy of casting out particularly odious patriarchal practices (wife beating, child abuse, etc.) that were long hidden and unexamined dimensions of patriarchal order. She acknowledges the twin problems thereby generated: loss of privacy and creation of government bureaucracies overseeing (and disempowering) women. She argues that feminists need to critically appropriate a Habermasian model of public space as a means to avoid the dead-ends of "legalistic liberal reformism" like the program of NOW (National Organization for Women) and a "radical feminism which can scarcely conceal its own political and moral authoritarianism."⁶³ In Benhabib's mind:

All struggles against oppression in the modern world begin by redefining what had previously been considered "private"...In this respect, the women's movement, the peace movement, the ecology movement, and new ethnic identity movements follow a similar logic.⁶⁴

In the dialectic of individual and system, however, Benhabib loses sight of intermediate social constellations. She is therefore subject to the accusation that she would simply like to construct a more rational version of the existing system -- particularly as related to questions of justice.

In her zest to radically restructure the patriarchal capitalist system, she underestimates the centralizing impetus of that behemoth. Rather than postulating a model of public space as decentralized and controlled by participants, she would subject all humans to the secular, liberal democratic norms of discourse and interaction.⁶⁵ Should polygamists be able to create their own autonomous communities? Should lesbians be allowed to have their own private societies? Benhabib would indicate not, at least not without having to publicly justify doing so, a justification she insists cannot be made since some "practices are more just and fair than another."⁶⁶ Isn't an underpinning of collective autonomy the capability for groups to self-construct their own norms? As Habermas articulated the meaning of autonomy: "The citizens are autonomous only if the addressees of the law can also see themselves as its authors."⁶⁷

Autonomy as an organizing principle of collective life does not insist upon the invasive evaluation imposed by Benhabib's monocentric notion of public space. As I mentioned already, in the midst of his tenure as chairperson of the Chicago Black Panther Party, Fred Hampton insisted white power should belong to white people, and Nelson Mandela expressed support for limited autonomy for white homelands for those who insist that is what they need. A similar respect for diversity exists within European autonomous movements at their best. During the planning for demonstrations at Wackersdorf, for example, the Autonomen used consensus (communicative

ethics) to make decisions and encouraged a range of tactics (not simply militant ones) from which individuals could choose depending upon their own consciences and consciousness. Pacifists and others non-violently protested, while elsewhere, more militant groups simultaneously acted according to what they deemed most effective. While these movement groups have positions that negate the modernist engine of uniformity, Benhabib's neo-Kantian ethical imperatives create an appearance of central authority lying in her discourse, despite her insistence of her being part of the shift from legislative to interactive ethics. Like Habermas before her, she is trapped in systematic totality despite her genuine intention to free the self from oppressive situatedness in systemic frameworks including discourse ethics. Benhabib's situated self is not yet free to stand by collectively constructed principles of social organization. The "conscious spontaneity" of the *Autonomen* provides the universalism of a modernist critique of capital while simultaneously preserving decentered and locally-defined milieus discussed by postmodernists. Although the latter, like theorists of identity politics, impose schematic divisions between these various groups, autonomous movements synthesize their memberships into a universally critical movement.

In the final analysis, because Benhabib's reformulation of the philosophical basis for ethical decisions retains a centralized notion of public space, she contributes to the rationalization of the system's control center, not a questioning of the reasonableness of its existence. Like all contemporary advocates of social democracy, she believes in the rationality of her project but fails to deal with the irrational imperatives of the existing structures. As expressions of anti-systemic participatory politics, autonomous social movements seek to live without a control center, no matter how rationalized its operation may be.

The Atomized Individual and the Constraint of Autonomy

In her meticulous appropriation of the categories of western philosophy, Benhabib uncritically adopts the standpoint of the atomized individual. Since her analysis is undertaken looking through the prism of this one-point perspective, she remains a modernist in the sense of postulating a central point to the world rather than conceptualizing it as a polycentric collective construction. To be sure, the self she understands is not the fixed "Archimedean standpoint, situated beyond historical and cultural contingency."⁶⁸ That self, a metaphysical illusion of the Enlightenment, is replaced by a "postmetaphysical" understanding of "finite, embodied and fragile creatures, and not disembodied cogitos or abstract unities of transcendental apperception."⁶⁹ When compared to the appropriation of subjectivity as conceived by western philosophy, she develops a more "adequate, less deluded and less mystified vision of subjectivity." She reformulates the subject while retaining traditional qualities like autonomy, self-reflexivity, the ability to act on principle, and accountability for the consequences of one's actions.⁷⁰

By understanding the "radical situatedness of the subject" she believes feminists can reconstruct a universality corresponding to the impetus of feminism to remake the entire social world, not simply to create isolated post-patriarchal pockets within a patriarchal world system. Her analysis is at its best when she challenges postmodern feminists to rethink their assumption that gendered identity can be attributed to "deeds without the doer." By critically examining varieties of feminism that are premised on the dissolution of subjectivity, on the death of the self as creator of a life-narrative,⁷¹ Benhabib's own vision of a feminism premised on the integrity and autonomy of

both female and male individuals becomes possible to articulate. In the course of intellectually demolishing the notion of deeds without a doer, however, Benhabib continually posits the "I" as the subject, never the "we." Her response to Judith Butler's farewell to the "doer behind the deed" is to reflect on the production of Butler's own book: Benhabib "presupposes that there is a thinking author who has produced this text, who has intentions, purposes and goals in communicating with me; that the task of theoretical reflection begins with the attempt to understand what the author meant."⁷² Such an example may neatly illustrate the self's production of a book, but it has very little to do with the social construction of patriarchy unless we would consider it to be a consciously authored, meticulously crafted system like a book (which it is not!). By failing to move her analysis beyond the level of the individual reflecting self, Benhabib fails to offer an adequate explanation for how social realities are authored and edited -- to say nothing of how their grammar and syntax can be transformed.

Retaining Cartesian categories of individual subjectivity, Benhabib ignores the "conscious spontaneity" of autonomous movements, their construction of a "we" seeking to accomplish the theoretical tasks that she only outlines. Like Benhabib, I too search for a "concrete universal" but I find it in some social movements -- in certain versions of feminism and ecology and particularly in autonomous movements at their best. I locate "collective concrete others"⁷³ in such movements. They have structures, groups, ideas -- they are sensuous historical actors. Certain dimensions closely resemble a new "concrete universal" in the making. This book seeks to situate the self in concrete historical alternatives that have emerged in various contemporary contexts and that aim to create similar goals to those enunciated by Benhabib. My ontology is that thousands of people acting in social movements embody the concrete realization of freedom: Outside established norms and institutions, thousands of people consciously act spontaneously in concert.⁷⁴ In such moments (which I call moments of the "eros effect"), genuine individuality emerges as human beings situate themselves in collective contexts that negate their individualism. Vibrant democratic movements enhance the autonomy of the individual and simultaneously build groups that break free of the centralizing uniformity of the corporate-state behemoth. As we saw in the case of German feminism, women in Germany came together in the women's centers and transformed their individual lives as they created feminist projects.⁷⁵

Autonomy for Benhabib, like all the concepts she uses, fundamentally pertains to the individual, not to collectivities. Although it is one of the central concepts of her analysis, she never defines it precisely. Extrapolating from her usage, she refers to the personal independence of isolated individuals. At one point, she refers to Nietzsche's Zarathustra as having reached "a state of autonomy beyond community."⁷⁶ In so posing autonomy against community, her mechanical appropriation of the concept from Kant is apparent. While she recognizes the "autonomous" nature of the women's movement in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, she never acknowledges the existence of Italian *Autonomia* or the German *Autonomen* -- or uses autonomy as a concept referring to collectivities other than traditionally defined cultural autonomy. By postulating the existence of isolated individuals unconnected to each other as the building blocks of society, she adopts the atomistic categories of analysis that arose along with capital's penetration of the collective forms of social life, categories that subverted the ancients' assumption of a "we" as opposed to the "I" as the basis of knowledge and social organization.

The Autonomy of Theory?

Benhabib brilliantly synthesizes currents of contemporary thought, and while she acknowledges the need for action, her shadow world of theory retains notions that predispose her to remain aloof to the realm of action. She recognizes that "our moral and political world is more characterized by struggles unto death among moral opponents than by a conversation among them"⁷⁷ and she points out the necessity of political activity for the generation of new ethics. Her understanding of modern societies includes the idea that they demand enlarged participation in social affairs -- what she calls democratization in reference to an "increase and growth of autonomous public spheres."⁷⁸ In her repertoire of action, working to "clean up a polluted harbor" or "combating racism and sexism in the media" by writing critically about them in a journal are "no less political" than narrowly defined definitions of political participation like voting.

For her, qualities of "civic friendship and solidarity" are the bridge between the dual standard currently applied to categories of justice and ethical norms of everyday life. In her view, such a notion of communicative ethics:

...anticipates non-violent strategies of conflict resolution as well as encouraging cooperative and associative methods of problem solving. Far from being utopian in the sense of being irrelevant, in a world of complete interdependence among peoples and nations, in which the alternatives are between non-violent collaboration and nuclear annihilation, communicative ethics may supply our minds with just the right dose of fantasy such as to think beyond the old oppositions of utopia or realism, containment or conflict. Then, as today, we still can say, 'L'imagination au pouvoir!'⁷⁹

Her discourse ethics are premised upon the possibility of the "utopian community of humankind" using the "gentle force of reason" in conversations where reciprocal recognition of the participants exists. Her interactive universalism is the "practice of situated criticism for a global community that does not shy away from knocking down the 'parish walls.'" Reconstituting "community" through critical thinking leads her to discuss the communitarian notion of the "reassertion of democratic control over the runaway megastructures of modern capital and technology."⁸⁰

At every point in her analysis when she approaches the resolution of the intellectual problems she raises, however, she flies into the rarefied world of abstraction. In her chapter "Feminism and the Question of Postmodernism," for example, when she approaches the crucial issue of the "death of the subject" (i.e. the self that is to be situated -- presumably the central problematic of her book) she remarks:

To embark upon a meaningful answer to this query from where we stand today involves not yet another decoding of metaphors and tropes about the self, but a serious interchange between philosophy and the social sciences like sociolinguistics, social interactionist psychology, socialization theory, psychoanalysis and cultural history among others.⁸¹

Her failure at this crucial juncture to theorize the emergence of active subjectivity in the practical movement of history reflects the inadequacies of her theoretical break with the postmodernist idea of the death of history.

If, as has often been remarked, the world for Marx in *Capital* was one big factory, then

Benhabib's world is one ongoing conversation. Her belief that conversation in itself constitutes sufficient action is revealed in her statement: "Only if somebody else is able to understand the meaning of our words as well as the whatness of our deeds can the identity of the self be said to be revealed."⁸² What if the persons in question speak a language we do not understand, but they use violence to enforce their views upon us? Has their self not been revealed? The critical question she leaves unanswered is: What happens when the actions of another are physically and psychically destroying people (or other life) and talk is no help?

She insists upon a need for universal agreement that dialogue will not be constrained either by those allowed to participate in it or what they can bring to consideration. For her, "the basic principles of a just order should be morally neutral..."⁸³ She believes basic liberties are never to be curtailed. That statement is itself a moral judgment in favor of unrestrained individual liberty -- including the freedom to incite racist violence against those labelled "other." It is unrealistic insofar as no public project of any magnitude could proceed if it were to necessitate the use of eminent domain to take control of privately owned land. Her formulation of freedom appears to favor greater individual liberty until we ask: *Whose* liberty are we discussing? The oppressed or the oppressor? If liberties are in conflict, whose standpoint do we adopt? As Rawls pointed out, the liberty of the racist is unreasonable. The racist can be rational (to the extent for example that his/her observations have a real basis) but never reasonable. Similarly, the actions of the Autonomen are often irrational (for example, the smearing of excrement in yuppie restaurants) but reasonable (to the extent that one can make a case that the action helps defend the neighborhood from the assault of monied interests).

Benhabib's freedom is formulated in the abstract world of pure mind, not of the sensuous world of living human beings complete with bodies and souls. Real freedom demands continual moral judgment. Not even technology is purely neutral, as Herbert Marcuse convincingly demonstrated.⁸⁴ What about the case of people facing brutal treatment at the hands of others? Should Jews have been bound by the constraints of open dialogue while on their way to the concentration camps? Should young Germans stand by and discuss the racial purity of the nation with neo-Nazis actively engaged in attacking foreigners? Those Autonomen who defend foreigners counterpose militant resistance to Benhabib's "gentle force of reason." Her assumption that rationality is preeminent, that our minds exist but not our bodies, fetishizes the discourse of the university classroom, privileging it over other more passionate forms of expression while ignoring the discourse of racist violence affecting the bodies and souls of too many people. As I discussed at the end of the previous chapter, in the course of confronting oppressors -- physically when necessary -- individuals are transformed, liberated from the passivity, victimization and acceptance of domination that is today a crucial component of oppressor/oppressed relations. Her rationality of the mind is far removed from such a rationality of the heart. In a world without bodies, it doesn't matter if there are attacks or not. Everyone's liberties to speak in that world should certainly be guaranteed. But when we return to the real world, as opposed to seminar rooms, the difference between "reasoned arguments" and educated indifference reaches a vanishing point.

Despite the unresolved problems in her orientation, Benhabib's insights have much to offer autonomous movements as they try to break out of the managed space of the contemporary world. Who could fault the Autonomen for learning a bit about the "gentle force of reason" in their own internal relations? And Benhabib's analysis would be enriched if she were to integrate autonomous

movements into her discourse. By excluding them, she breaks one of her own rules -- namely that nothing should be outside the discourse world she creates. Her synthetic thinking might prefigure the emergence of social movements prepared to take her categories from the rarified and abstract world in which they were articulated and make them substantive. As I've discussed, however, her reified categories (particularly her notion of autonomy) must first be transformed.

My tripartite critique of the feminism of Seyla Benhabib, the workerism of Antonio Negri, and the critical Germanity of Günter Grass and Christa Wolf has clarified how none of these particular analyses reaches the level of species interest realized by autonomous movements at their best. The questions posed by the contradictions of contemporary industrial society are precisely at a species level of discourse -- as are the possible solutions articulated in the praxis of subversive social movements. The theorists I chose to critique are some of the most progressive in their fields: No matter how clear-headed or rooted in time-tested philosophical categories, however, any analysis based exclusively on ethnic, gender or workerist categories cannot attain a species discourse. Instead, the latent potential of these various forms of identity politics remains obscured by their own internal limitations.

DECOLONIZATION AND DEMOCRACY

Since the seventeenth century, political revolutions in Europe posing as carriers of universal interests have constructed nation-states with immense powers and simultaneously produced images of them as ideal forums for resolving conflicting interests. Two hundred years ago, French political history, notably the guillotine (which Hegel regarded as reason incarnate), provided a script from which local variations emanated throughout the world. Backwards Germany could write little or nothing on the pages of the history of democracy, at least not in the actions of its people, but German philosophers distilled the legacy of the French revolution and presented it with a universalism and clarity that -- via Marxism -- saw theory become a material force. European history in the 1970s and 1980s was in many ways the reverse. In Germany, movements of striking importance emerged, while philosophical developments appear largely to have extended the modernist critique of Kant and Hegel (Habermas's project). Life in France has proceeded apace within a highly centralized state while its philosophers theorize deconstructionism and postmodernist decentered sites of dispersed power.

Under the authority of universal interests, contemporary nation-states have appropriated extraordinary powers over individuals' everyday lives. Like international style architecture, modern nation-states and transnational corporations were constructed according to a first principle of the bigger the better. In their own day, skyscrapers freed humans from the imperative of building horizontally, but under contemporary conditions, they dominate rather than liberate. Similarly, representative democracy, while once freeing humans from aristocratic absolutism, has become incapable of fulfilling its historic promise to expand freedom for all and provide effective means for popular participation. If the term postmodern has an uplifting aspect, it is precisely in its potential to recreate a human scale. Whether in architecture or politics, the promise of reinvigorated collective interaction and a better quality of life are increasingly denied by such modern forms as representative democracy and international style architecture.⁸⁵ Although postmodern architecture is a product of capital, it seeks to blend into its surroundings more harmoniously than structures designed by modernists ranging from Louis Sullivan to Corbusier. Much like the kind of democracy

envisioned by autonomists, it returns to notions of human scale derived from the Renaissance or ancient Greece.

Despite promises of the good life made in exchange for the penetration of our private lives by new products and services, the existing system increasingly delivers economic insecurity and ecological disaster hand-in-hand with the production of political apathy. The state confronts us as an alien being. Recent polls show an historically low and rapidly declining faith in government in the United States and in Europe. The immense resources and international mobility of transnational corporations often make nation-states peripheral to critical economic decisions affecting entire regions. As the power of cities and regions to attract major investments has grown, the role of the nation-state in negotiating the terms for capital's impact within its territory has diminished.⁸⁶ Like the ability of governments to use force domestically, the unilateral power of nation-states to intervene internationally through force has declined.

While banks and corporations have downsized in the 1990s (to accommodate their profit needs, not any ecological or moral concerns), national militaries and bureaucracies have yet to be similarly reshaped. How long can the public sector scandalously squander a preponderant share of social resources on the military and transfer payments to the wealthy in the form of interest on debt? In this context, three examples from recent history provide entirely different outcomes. The deconstruction of Czechoslovakia was an exemplary action: One nation-state peacefully devolved into two according to expressed desires of Slovaks. The demise of the Soviet Union, while generally free of violence, is a mixed example of national deconstruction, involving both a laudable end to the Cold War and the system that produced Chernobyl, but also an uncertain future. Yugoslavia's fate and the unleashing of ethnic cleansing tragically points to the dangers involved in this new historical process. (Clearly all forms of autonomy cannot be understood as producing good things.) While in Europe, nation-states have declined in power as European economic integration has increased, in the U.S., the federal government has appropriated great powers vis-a-vis the states and individuals. One needn't be a Republican or sympathize with the militias to understand this elementary fact. Will the U.S. experience its own form of *perestroika*, its own decentralization of power -- perhaps even devolving into autonomously governed, bioregional domains?

Making ecologically responsible decisions already calls for rethinking the political power of nation-states and enlarging the democratic control of technology. The entire species (and all life) is today at the mercy of those who make decisions about high-technology. Radioactive fallout from Chernobyl was measured in milk in North America less than a month after the catastrophe. Nonetheless, whether a nuclear power plant should be built is an issue which the established system answers through national bureaucracies governed by scientific experts, faceless government employees and professional politicians who make decisions that will affect life on this planet for 70 generations.⁸⁷ No society has democratically determined whether or not nuclear waste should be produced even though it will remain carcinogenic and toxic beyond comparison for tens of thousands of years -- more time than since the great pyramids of Egypt were built. The average nuclear power plant has a life of less than 50 years, yet for such transitory generation of electricity we produce toxic repositories, each of which will need to be encased (or somehow dealt with) for thousands of years. Given the insatiable need for energy in contemporary society, this is no trivial problem.

The system's reliance on nuclear energy rather than solar, wind and other non-polluting

sources is conditioned by the need to provide big governments and large corporations with massive projects for expansion of their powers and the realization of profits. Solar and wind energy generation are far more efficient than is popularly understood, and they provide more jobs than nuclear fission.⁸⁸ They would generate increased job opportunities from many small investments (rather than one huge one), and profits would be realized by handyman producers, not big capital -- whose essential nature requires massive projects. Nuclear power, in turn, demands militarism of society for the security of the installations. Because nuclear weapons can obliterate a nation in a matter of minutes, militaries must be on constant alert and immense resources devoted to them. A more symbiotic relationship between large corporations and big governments could not be imagined nor could a better means to block the possibility of substantive autonomy.

Our species' powers have created the potential to destroy the planet at the push of a button, to put holes in the ozone layers, to create and unleash genetically engineered beings, to melt the polar ice-caps, or to pollute huge areas (like that around Chernobyl) so badly that it would have to be evacuated for hundreds of years. Tragically, at the very same historical moment that the human species has been endowed with powers far beyond any possessed in the past, obsolete decision-making processes are increasingly confined to corporate boardrooms and the inner offices of non-elected bureaucrats. Even if elected representatives are part of the formulation of policy, the outcome is often not different. The unreasonableness of the existing system, its undemocratic nature as discussed above in relation to the issue of nuclear power, can be similarly understood in relation to a number of weighty social decisions such as the choices to use atomic bombs at the end of World War 2, to build the interstate highway system in the U.S., create suburbs and abandon the inner cities in the 1950s, to fight a Cold War and a Vietnam war, and to maintain astronomical expenditures for national militaries at the end of the Cold War. The future effects of the existing system's unreasonableness, its response to its own crisis tendencies, are already visible in plans to invest more resources in capital-intensive programs and existing industry -- notably automobiles. Over the next two decades, the European Community plans to spend over \$1 trillion on more than 7000 miles of new highways, seriously threatening the scant remaining green spaces on the continent, including the last habitat for bears in France.⁸⁹ Infrastructural expenditures designed to aid transnational corporations have already been made for massive tunnels in the Pyrenees and the Alps, the Oresund bridge connecting Denmark and Sweden, and the tunnel between France and Britain. Such squandering of resources is not simply a European problem. Canada plans to build a mammoth bridge to Prince Edward Island, and despite the end of the Cold War, the U.S. spends more on its military than all other nations combined.

Each of these decisions was made in its own time by non-elected persons in conjunction with professional politicians whose differences from their electoral alternatives were seldom greater than those between coke and pepsi. Left to direct democratic forums of local citizens, none of these decisions would probably have been made. With respect to nuclear power, housing policies, abortion rights, and disarmament, autonomous movements have clearly done more to enact what is now recognized as the popular will than did initiatives from within the existing political system. At a minimum, militant protest movements, like those against segregation, the Vietnam war and nuclear power, revealed the lack of consensus on specific policies and provided a necessary counterbalance compelling even the most intransigent politicians to reconsider their positions. In a larger context, the type of subversive social movements portrayed in this book probably constitute

more reasonable vehicles for making significant social decisions than corporate profitability, bureaucratic sanction, or votes by the political system's elected representatives. What I call civil Ludditism can sometimes enact greater forms of democratic control than voting once every four years or paying dues to unions.

While greater freedom and prosperity are both necessary and possible, their realization seems quite remote. Instead of real autonomy in which regions could plan their future as part of humanity's creative powers, we have false autonomy offered us in choices between various consumer products, politicians, and individual careers. In the short run, several factors appear to favor a continuing regeneration of autonomous movements: First, job opportunities and decent housing continue to be denied to a wide cross-section of people. The existence of hundreds of thousands of unemployed youth in Europe provides a base from which wave after wave of new activity might emerge. Secondly, the existing system's top-heavy impetus preconditions its continuing reliance on massive capital projects. Now that construction of nuclear power plants has virtually come to an end, other projects must be found to satisfy the needs of large capital. With any number of boondoggles looming on the horizon, it appears the existing system will continue to provide more than sufficient reasons for massive opposition to its destructive imperatives. The unreasonable character of large capital is exemplified in Royal Dutch Shell. Yesterday it stubbornly clung to investments in apartheid. More recently, it took international protests to persuade Shell not to discard one of its mammoth oil platforms by sinking it in the Atlantic Ocean. Shell's shadow also was cast over the execution of Nigerian playwright Ken Saro-Wiwa, whose activism exposed the nefarious tip of Shell's African activities.

As suggested by this book's title, the goal of autonomous social movements is the subversion of politics: the decolonization of everyday life and civil society, not the conquest of state power. Based upon a politics of the first person and desire to create direct democracy, these movements oppose the false universality of the control center under whose guise behemoth governments and corporations seek to impose their wills. The subversion of politics would mean more democracy -- more than citizens of Athens or Florence ever imagined, more than envisioned and enshrined by the American revolution, and qualitatively more than ever before possible. If Immanuel Wallerstein is once again right (as he was with respect to the existence of one world system encompassing the Soviet Union) and "As the present world-system crashes down amidst us in the next 50 years, we must have a substantive alternative to offer that is a collective creation,"⁹⁰ autonomy might be that collective creation. Under such circumstances, it may not be as much a choice for more democracy as a necessary form for survival of the species and all life.

NOTES Chapter 7

An earlier version of part of this chapter was presented as "Post-Fordist Social Movements and the Politics of Identity" at York University on March 20, 1995. I would like to thank Barbara Epstein, Eddie Yuen, Teodros Kiros, Victor Wallis, Rudy Torres and Susanne Peters for their comments on earlier drafts.

- 1..The United Nations estimates that 40,000 children under the age 5 die every day from malnutrition, diarrhea and diseases with cheap cures. In one year, that amounts to more than 12 million children. If anything, the U.N. believes that this figure might even be too low.
- 2..Fred Block, *Post-Industrial Possibilities: A Critique of Economic Discourse* (California, 1990).
- 3..On the contrary, I think that denying the existence of a grand narrative (or unifying impulse to history) is precisely to assert one, however fragmented it may be.
- 4..Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Duke University Press, 1991) p. xii. David Harvey also integrates his understanding of postmodernism within an analytical framework of capitalism. See *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Basil Blackwell, 1980).
- 5..Alberto Melucci has a similar view in "Paradoxes of Post-Industrial Democracy: Everyday Life and Social Movements," **Berkeley Journal of Sociology** #38 (1993-1994) p. 185.
- 6..Andre Gorz, *Farewell to the Working Class: An Essay on Post-Industrial Socialism* (South End Press, 1982) p. 130.
- 7..Valle and Torres, p. 20.
- 8..Stefan Krätke, "Berlin: The Rise of a New Metropolis in a Post-Fordist Landscape," in *Cities and Regions in the New Europe: The Global-Local Interplay and Spatial Development Strategies*, edited by Mick Dunford and Grigoris Kafkalas (Belhaven Press, 1993) p. 233.
- 9..Sharon Zukin, *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disney World* (University of California Press, 1991) p. 5.
- 10..Victor Valle and Rodolfo D. Torres, "Latinos in a 'Post-Industrial Disorder,'" **Socialist Review**, Vol. 23 #4 (1994) p. 7.
- 11..Klaus von Dohnanyi, *Education and Youth Employment in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education, 1978) p. 31.
- 12..*Kommission für wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Wandel* (Göttingen, 1977).
- 13..See **Boston Globe**, February 9, 1994. **Neues Deutschland** (February 6/7, 1993, p. 1) estimated there were at least six million unemployed when the government's figure was 3.5 million.
- 14..**New York Times**, August 9, 1993.
- 15..Jonathan Kaufman gave a figure of 23 million. See "Europe; Left Out?" **Boston Globe**, July 18, 1993, p. 56, while the **Orlando Sentinel** put the number at more than 36 million.
- 16..See Ferdinand Protzman, "Hard Times in the Ruhr, With No Miracles in Sight," **New York Times**, May 2, 1993, p. F5. All over Germany, workers reacted to the crisis. See the series of articles in **Die Tageszeitung**, 19 February 1993.
- 17..Jeremy Rifkin, "Technological Gain: A 30-Hour Workweek for All," **Boston Globe**, **November 19, 1995** p. 82.
- 18..**The Week in Germany**, April 2, 1993, p. 5.

- 19..New York Times, August 9, 1993, p. A8.
- 20..Sergio Bologna, "The Tribe of Moles," *Semiotexte*, Vol. III No. 3 (1980) p. 41.
- 21..The Economist, October 1, 1994, p. 38
- 22..For an analysis of these dynamics see *The Political Economy of West Germany: Modell Deutschland* edited by Andrei Markovits (Praeger, 1982) pp. 155-158.
- 23..Joachim Hirsch, *Der Sicherheitsstaat* (Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1980).
- 24..See Margit Mayer, "Restructuring and Popular Opposition in West German Cities," in M. Smith and J. Feagin (editors), *The Capitalist City* (Blackwell, 1987) p. 350.
- 25..This arrangement has recently been revealed again as Helmut Kohl's response to the fiscal crisis precipitated by the annexation of East Germany was to cut back on welfare and unemployment benefits, student aid and family allowances.
- 26..Elmar Altvater, Jürgen Hoffmann and Willi Semmler, *Vom Wirtschaftswunder zur Wirtschaftskrise: Ökonomie und Politik in der Bundesrepublik* (Verlag Olle und Wolter, 1979) p. 274
- 27..Wages for manufacturing jobs in Germany are 50% higher than in the U.S. Counting benefits and corporate taxes, a German factory worker cost \$25/hour in 1992, compared with \$16 in the U.S. (only \$5 in South Korea and less than \$.50 in China, India and Indonesia).
- 28..Alan Riding, "In a Time of Shared Hardship, The Young Embrace Europe," *New York Times*, August 12, 1993, p. A1, 12.
- 29..as quoted in Paul Sweezy and Harry Magdoff, "Unemployment: Capitalism's Achilles Heel," *Monthly Review* (December 1994) p. 2.
- 30..OECD Employment Outlook, 1984, 1985, 1986.
- 31..Klaus von Dohnanyi, pp. 27-29, 96-97.
- 32..Joel Kotkin, "Europe Isn't Working," *Concord Monitor*, September 28, 1991, p. 12.
- 33..Klaus von Dohnanyi, p. 13.
- 34..For an analysis of youth that locates larger reasons for this dynamic, see my chapter on ageism in *Introduction to Critical Sociology*, co-authored with R. George Kirkpatrick (Irvington Publishers, 1987).
- 35..Since Habermas developed the term from philosophical categories of phenomenology, it has become widely used. See George Ritzer's *MacDonaldization of Society* (Pine Forge Press, 1993). Habermas's original formulation is in *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns* (Suhrkamp, 1981) especially pp. 471 and 577 of volume 2. The English source is *The Theory of Communicative Action 2* volumes (Beacon Press, 1987) pp. 332-373.
- 36..James O'Connor sees this dynamic as a second level of contradiction. See his articles, "Capitalism, Nature, Socialism: A Theoretical Introduction," *CNS*, Fall 1988 (#1) pp. 11-38, and "The Second Contradiction of Capitalism: Causes and Consequences," (CNS Conference Papers, 1991).
- 37..Habermas, "New Social Movements," p. 33.
- 38..Habermas, p. 35.
- 39..Alberto Melucci, "The New Social Movements: A Theoretical Approach," *Social Science Information* 19, 2 (1980) pp. 217-8.
- 40..Harry Braverman, "The Making of the U.S. Working Class," *Monthly Review* (November 1994)

p. 23.

41..Neither side in the prolonged discussions in Germany, Italy or the U.S. seems to have arrived at that conclusion. The two positions tended to be wages for women (which some opposed because it institutionalized women in the household) or equal division of household responsibilities (often unrealistic, and also unfair if one person has overwhelming responsibility for supplying the family with money). I owe Fredric Jameson credit for this observation. See *Postmodernism* p. 325.

42..A broad range of analysts besides postmodernists has come to employ the term "new social movements" to refer to various types of post-Fordist social movements: feminist, youth, ecology, peace and gay (and in the U.S., Black, Latino, Asian-American and Native American). As identity became key to the self-understanding of participants in new social movements, ascriptive criteria for membership defined the various emergent formations. The term "new social movements" is actually a misnomer since oppositional forces structured along the lines of identity are not new: Women mobilized no later than 1848 and African-Americans since the arrival of the first African slaves in America.

The best single definition of new social movements I have found is contained in Markovits and Gorski, pp. 10-13. In the first place, they demarcate the difference between old movements, "which concentrated on the expansion of rights" with new ones which "devote their energy to the expansion of 'autonomy.'" In addition they delineate 8 other characteristics of new social movements, such as: eschewing comprehensive theories, valuing the collective good and identity rather than individual interests and class politics, and independence from political parties.

German sociologists Karl-Werner Brand and Roland Roth both characterize new social movements as intermediate levels of communication between isolated citizens and political parties. See Roth and Rucht, pp. 43, 73.

An early analysis of new social movements was published as a special issue of **Social Research**, Vol. 52, No. 4 (Winter 1985). Jean Cohen noted that new social movements emerged from civil society rather than mass institutions and that their unwillingness to make formal calculations vis-a-vis effectively placed them outside the resource-mobilization paradigm.

Finally, Enrique Larana, Hank Johnston and Joseph Gusfield pose eight characteristics of new social movements including a social base that transcends class structure, pluralism of ideas and values, new dimensions of identity, and autonomy from political parties. See their edited volume, *New Social Movements: From Ideology to Identity* (Temple University Press, 1994).

43..For a critical reading of postmodernism, see *In Defense of History: Marxism and the Postmodern Agenda*, special issue of **Monthly Review** (July/August 1995). Surprisingly, the entire double issue contains only a single paragraph dealing with economic dimensions of contemporary reality, usually MR's specialty.

44..K. Anthony Appiah, "Identity, Authenticity, Survival: Multicultural Societies and Social Reproduction," in *Multiculturalism* edited by Amy Gutmann (Princeton University Press, 1994) p. 161.

45..One source which demonstrates ecofeminism's breadth is Irene Diamond and Gloria Orenstein's *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism* (Sierra Club Books, 1990).

46..See Patrick Novotny's discussion of the Gulf Coast Tenants' Organization and the SouthWest Organizing Project in **New Political Science** #32 (Summer 1995).

47.. The voluminous literature on the theory of new social movements is itself the subject of articles and books. A good attempt to contextualize theory and practice since the 1960s is the last chapter of Barbara Epstein's *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution: Nonviolent Direct Action in the 1970s and 1980s* (University of California Press, 1991). An anthology which contains empirical observations on Germany is Roland Roth and Dieter Rucht (editors), *Neue Soziale Bewegungen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, 1987).

48..Margit Mayer, "Social Movement Research in the United States: A European Perspective," p. 474.

49..Many activists from the early New Left, particularly those who subsequently became historians, were uninvolved then, and their histories pay little or no attention to the more than 10,000 participants in that gathering in Philadelphia who experienced the energy of commonality amid difference. The documents from the Revolutionary Peoples' Constitutional Convention reveal that identity politics complete with autonomous female and black groups can indeed formulate universally transcendent visions. These were small first steps, but the library full of debates about the promise of identity politics would be enriched by consulting this instance of historical praxis. See *The Imagination of the New Left: A Global Analysis of 1968* (South End Press, 1987) pp. 203, 265-279.

50..Todd Gitlin, "Fragmentation of the Idea of the Left," in Craig Calhoun (editor) *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity* (Blackwell, 1994) p. 166.

51..By constructing the identity "female," for example, to conflate the interests of New York's super-wealthy women and the poorest women of Bombay, enormous differences are obscured, and the world system of stratification unthematized.

In 1991, the United Nations reported that the top one-fifth of the world's population controlled 83% of its total wealth and the bottom one fifth only 1.4%. The difference between the world's rich and poor had roughly doubled in thirty years. Alongside 202 billionaires, more than one billion people lived in the worst poverty and 400 million were close to starvation. The average per capita income in the South (the Third World) in 1987 was \$670 compared to a corresponding figure of \$12,000 in the North. See Walter Corson (editor), *The Global Ecology Handbook* (Beacon Press, 1990) p. 44.

Identity politics can be a means of glossing over this crucial schism in the world, a means of turning attention to the needs of those at the top in relation to each other, not in relation to the whole. As observed in the case studies of autonomous women's movements, however, Italian and German feminists recognized that emancipation within the corporate world is not the same as liberation from it.

52..Frances Fox Piven's discussion at the American Political Science Association meetings in 1993 was a significant stimulus to this insight.

53..He continually defines social movements in terms of power. For his own discussion of this and other issues, see Alain Touraine, "Commentary on Dieter Rucht's Critique," in Rucht (editor) *Research on Social Movements* (Campus Verlag, 1991) pp. 385-391.

Touraine poses a "new central conflict" like the labor movement in the nineteenth century. From detailed studies of the Polish workers' movement, the anti-nuclear movement, student movements, and regional movements in southern France, he arrives at the conclusion that: "we

were able to observe...both the growing autonomy of social movements, freeing themselves from the control of political parties and ideologies, and the central role of cultural problems in societies where 'cultural industries' play a rapidly growing role, especially in health, education and mass communication." (p. 388). For him, unlike industrial societies in which workers opposing capitalists was the central conflict, "programmed societies" are sites where social movements centering on knowledge and identity are crucial.

Seeking to construct a critical scientific sociology, Touraine engaged social movement participants in hundreds of hours of discussions after which his researchers wrote up and presented their views of the "highest" possible meaning of the movement's actions in order to provoke discussion of larger transformative ideas within focused movements. He seeks to infuse social movements with knowledge. But as each of his books make clear, he is informed by social movements--not necessarily the other way around. Touraine's interventionist sociology is the residue of Leninism in academic theory: The educated outsider bringing knowledge to the committed is nothing but a reformulation of Lenin's notion of the party. In another sense as well, Touraine's conception of social movements is traditional Leninism. For him, diversity and fragmentation go hand in hand and permit the ruling elites to employ tactics of divide and conquer, and universality cannot be present within a diverse array; each stage of social development should have one unifying oppositional social movement. See Ron Eyerman, "Social Movements and Social Theory," *Sociology* Vol. 18, No. 1 (1984) pp. 71-82.

54..By focusing on issues like the availability of resources for movements and the impact of state intervention against and within movements, such analysis moves the study of movements in the direction of natural science. Instrumental factors are assumed to be central, and "actors" are assumed to make utilitarian choices related to participation. In this sense, social movements are considered to be essentially no different than any other form of institutional behavior. Posing atomized individuals as the building block of movements (and society), the issue then becomes whether identities are rationally constructed by abstract individuals or by groups with specific identities in history.

Despite its great differences from Touraine, resource mobilization theory also privileges traditionally structured political initiatives over ones which do not seek inclusion in the existing system. (See Margit Mayer, "Social Movement Research in the United States: A European Perspective," *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* Vol. 4, No. 1 (1991) p. 464.) According to the resource mobilization perspective: "Victories generally begin with policy successes and culminate in distributional goals." (See Craig Jenkins, *The Politics of Insurgency: The Farm Workers Movement in the 1960s* (Columbia University Press, 1985) p. 21.) Their middle-range perspective prohibits their comprehension of the fundamental differences of "post-political" movements, and they end up (like the more astute Habermas) in advocating traditional forms of political engagement.

55..Habermas fails to see that the entire world cannot live at the standard of living of the integrated middle class, and that the structural imperatives of the system demand intensified poverty alongside wealth. Can societies democratically decide to limit the system's predatory character vis-a-vis private life and the natural environment? Even from within his own set of assumptions, Habermas's search for communicative competence in the rational structures of language and consciousness

ignores entirely the intuitive ties between humans, our passions and unconscious impulses. In the work of Marcuse, art and nature constitute dimensions of freedom (that remain unthematized by Habermas).

56..The German idea of justice is predicated upon the *Rechtsstaat*, a government that respects laws and inspires and fulfills moral obligations. In the U.S., our liberal tradition emphasizes individual liberty with as little government as possible. As Jameson commented:"...the culture of the *Spiessbürger* and the philistine suggests the possibility that in this particular national situation Habermas may well be right, and the older forms of high modernism may still retain something of the subversive power they have lost elsewhere." (Jameson, p. 59).

57..Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics* (Routledge, 1992) p. 38. Hereafter referred to as StS. Unlike Habermas who believes consensus will emerge in such an ideal speech community, Benhabib stresses the process of dialogue rather than the certainty of any particular outcome.

58..For discussion of an international general strike, see Petra Kelly, *Um Hoffnung kämpfen: Gewaltfrei in eine grüne Zukunft* (Lamuv Verlag, 1983) pp. 92, 165.

59..StS, p. 225.

60..StS, p. 11.

61..StS, p. 109.

62..StS, pp. 110-111.

63..StS, p. 113.

64..StS, p. 100.

65..In her discussion of Rawls, she makes clear that "we" are to identify and help the "least advantaged" individuals, not to create a context in which they are empowered to help themselves. For her, a basic problem with Rawls is that he assumes "we" can somehow identify the least advantaged. She asks: "But who are the 'least advantaged' in our society: the black welfare mother of three? the white Detroit automaker, father of four, who loses his position after 20 years of work? the divorced suburban housewife whose household is liquidated and who has no skills to enter the workforce? etc. I see no satisfactory resolution to this question within the scope of *A Theory of Justice*." (StS, p. 168).

66..StS, pp. 42-3.

67..Jürgen Habermas, "Struggles for Recognition in the Democratic Constitutional State," in *Multiculturalism*, edited by Amy Gutmann (Princeton University Press, 1994) p. 122. In this text, Habermas apparently has a deeper appreciation of the role of social movements than in his earlier works. He believes that without them, there would be "little likelihood" of the "consistent actualization of the system of rights." (p.113).

68..StS, p. 4.

69..StS, p. 4-5.

70..StS, p. 214.

71..StS, p. 215.

72..StS, p. 216.

73..The terms she uses on p. 12 are adapted from Arendt.

74..In *The Imagination of the New Left*, I discuss how millions of people acted in strikes during

May 1968 in France and May 1970 in the U.S. Their spontaneously generated goals, tactics and aspirations were remarkably similar and emerged without any central organizations.

75..In dozens of communes in Germany, sexual relations were daily being transformed, yet when Benhabib discusses free love, she reverts to classical western philosophy for her subject matter and dwells on Caroline Schlegel when the movement of contemporary history would provide equally significant persons for her purpose. Her focus on the life of one person as the conclusion to her book while ignoring completely contemporary examples of transforming everyday life demonstrates her inability to theorize the world spirit in history.

76..StS, p. 195.

77..StS, p. 33.

78..StS, pp. 104-5.

79..StS, p. 49.

80..StS, p. 25. Why she uses "reassert" is questionable. When was there democratic control over capital and technology?

81..StS, p. 218.

82..StS, p. 127.

83..StS, p. 76.

84..Herbert Marcuse, "Industrialization and Capitalism in the Work of Max Weber," *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory* (Beacon Press, 1969); also see Habermas's essay, "Technology and Science as 'Ideology,' in *Toward a Rational Society* (Beacon Press, 1972). Marcuse related to me that Habermas later recanted this view of Marcuse.

85..This point is made by David Harvey in *The Condition of Postmodernity*. It refers to the promise of locally controlled sites--an extension of democracy that is not actualized in contemporary society.

86..Within this context, some analysts see the Greens as providing the system with a new regional planning mechanism.

87..Plutonium 239 takes 250,000 years to decay and is hazardous if only one-one millionth of a gram arrives in lungs or bone tissue (where it tends to concentrate). One estimate placed the amount of radioactive waste produced by nuclear power by the year 2000 at 25,000 tons, 24 tons of which would be Plutonium 239. See Jerome Price, *The Antinuclear Movement* (Twayne Publishers, 1982) and Anna Gyorgy and friends, *No Nukes: Everyone's Guide to Nuclear Power* (South End Press, 1979).

88..A 1994 study of the Bremen-based Progress Institute of Economic Research estimated that a net gain of 120,000 jobs would result from a decision to shift generation of electrical power in Germany from nuclear plants to water, wind, solar, natural gas and biomass conversion. See **The Week in Germany**, December 9, 1994, p. 5.

89..Leonard Doyle, "Europe Racing to Build Roads," **London Independent**, reprinted in **Picayne-Times** (Norfolk, Virginia) March 12, 1994.

90..Immanuel Wallerstein, "Revolution as Strategy and Tactics of Transformation," paper presented at the Rethinking Marxism Conference, November 1992, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, p. 13.