

EDITED BY WERNER BONEFELD, RICHARD GUNN,
JOHN HOLLOWAY AND KOSMAS PSYCHOPEDIS

EMANCIPATING MARX

OPEN MARXISM 3

The sociological heritage which emerged from under the banner of social Marxism has had a detrimental effect on socialist thinking. From this starting point, and within a framework of 'openness', the contributors to *Emancipating Marx* reexamine the intrinsic components of Marxist thinking. Ranging across dialectics, epistemology, social emancipation, value theory, historical materialism and the relationship between form and Marx, this volume provides a forum for open debate on the theoretical questions of the decade. The theme of 'openness' involves freeing of Marx from the orthodoxies of the twentieth century and the liberation of the human spirit from the control of capital. Publication of the first two volumes of *Open Marxism* has renewed interest in a theoretical tradition which, during the 1980s, seemed to have lost momentum. The long awaited third volume contributes to the continued reexamination of Marxist theory as we approach the twenty first century.

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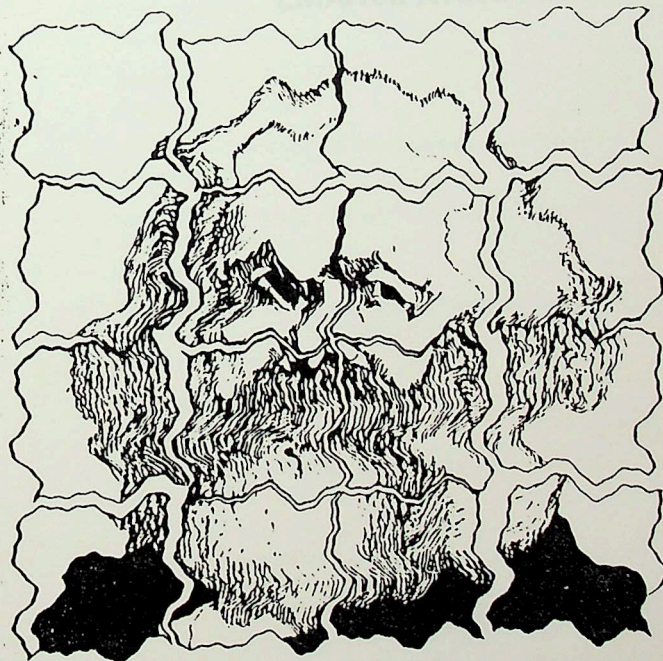


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1

Introduction: Emancipating Marx

WERNER BONEFELD, RICHARD GUNN,
JOHN HOLLOWAY, KOSMAS PSYCHOPEDIS¹

The present volume continues the themes developed in the first two volumes of *Open Marxism* (Pluto Press, 1992). The title of this volume, *Emancipating Marx*, is intended to be understood in a double sense, integrating the two main concerns of the Open Marxism project. The first concern is the emancipation of Marx (and Marxism) from the sociological and economic heritage which has grown up around it under the banner of 'scientific Marxism', the detrimental effect of which was discussed in our introduction to Volume I of *Open Marxism*. The emancipation of Marx implies at the same time the understanding of Marx (and Marxism) as emancipating: hence the second sense of the title and the second concern of the project. We regard (open) Marxism as the site of a self-reflection which clears the way towards a defetishised and emancipated social world. Only if we work to clear the massive deadweight of positivist and scientific/economic strata can Marxism emerge again as a constitutive moment in that project of emancipation which is its heartland and its home.

Emancipating Marx continues the issues addressed in our first two volumes through a critical analysis of Marxism's false friends and through an emphasis on the emancipatory perspective of Marxism's thought.

The Open Marxism project does not aim to reconstruct Marx's thought, in the sense of presenting an interpretation which masquerades as the sole 'correct' one. Such an approach would not be helpful, for it would presuppose the possibility of a uniform and finished interpretation of Marx's work. Instead we wish to reconstruct the pertinent theses of his work with a view to freeing them from the ballast of their dogmatic presentation.

Central to our approach is an emphatic endorsement of Marx's notion of a unity between theory and practice.² In the tradition of Marxist 'orthodoxy',

and explanation, he assesses the crisis of the theory of explanation in the social sciences, focusing especially on Weber and on post-Keynesian thought.

The last two papers, by Holloway and Bonefeld, are concerned with overcoming the dualist separation between objectivity and subjectivity. *John Holloway* argues that the orthodox tradition is fatally weakened as a theory of struggle by a dualistic separation between the 'objective' (the movement of capital) and the 'subjective' (struggle). For him the only possible way in which this dualism can be overcome is genetically, by understanding the subject as producing the object. *Werner Bonefeld* also focuses on the issue of human practice, and particularly on the way in which practice is conceptualised in structuralist and autonomist approaches. He proposes to go beyond the dualist separation between objectivity and subjectivity and explores this issue by reference to the work of Max Horkheimer and the goal of a society where humans exist not as a resource but as a purpose.

All the contributions are attempts to colour a picture, to put together a jigsaw which is still in the making, to create a territory which has yet to be explored. The task is clear and desperately urgent: to open a theoretical tradition which has tended to become closed and dogmatic, a tradition which, despite all its tragic history, remains the most powerful tradition of negative thinking that exists.

References

1. We wish to thank Peter Burnham for his advice and criticism.
2. We have explored this issue in our introduction to volume II of *Open Marxism*. See also the contributions by R. Gunn; H. Cleaver; J. Fracchia and Ch. Ryan; and J. Holloway in volume II.
3. See, for example, the Regulation Approach associated with Aglietta (*A Theory of Capitalist Regulation*, Verso, London, 1979) and the debate on Post-Fordism (Hirsch, 'Fordism and Post-Fordism' and Jessop, 'Polar Bears and Class Struggle'; both published in W. Bonefeld and J. Holloway (eds.), *Post-Fordism and Social Form*, Macmillan, London, 1991). Stuart Hall's (*Road to Renewal*, Verso, London, 1988) demand that the Left should learn from 'Thatcherism' is symptomatic.
4. Scholarly work is seen here, following Agnoli, as negation of all alienated social relations. See Agnoli, 'Destruction as the Determination of the Scholar in Miserable Times', *Common Sense*, no. 12, Edinburgh, 1992.
5. Hegel makes the same point: 'Inasmuch as the new true object issues from it, this dialectical movement which consciousness exercises on itself and which affects both its knowledge and its object, is precisely what is called *experience*' (G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1977).
6. On this issue see Bonefeld's contribution to volume I of *Open Marxism* and Gunn's 'Against Historical Materialism' in volume II.

Capitalism and Reproduction

MARIAROSA DALLA COSTA

The sphere of reproduction today reveals all the original sins of the capitalist mode of production. Reproduction must be viewed, of course, from a planetary perspective, with special attention being paid to the changes that are taking place in wide sectors of the lower social strata in advanced capitalism as well as in an increasing proportion of the Third World population. We live in a planetary economy, and capitalist accumulation still draws its life-blood for its continuous valorisation from waged as well as unwaged labour, the latter consisting first of all of the labour involved in social reproduction,¹ in the advanced as well as the Third World countries.

We find that social 'misery' or 'unhappiness' which Marx² considered to be the 'goal of the political economy' has largely been realised everywhere. But, setting aside the question of happiness for the time being – though certainly not to encourage the myth of its impossibility – let me stress how incredible it now seems, Marxist analysis apart, to claim that capitalist development in some way brings a generalised wellbeing to the planet.

Social reproduction today is more beset and overwhelmed than ever by the laws of capitalist accumulation: the continual and progressive *expropriation* (from the 'primitive' expropriation of the land as a means of production, which dates from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries in England, to the expropriation, then as now, of all the individual and collective rights that ensure subsistence); the continual *division* of society into *conflictual hierarchies* (of class, sex, race and nationality, which pit the free waged worker against the unfree unwaged worker, against the unemployed worker, and the slave labourer); the constant production of *inequality and uncertainty* (with the woman as reproducer facing an even more uncertain fate in comparison to any waged worker and, if she is also member of a discriminated race or nation, she suffers yet deeper discrimination); the continual *polarisation* of the production of *wealth* (which is more and more concentrated) and the production of *poverty* (which is increasingly widespread).

As Marx writes in *Capital*:

Finally, the law which always holds the relative surplus production or industrial reserve army in equilibrium with the extent and energy of accumulation rivets the worker to capital more firmly than the wedges of Hephaestus held Prometheus to the rock. It makes an accumulation of misery a necessary condition, corresponding to the accumulation of wealth. Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, the torment of labour, slavery, ignorance, brutalization and moral degradation at the opposite pole, i.e. on the side of the class that produces its own product as capital.³

This is true, not only for the population overwhelmed by the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century. It is even more accurate today, whether capital accumulation passes through factory, plantation, dam, mine or the carpet weaving workshops where it is by no means rare for children to be working in conditions of slavery.

Indeed, capitalist accumulation spreads through the world by extracting labour for production and reproduction in conditions of stratification which end in the reestablishment of slavery. According to a recent estimate, slavery is the condition in which over 200 million persons are working in the world today.⁴

Those macro-processes and operations which economic forces, supported by political power, unfolded during the period of primitive accumulation in Europe – with the aim of destroying the individual's value in relationship to his/her community in order to turn him/her into an isolated and valueless individual, a mere container for labour-power which s/he is obliged to sell to survive – continue to mark human reproduction on a planetary scale.

The indifference to the very possibility of labour-power's reproduction shown by capital in the first phase of its history was only very partially (and today increasingly precariously) redeemed centuries later by the creation of the welfare state. Currently, the major financial agencies, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, have undertaken the task of re-drawing the boundaries of welfare and economic policies as a whole⁵ in both the advanced and the developing countries. (The economic, social welfare and social insurance measures recently introduced in Italy correspond precisely to the various 'structural adjustment' plans being applied in many Third World countries.) The result is that increasingly large sectors of the world's population are destined to extinction because they are believed to be redundant or inappropriate to the valorisation requirements of capital.

At the end of the fifteenth century, the bloody legislation against the expropriated⁶ led to the mass hanging, torturing, branding and chaining of the poor. So today the surplus or inadequately disciplined population of the planet is exterminated through death by cold and hunger in eastern Europe and various countries of the advanced West ('more coffins less cradles in Russia').⁷ They suffer death by hunger and epidemic in Africa, Latin America and elsewhere: death caused by formally declared war, by genocide authorised directly or indirectly, by military and police repression. The other variant of extinction is an individual or collective decision of suicide because there is no possibility of survival. (It is significant that, according to Italian press reports in 1993–94, many cases of suicide in Italy are due to unemployment or to the fact that the only work on offer is to join a criminal gang. In India, the 'tribal people' in the Narmada valley have declared a readiness to die by drowning if work continues on a dam which will destroy their habitat and, hence, the basis of their survival and cultural identity.)⁸

The most recent and monstrous twist to this campaign of extinction comes from the extreme example of resistance offered by those who sell parts of their body. (In Italy, where the sale of organs is banned, there were press and television reports in 1993–94 of instances in which people said that they were trying to sell parts of their own bodies for lack of money. There have been reports of how criminal organisations with perfectly legal outlets are flourishing on the basis of trafficking in organs, sometimes obtained through the kidnapping of the victims (often women or children) or through false adoption.)

An enquiry was recently opened at the European Parliament on the issue,⁹ and various women's networks are trying to throw light on and block these crimes. This is where capitalist development, founded on the negation of the individual's value, celebrates its triumph; the individual owner of redundant or, in any case, superfluous labour-power is literally cut to pieces in order to re-build the bodies of those who can pay for the right to live.

During the era of primitive accumulation, when the free waged worker was being shaped in England, the law still authorised slavery,¹⁰ treating the vagabonds created by the feudal lords' violent and illegal expropriation of the land as 'voluntary' perpetrators of the crime of vagabondage and ordaining that, if anyone should refuse to work, he would be 'condemned as a slave to the person who denounced him as an idler.'¹¹ If this reduction of the poor to slavery remained on a relatively limited scale in England, capital soon after launched slavery on a much vaster scale, emptying Africa of the equivalent of Europe's population at that time through the slave trade to the Americas and the Caribbean.

Slavery, far from disappearing, has remained as one of capitalism's unmentioned, concealed constants. The poverty imposed on a large part of the

planet by the major financial agencies chains entire families to work in conditions of slavery so that they can pay their creditors. Workers are made to work in conditions of slavery in livestock farms, plantations and mines. Children are made to work in conditions of slavery in carpet workshops. Women are kidnapped or fooled into working in the sex industry. But these are only some examples. It is significant that the problem of slavery was raised by the Non-Government Organisations at their Forum in Vienna on 10–12 June that preceded the UN's World Conference on Human Rights on 14–25 June 1993.

In the period of primitive accumulation, while free waged labour was being born from the great expropriations, there was the greatest case of sexual genocide in history – the great witch-hunts, which, with a series of other measures directed expressly against women, contributed in a fundamental way to forging the unfree, unwaged woman worker in the production and reproduction of labour-power.¹² Deprived of the means of production and subsistence typical of the previous economy, and largely excluded from craftwork or access to the new jobs that manufacturing was offering, the woman was essentially faced with two options for survival: marriage or prostitution. Even for women who had found some form of work external to the home, prostitution at that time was also a way of supplementing low family income or the low wages paid to women. It is interesting that prostitution first became a trade exercised by women at the mass level in that period. One can say that during the manufacturing period the individual proletarian woman was born fundamentally to be a prostitute.¹³

From this insoluble contradiction in the feminine condition of being an unwaged worker in a wage economy¹⁴ sprouted not only the mass prostitution in that period but also the reoccurrence in the context of current economic policies of the same phenomenon today, but on a vaster scale, in order to generate profits for one of the most flourishing industries at the world level, the sex industry. This led the World Coalition against Trafficking in Women to present the first World Convention against Sexual Exploitation in Brussels (May 1993). The women in the Coalition also agreed to work for the adoption of the convention by the United Nations and its ratification by the national governments.

Internationally, in fact, the sexual exploitation of women by organised crime is increasingly alarming. These organisations have already brought many women from Africa and eastern Europe to work in Italy as prostitutes. The tricks used to cover up exploitation by prostitution – for example, wife sales by catalogue or 'sexual tourism' in exotic destinations – are legion and well known. According to the Coalition's charges, various countries already accept forms of 'sexual tourism' as a planned component in national income. Thanks

to individual women and non-governmental organisations, studies of the direct government responsibility in forcing women to serve as prostitutes for soldiers during the Second World War have also begun.

Woman's condition in capitalism is born with violence (just as the free waged worker is born with violence); it is forged on the witches' pyres and is maintained with violence.¹⁵ Within the current context of the population's reproduction, the woman continues to suffer the violence of poverty at the world level (since her unpaid responsibility for the home makes her the weak contracting party in the external labour market). Because of her lack of economic resources, she also suffers the further violence of being sucked increasingly into organised prostitution. The warlike visage that development increasingly assumes simply worsens woman's condition still further and magnifies the practice and mentality of violence against women.¹⁶ A paradigmatic case is the war rape exercised as ethnic rape in ex-Yugoslavia.

I have mentioned only some of the social macro-operations which allowed the capitalist system to 'take off' during the period of primitive accumulation. Just as important was a series of other operations¹⁷ left unmentioned here for the sake of brevity, but which could also be illustrated today as aspects of the continual re-foundation on a world scale of the class relationship on which capitalist development rests. In other words the perpetuation of the stratification of workers based on separation and counterposition imposed through the sexual division of labour.

These considerations lead to one fundamental thesis: capitalist development has always been *unsustainable* because of its *human impact*. To understand the point, all one needs to do is to take the viewpoint of those who have been and continue to be killed by it. A presupposition of capitalism's birth was the sacrifice of a large part of humanity – mass exterminations, the production of hunger and misery, slavery, violence and terror. Its continuation requires the same presuppositions. Particularly from the woman's viewpoint, capitalist development has always been unsustainable because it places her in an unsustainable contradiction, by being an unwaged worker in a wage economy and, hence, denied the right to an autonomous existence. If we look at the subsistence economies – continually besieged, undermined and overwhelmed by capitalist development – we see that capitalist development continually deprives women of the land and water which are fundamental means of production and subsistence in sustaining the entire community.

The expropriation of land leaped to the world's attention in January 1994 with the revolt of the indigenous people of Chiapas in Mexico. The media could hardly avoid reporting it because of the crucial role played by Mexico's alignment with the Western powers through the agreement for the North American Free Trade Area. The perversity of producing wealth by expropriation

and the production of misery was there for all to see. It is also significant that the dramatic consequences of expropriation of the land led those involved in drawing up the *Women's Action Agenda 21* in Miami in November 1991¹⁸ to make a forceful appeal for women to be guaranteed land and access to food. At the same time, the process of capitalist expansion – in this case the Green Revolution – led many people to practise the selective abortion of female foetuses and female infanticide in some areas of the Third World:¹⁹ from sexual genocide to preventive annihilation.

The question of unsustainable development has become topical with the emergence of evidence of various environmental disasters and forms of harm inflicted on the ecosystem. The Earth, the water running in its veins and the air surrounding it have come to be seen as an ecosystem, a living organism of which humans are a part – they depend for their life on the life and equilibrium of the ecosystem. This is in opposition to the idea of nature as the 'other' of humanity – a nature to be dominated and whose elements are to be appropriated as though they were potential commodities waiting in a warehouse. After five centuries of expropriation and domination, the Earth is returning to the limelight. In the past it was sectioned, fenced in, and denied to the free producers. Now, it is itself being expropriated of its reproductive powers – turned topsy-turvy, vivisectioned, and made a commodity. These extreme operations (like the 'banking' and patenting of the genetic codes of living species) belong to a single process whose logic of exploitation and domination has brought the planet to such devastation in human and environmental terms as to provoke disquieting questions as to the future possibilities and modalities of human reproduction.

Environmental destruction is united with the destruction wreaked on an increasingly large proportion of humanity. The destruction of humans is necessary for the perpetuation of capitalist development today, just as it was at its origins. To stop subscribing to this general destruction, and hence to approach the problem of 'sustainable development', means, above all, to take into account the struggles that are moving against capitalist development in the metropolises and the rural areas. It also means finding the ways, and defining the practices to set capitalist development behind us by elaborating a different approach to knowledge.

In interpreting and taking into account the various anti-capitalist struggles and movements, a global vision must be maintained of the many sections of society rebelling in various forms and contexts throughout the planet. To give priority to some and ignore others would mean adopting the same logic of separation and counterposition which is the soul of capitalist development. The cancellation and annihilation of a part of humanity cannot be given as a foregone conclusion. In the metropolises and the advanced capitalist countries

in general, many no longer have a waged job. At the same time, the welfare measures that contribute to ensuring survival are being cut back. Human reproduction has already reached its limits: the woman's reproductive energy is increasingly dried out like a spring whose water has been used for too much land and water, says Vandana Shiva,²⁰ *does not multiply*.

Reproduction is crushed by the general intensification of labour, by the over-extension of the working day, amidst cuts in resources whereby the lack of waged work becomes a stress-laden work of looking for legal and/or illegal employment, added to the laborious work of reproduction. I cannot here give a more extensive description of the complex phenomena that have led to the drastic reduction in the birth rate in the advanced countries, particularly in Italy (fertility rate 1.26, population growth zero). It should also be remembered that women's refusal to function as machines for reproducing labour-power – demanding instead to reproduce themselves and others as social individuals – has represented a major moment of women's resistance and struggle.²¹ The contradiction in women's condition – whereby women are forced to seek financial autonomy through waged work outside the home, yet on disadvantageous terms in comparison to men, while they also remain primarily responsible for labour-power's production and reproduction – has exploded in all its unsustainability. Women in the advanced countries have fewer and fewer children. In general, humanity in the advanced countries is less and less desirous of reproducing itself.

Women's great refusal in countries like Italy also demands an answer to the overall question we are discussing. It demands a *new type of development* in which human reproduction is not built on an *unsustainable sacrifice by women*, as part of a conception and structure of life which is nothing but labour time within an *intolerable sexual hierarchy*. The 'wage' struggle, in both its direct and indirect aspects, does not concern solely 'advanced' areas as something distinct from 'rural' ones, for there are very few situations in which survival rests solely on the land. To sustain the community, the wage economy is most often interwoven with resources typical of a subsistence economy, whose overall conditions are continually under pressure from the political and economic decisions of the major financial agencies such as the IMF and the World Bank.²² Today, it would thus be a fatal error not to defend wage levels and income guarantees – in money, goods and services. These are working humanity's rights, since the wealth and power of capitalist society has been accumulated on the basis of five centuries of its labour. At the same time, land, water and forests must remain available for those whose subsistence comes from them, and to whom capitalist expropriation offers only extinction. As different sectors of mankind seek and demand a different

kind of development, the strength to demand it grows to the extent that no one accepts their own extinction or the extinction of others.

The question of human reproduction posed by women's rejection of procreation is now turning into the demand for another type of development and seeks completely new horizons. The concept of welfare is not enough. The demand is now for happiness. The demand is for a formulation of development that opens up the satisfaction of the basic needs on whose suppression capitalism was born and has grown. One of those needs is for time, as against a life consisting solely of labour. Another is the need for physical life/sexuality (above all, with one's own and other people's bodies, with the body as a whole, not just the functions that make it more productive) as against the body as a mere container for labour-power or a machine for reproducing labour-power. Yet another need is the need for collectivity (not just with other men and women, but with the various living beings which can now only be encountered after a laborious journey out of the city) as against the isolation of individuals in the body of society and living nature as a whole. Still another need is for public space (not just the public parks and squares or the few other areas permitted to the collectivity) as against the enclosure, privatisation and continual restriction of available space. Then there is the desire to find a relationship with the totality of the Earth as a public space as well as the need for play, indeterminacy, discovery, amazement, contemplation, emotion ...

Obviously, the above makes no pretence of 'defining' fundamental needs, but it registers some whose systematic frustration by this mode of production has certainly not served human happiness. I think one must have the courage to pose happiness as a problem. This requires re-thinking the notion of development, in order to think again 'in the grand manner', and to reject the fear that raising the question of happiness may appear too daring or too subjective. Rigoberta Menchu²³ told how the mothers in her community teach their girls from the start that the life facing them will be a life of immense toil and suffering. But she also wondered why, reflecting on very precise, capitalist reasons: 'We started to reflect on the roots of the problem, and we came to the conclusion that its roots lay in possession of the land. We did not have the best land, the landowners did. And every time we clear new land, they try to take it from us or to steal it in some way'.²⁴ Rigoberta has raised the problem of how to change this state of affairs; she has not cultivated the myth of human unhappiness. The Christian teaching she has used alongside the Mayan traditions has offered various lessons, including that of the Old Testament's Judith.

In my view, it is no coincidence that, in these last 20 years, the women's question, the question of the indigenous populations,²⁵ and the question of the Earth have assumed growing importance, for they are linked by an

especially close synergy. The path towards a different kind of development cannot ignore them. There is much knowledge still in civilisations which have not died but have managed to conceal themselves. Their secrets have been maintained thanks to their resistance to the will to annihilate them. The Earth encloses so many powers, especially its power to reproduce itself and humanity as one of its parts. These powers have been discovered, preserved and enhanced more by women's knowledge than male science. It is crucial, then, that this other knowledge – of women, of indigenous populations and of the Earth – whose 'passiveness' is capable of regenerating life²⁶ – should find a way of emerging and being heard. This knowledge appears now as a decisive force that can lift the increasingly deadly siege capitalist development imposes on human reproduction.

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14. See M. Dalla Costa and S. James, *The Power of Women*.
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 16. Currently, there is a wide-ranging debate on this issue. A. Michel's essay remains a good reference-point: 'La donna a repentaglio nel sistema di guerra', *Dozze*, no. 2, April–March 1987.
 17. See K. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, chapters 26–33.
 18. *Women's Action Agenda 21*, in *World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet*, Official Report, United Nations, 8–12 November, Miami, 1991.
 19. See V. Shiva, *Staying Alive*.
 20. *Ibid.*
 21. See M. Dalla Costa and S. James, *The Power of Women*.
 22. See M. Dalla Costa and G.F. Dalla Costa, *Donne e politiche del debito*.
 23. E. Bugos, *Mi chiamo Rigoberta Menchù*, Giunti, Florence, 1990.
 24. *Ibid.*, p. 144.
 25. As was stressed by the Working Group on Indigenous Peoples at the NGO Forum in Vienna (10–12 June 1993), these peoples have worked especially hard during the last two decades to get their voices heard, to make progress on questions concerning them (the question of land, above all), to obtain greater respect for and a formalisation of their rights in written form. Significant stages in the process have been the Kari Oca Declaration, the Land Charter of the Indigenous Peoples, and the Convention of the International Labour Organisation of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (ILO Conv. No. 169). This growing liaison and promotion of their demands was a major factor in the speedy expressions of solidarity from the North American indigenous populations during the rebellion of the indigenous peoples of Chiapas.
 26. See V. Shiva, *Staying Alive*.

3

Emancipating Explanation

KOSMAS PSYCHOPEDIS

In contemporary societies the appeal to liberties and rights goes hand in hand with oppression, exploitation and domination. The appeal to the right to information goes hand in hand with the suppression of criticism and the concealment of qualitatively significant knowledge about social contradictions; the appeal to autonomy with the imposition of hierarchies; the appeal to citizenship with the reproduction by capitalism of the social separations which proscribe it or disorientate the citizen. It is this which constitutes the *fetishism* of social relations, that is, the reproduction of human freedom and spontaneous activity as domination and exploitation, as apparent freedom and apparent spontaneity. Finally, it is reproduced as critique of social relations, which however is separated from those relations and powerless to change them. In other words, social theory is not exempt from this fetishism. Thought about the crisis of the object partakes of this crisis while at the same time striving to transcend it. The Enlightenment demand *Sapere aude* (Dare to know) is, thus, also apposite today. It is the demand for the emancipation of contemporary theory of society from its crisis, a crisis which takes the forms of scientism, relativism and decisionism.¹ This demand, however, is equivalent to the demand that society be emancipated from the fetishistic form of its existence. The nature of socio-historical events cannot be explained without recourse to such a demand. This demand refers to the constitution of the historical/social which is effected via the contradiction between the cooperative and collective character of human sociability, on the one hand, and the divisive and egoistic forms of action – of particular, mutually antagonistic, goals – on the other.

Can contemporary theory address the critical idea of a common and collective forming of the social conditions of life as a wider rational-social goal – which constitutes a condition for the construction of social action – and determine the relation which particular and egoistic goals and the mechanisms for realising them bear towards this wider teleology? This