UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

DEFENDING AND RECONSTRUCTING EMANCIPATION: USING THE ZAPATISTA UPRISING AS A GUIDING HEURISTIC

BY

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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Edmonton, Alberta
Fall 1997

University of Alberta

Library Release Form

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Title of Thesis:	Defending and Reconstructing Emancipation: Using the Zapatista Uprising as a Guiding Heuristic
Degree:	Master of Arts
Year this Degree Granted:	1997

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SEPT 5 /97

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Abstract: Two questions guide this thesis. First, are theories of emancipation relevant in an age of postmodern intellectual scepticism? Second, what does the Zapatista uprising in Mexico tell us about our theories of emancipation? In the first part of the thesis I introduce the concept of emancipation, and suggest that it has become detached from praxis, and mired in debates between modernity and postmodernity. I use the Zapatista uprising as a heuristic to demonstrate the necessity of transcending narrow debates. I also examine the implications of labeling the Zapatista uprising "postmodern". In the second section I use the Zapatista heuristic, and the work of Paulo Freire to suggest that social theorists need to go beyond modernity/postmodernity, and work on a conception of emancipation which is dialogical, value-explicit, and multiperspectival. Finally, I engage one emancipatory perspective - democratic theory - with the Zapatista case study to demonstrate the value of a theory/practice dialogue.

Utopia has not died. The suffering and misery that neoliberalism wreaks among millions of poor people on our continent is a medium, a culture where utopia grows.

Reuben Zamora, Salvadoran political scientist
and former leader of the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR)

...not everybody listens to the voices of hopelessness and resignation. Not everyone has jumped onto the bandwagon of despair. Most people continue on; they cannot hear the voice of the powerful and the faint-hearted as they are deafened by the cry and the blood that death and misery shout in their ears. But in moments of rest they hear another voice, not the one that comes from above, but rather the one that comes with the wind from below and is born in the heart of the indigenous people of the mountains, a voice that speaks of justice and liberty, a voice that speaks of socialism, a voice that speaks of hope . . . the only hope in this earthly world.

Subcomandante Marcos (1995b:45).

It is a measure of how far we have strayed from our own left tradition that people would have to be reminded that theory is supposed to be a guide to action.

Frank Bardacke, American union and farmworker activist (1995:258)

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INTRODUCTION

The spokesperson for the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), Subcomandante Marcos, wrote a letter to a 13 year old boy in Baja California where he described the EZLN as "Professionals of Hope" (Marcos, 1995b:167).

As Marcos wrote these words, many intellectuals in Western[1] academia declared that the age of hope and meaning was naive and archaic. Baudrillard insisted that he belonged to a "second revolution, that of the twentieth century, of postmodernity, which is the immense process of the destruction of meaning"(as in Best & Kellner, 1991:127).

In the first declaration of the Lacandon jungle, the EZLN stated that they were fighting for "work, land, housing, food, health, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice, and peace" (1995b:54). While the EZLN made these demands, modern critical theorists busied themselves with the details of the ideal speech situation and communicative rationality.

Extreme postmodern[2] theorists in the West have attempted to demonstrate that reality is unmappable, fragmented, and unordered. Meanwhile, Subcomandante Marcos replied to a letter from a 10 year old girl in Mexico City, and cogently explained the reasons behind their struggle using a story of a little beetle named Durito who steals tobacco and studies neoliberalism.

At the same time the EZLN fights to restore what they perceive as essential human dignity, social theorists in the West bicker over whether or not we live in a postmodern age, and ceremoniously pronounce that the EZLN are the world's first 'postmodern rebels'.

The realities of indigenous life in the Mexican state of Chiapas, as shown to us by Marcos' words and various EZLN communiqués, shine a bright light on serious flaws within Western social theory. In this thesis I do not seek to prove that the EZLN is "right", and that Western social theory is "wrong". The goal is more subtle: to use the case of the Zapatista uprising as a heuristic to explore serious shortcomings in Western social theory.

In this thesis I argue that the Zapatista uprising provides cause to reflect on a fundamental weakness in social theory and the social sciences more generally: *the*

difficulty in interpreting and understanding movements of emancipation in ways that are not totalizing and eurocentric. Put simply, our emancipatory theories are underdeveloped, overly-abstract, oriented away from praxis, often oblivious to their Western biases, and generally inadequate for a full comprehension of the struggles for emancipation occurring in the so-called third world. As activist Frank Bardacke writes, "it is a measure of how far we have strayed from our own left tradition that people would have to be reminded that theory is supposed to be a guide to action" (1995:258).

I argue that theories of emancipation are still relevant, but that they need to be reconstructed in ways which transcend narrow theoretical debates. In particular, I argue that they need to go beyond the debate between modernity and postmodernity, and move in a direction which is committed to dialogue, values and multiple perspectives.

How does the Zapatista uprising fit into this argument? In this work I focus on the failings of Western theory to offer concrete, relevant interpretations of struggles for emancipation. This thesis will reflect on this issue, using illustrative examples from the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas to elucidate my points. I will not attempt to give a scientific analysis of the causes behind the Zapatista uprising, nor will I repeat other analyses which give historical accounts of the uprising and subsequent negotiations.[3] The Zapatista case-study will be used in creative way, as part of a general interweaving of conceptual theoretical discussion with concrete empirical examples. The EZLN uprising will serve as a heuristic which helps avoid abstract theorizing (a perennial problem in the literature on emancipation) and which suggests necessary directions for a reconstructed theory of emancipation.

To set the scene of both the Zapatista uprising and emancipatory theory, it is useful to begin by observing the following two phenomena: 1) how the Zapatista uprising bewildered Western academics from the outset, and 2) the confusion and disarray within the theoretical field at the time of the uprising.

Although the region was intensely studied and its extreme poverty not a secret, the rebellion came as a surprise to most observers. What was most surprising was the unique form that the rebellion took.

The Zapatista uprising defied traditional social science boundaries. It resisted pat classification as simply a 'Peasant Uprising', an 'Indigenous Revolt', a traditional 'guerilla

struggle', or an act of 'local resistance'. The EZLN rebels rallied around traditional peasant issues, such as the need for continued land reform, but they also called for an end to the oppression of indigenous people, and were part of a long-standing indigenous movement demanding self-determination. Contrary to the *machismo* of most Latin American military movements, this movement demanded increased equality for women, had women on its top military council, and called for men to take on their share of the housework.[4] Although the movement was motivated by local concerns, it also demanded broader changes at the level of national government and international economics. The rebels demanded land for local *campesinos*[5], but they also called for the resignation of the current PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) regime[6], and a renegotiation of NAFTA.

To complicate matters further, the Zapatista uprising was not a simple or straightforward act of armed rebellion. Although it was truly a military affair, equipped with machine guns and military strategies, the EZLN maintained a remarkable respect for civil society and democracy. They did not, and do not perceive their goal as the violent overthrow of state power, but instead strive for the development of a more meaningful democracy in Mexico.

The Zapatistas argued that the peasants of the Lacandon jungle had no choice but to turn towards armed uprising. At the same time they applauded the efforts of civil society to fight for democracy in a peaceful manner using a panoply of organizational tactics. Although there is a definite military component to the EZLN, there is a remarkable aspect of democratic organization within its ranks (Collier, 1994:152-153). The formation of a civilian off-shoot of the EZLN, the Zapatista Front of National Liberation (FZLN), attests to the power of, and support for democratic, peaceful tactics within Zapatista ranks.

The complexity of the uprising in Chiapas presents many questions for traditional social scientists. These questions come in a time of theoretical disarray, upheaval, and uncertainty. They come at a time when the problems of poverty and 'underdevelopment' have been largely left in the hands of neoliberal thinkers and IMF bureaucrats.

In addition, the grand methodological strategy of positivism has faced a general attack (Skinner, 1985:6-7), making it troublesome to treat the EZLN as a sort of laboratory case which can be studied according to naturalistic scientific methods. It is

also no great secret that the grand metanarratives of Marxism and Liberalism are under heavy fire. It is no longer acceptable for many academics on the 'left' to study such a movement using pre-made analytical categories which assume the centrality of class.

Other theoretical positions might lead one to question whether it is even possible to truly understand the motivations behind the Zapatista uprising. The Gadamerian response to the attack on the natural sciences has focussed on the limitations of the interpreter's horizons, and casts doubt on whether true understanding is possible (Skinner, 1985:7). From the Gadamerian response it is just a short step to Derrida's insistence that the recovering of the intended meaning of a text (or a movement) is a suspect proposition (*ibid*). If we follow this line of theoretical argumentation to its radical conclusion, we should abandon the goal of trying to understand the intended meaning of the EZLN uprising.

The Zapatista uprising also came at the end of a 'lost decade' of development and development theory. Postmodern critics charged that development was a washed-up Enlightenment idea. The collapse of the Soviet Union, and the changes in China shook the faith of those looking for a 'socialist solution'. Environmentalists attacked the idea of unlimited growth as unacceptable. Within the discipline of development a schism emerged between development theorists, and those working in the field on projects. More generally, the focus grew on empirical work in specific projects, while theoretical and conceptual work surrounding the idea of development was severely neglected (Schuurman, 1993:1).

Importantly, this theoretical vacuum developed at the same time the 'developing world' was experiencing severe socio-economic chaos caused by the debt crisis (Schuurman, 1993:9). As Marxist and neo-Marxist development theories stymied, neoliberal development theory thrived, as the debt crisis ushered in an era dominated by talk of structural adjustment, and the proper (minimal) role of the state (Slater, 1993:95). People in the South suffered during one of the worst economic crises of the century, at the same time theoretical attempts to understand this suffering was largely left in the hands of the neoliberal economics.

Although there are many complex issues interwoven in these debates, it is possible to identify one which seems to have central importance, particularly when juxtaposed

against the questions posed by the EZLN rebels. That central issue is the ability of social theories to understand movements for emancipation in the 'underdeveloped' South.

Redefining our emancipatory theories are not, however, at the forefront of most scholarly pursuits. The whole discourse of emancipation seems to have been abandoned in the rush to dump our modern baggage. Many 'leftist' theories which do attempt to reconceptualize emancipation, seem horribly disconnected from praxis[7]. As a result, much of the 'left' hides away in universities debating important, yet limited questions of language and discourse. Giddens refers to this trend as the "retreat into the code", where the semiotic takes precedence over the social and the semantic (as in McLaren, 1986:391). Political activist Frank Bardacke writes:

> Some of the very best work now being done by left intellectuals (especially academic ones) is nothing more than brilliant analysis of the contemporary disaster. Traditions and possibilities of resistance seldom appear. These days I often put down a left book even more depressed than before I picked it up. Sure the situation is grim and getting worse. It is usually thus, says Marcos. Says his American soulmate, Tom Paine; "This is not time for summer soldiers or sunshine patriots." What time ever was?....It is not a question of cheerleading. It is a question of becoming, along with Marcos and the Zapatistas, professionals of hope. The basis of that hope is the belief in the ultimate value of political action (1995:258).

If Western intellectuals take seriously the need to acknowledge their privileged positions, and unite theory and practice in a politically relevant praxis, they cannot continue to ignore the chasm between critical theory and political action.

Although postmodern scepticism is the norm in circles of 'leftist' intellectuals, there is still a standard - albeit more "subtle, multiple, modest than modern views" - which labels some movements positive, and others negative (Nederveen Pieterse, 1992:5). Where does this standard come from? How can it be made more explicit in an age of normative scepticism, relativism, and wariness toward universal values? These are two central questions I will examine in this thesis.

Before proceeding further, it is important to carve out the goals of this work, given the enormity of the problem I have just introduced.

i. My Goals:

An initial caveat is in order. A hangover from the age of positivism is to think of social scientists as inventors. The academic 'inventor' is supposed to sit alone in *his* office, transforming the raw scientific data into new ideas and theories.

I prefer to think of my academic role as more closely resembling the work of a mid-wife, rather than an inventor-magician. Instead of claiming to independently create ideas in isolation, I work to nurture already existent, embryonic ideas, helping them to breath life and take shape. The main idea which I will nurture in this thesis is the idea of emancipation.

In this age of uncertainty, it is best to avoid the arrogance of statements which claim to have found a 'cure', and which state absolutely what needs to be done. Instead, I would suggest, with a greater degree of modesty, that we are at a cross-roads in the social sciences. We are living in a time of continued suffering, and continued resistance against this suffering, and it is not at all clear that social scientists are moving towards greater understanding of how to decrease suffering or understand and encourage resistance. For some, it is not even clear that this is the goal of the social sciences.

This thesis has two goals which permeate the arguments in each chapter. My *first* goal in this thesis will be to show that theories of emancipation are still relevant. My *second* goal will be to suggest that theories of emancipation need to be reconstructed in ways which transcend the narrow debate between modernity and postmodernity, and which make a serious commitment to dialogue, values, and a multiplicity of perspectives.

Both of these goals will be carried out through a dialogue between more theoretical perspectives on emancipation, and the more concrete struggles for emancipation occurring in the state of Chiapas. I view theories of emancipation not as static, complete entities, but works in progress, which can be greatly enriched by the lessons taught by actual, on-the-ground struggles for emancipation. Developing more complex theories of emancipation can also aid our understanding of the EZLN uprising and of other social movements. Prioritizing the concept of emancipation helps social theorists keep focussed in a time of muddy theoretical waters where a "retreat into the code" often obscures pressing issues of oppression and domination - issues which can be

easily ignored by intellectuals writing from a position of material and political privilege.

It is important to acknowledge the distance between the ideal theory/practice dialogue, and my own work. I have not carried out field research, but instead have relied on electronic and published sources of information on the uprising. I have also relied on EZLN communiqués, many of these written by Subcomandante Marcos - a *Ladino* who admits that he is writing for a culture that does not have a written tradition of expression. These sources were primarily written, or translated into English, which again, makes it important to acknowledge that my understanding will be limited, and partial. I am from a whitestream, Occidental background. Although I believe that I am able to reflect on this background, and recognize aspects of other cultures and traditions, I do not believe in perfect transcendence of one's ideological horizon, even after many years of study. Even with the limitations of my knowledge of the Zapatista uprising, I believe that it has been possible to gain a rudimentary recognition[8] of the meaning of the Zapatista uprising, and to use this understanding to engage in a dialogue with the prominent theoretical discourses of the day.

Yet another caveat is in order. Although I employ the Zapatista example in dialogue, I do not intend to act as a spokesperson for the Zapatistas. Instead I hope to accomplish what Denis sets out to do in his writings on First Nations peoples in western Canada: "In some ways, I am clearly writing *about* them; but I believe it would be more accurate to say that I am writing about *us and them*, and that in fact I am writing in a spirit of dialogue with them" (1997:39).

It is also important to make clear that I do not intend to produce the final word on emancipation. My intention in this thesis is instead to draw from a diverse range of sources to offer a new insight on the importance of this concept and related themes. Denis eloquently depicts this type of research approach when he describes his own outlook,

> There may well be nothing original in my plowing of one or the other corner of the garden, but it is in making the unlikely connexions that, perhaps, imprudence can bear fruit (1997:14).

ii. Plan for the Thesis

In Part I of the thesis I mark out the theoretical terrain of emancipation. Although the Zapatistas, as well as other social movements around the world, speak of liberation and emancipation, the practical issues surrounding emancipation are not readily discussed in theoretical academic circles. Part I gives some theoretical background to help understand why this is so - why theory and empirical reality can so significantly diverge. Because of space restrictions I only briefly profile the theoretical field, but this is sufficient to give a sense of why theories of emancipation have suffered, and how they need to overcome certain sticking points, especially the debate between modernity and postmodernity.

Currently, the concept of emancipation seems to be locked into an important, yet limited debate between theorists of modernity and postmodernity (Nederveen Pieterse, 1989/90:47). Emancipatory projects are disdained by many postmodernists, and rigidly guarded by 'defenders' of modernity who believe that emancipation will come through the rational fulfilment of Enlightenment ideals.

In Chapter One I examine the idea of emancipation in the context of modernity. I evaluate modern emancipation's strengths and weaknesses, and look at how the concept is used by one of modernity's most famous, and sophisticated theorists - Jurgen Habermas. Juxtaposing a modern conception of emancipation with the stated goals of the EZLN uprising will demonstrate that modern theory is still relevant, but must be developed in a more pluralistic, non-essentialist way that is cognizant of modernity's eurocentric heritage and over-reliance on the god of rationality.

Chapter Two evaluates the postmodern reaction against modern ideas of emancipation. This section acknowledges the value of certain postmodern concepts and critiques, but criticizes tendencies towards de-politicization, nihilism, and Eurocentrism. I also look briefly at Michel Foucault's position on emancipation.

In Chapter Three I discuss the implications of certain intellectuals and journalists labelling the EZLN uprising 'postmodern'. This discussion will demonstrate more concretely the benefits and problems a postmodern perspective can bring to the theory and practice of emancipation.

Having examined the theoretical grid-lock between modern and postmodern theories of emancipation, in Part II I argue that we need to transcend this debate, and begin to explore how the concept of emancipation could be reconstructed. More specifically, I argue that emancipation can function as a dynamic, multiperspectival, dialogical, normatively explicit reference point. I acknowledge that this is a constructed, provisional reference point, but contend that it can still serve as a reminder to stay connected to practical struggles, and to take seriously the persistence of domination and exploitation.

What should a reconstructed program for emancipation entail? I argue that three points are crucial:

1) A program of emancipation should be strengthened by **dialogue**, both with other theories and with actual social movements struggling for emancipation.
2) A program of emancipation should be centred on **values**, not reason; this is not to say that emancipation should be deliberately irrational, or reject all uses of reason.
3) A program for emancipation should be **critical** and **multiperspectival**. Just as there are varied levels of oppression, a reconstructed theory of emancipation(s) must be able to recognize multiple methods and processes of liberation. It must also be able to take a critical position on domination.

I do not propose that these three factors be used as fixed laws of emancipation. Rather, they are intended as midwifery; they are suggestions for how to reconstruct emancipatory theory in a way that keeps it closely linked to actual emancipatory movements. I argue that an emancipatory theory which is dialogical, value-centred, and multi-perspectival will be more closely linked to actual social movements, and will avoid problems of abstract theoreticism which currently plague social theory.

Part II will demonstrate how a dialogical, value explicit, multi-perspectival conception of emancipation is substantiated by the examples of social movements, using the particular case of the Zapatista movement. This vision of emancipation also has roots in various theoretical traditions. Spatial constraints prohibit a full examination of all its theoretical lineage, and I will instead focus on one particular tradition, that of Freirean pedagogy. Freire's work can act as a guide to help develop a conception of emancipation which transcends the post/modernity debates, and moves in a direction which is

dialogical, value-explicit, and multiperspectival.

Freire's pedagogy reminds the Western theorist that although the idea of emancipation is contradictory, problematic, and riddled with some problematic modernist assumptions, it need not be dismissed summarily. He demonstrates by example that a rich emancipatory program can be developed which is not crude, totalizing, abstract, or incapable of change.

In Chapter Four I look at the concept of Freirean dialogue, and argue that developing a new conception of emancipation would be greatly aided by this concept. Freire's dialogue suggests that a new conception of emancipation cannot reside exclusively on a theoretical plane, but must instead engage in dialogue with social movements. Emancipation can serve as a utopian reference point which engages in dialogue with empirical realities.

In Chapter Five I explore the idea of reconstructing emancipatory theories by focussing on values. I first look at the problems with a purely rational approach to social movements, and evaluate its manifestation in rational choice theory. I then examine how values comprise a major part of social movement motivation, using the example of the Zapatista uprising. I argue that if emancipatory theory engages in dialogue with social movements the importance of values to emancipatory theory will become apparent, if not glaringly obvious. I use the illustration of Freirean theory to aid my argument, advocating an explicitly normative approach to emancipatory theory. I also explore the question of how we are to 'ground' emancipatory values. Finally, I argue that values can provide an important source of solidarity within and between movements.

In Chapter Six I explore the idea of reconstructing emancipatory theory in a multiperspectival sense. I look at Freire's belief in the multi-dimensionality of emancipation, and suggest that a new conception of emancipation must be similarly multi-dimensional. Further, I argue that we must develop multiple reference points to understand such struggles as the one in Chiapas. One theoretical perspective is insufficient to understand how oppression and emancipation occur on multiple levels, as acknowledged in the Zapatista writings.

Chapter Six also introduces the idea of "emancipatory touchstones", which are value-guided perspectives used to critically guide research efforts. I suggest that

emancipatory theory needs to be anchored to numerous touchstones, rather than being fixed to a singular metanarrative. Emancipatory touchstones are theories which dialectically inform the empirical analysis of social movements, and in turn, are informed by the movements themselves. Because they are explicit normative reference points, however, they can be used to make connections between diverse movements and avoid succumbing to an extreme localism.

I conclude Chapter Six and Part II by examining the dangers of using emancipation as a reference point. I suggest that there are risks to using a central reference point of emancipation, but the costs of ignoring its role in contemporary social movements are greater.

I have chosen one perspective which I believe can act as a useful emancipatory touchstone to help understand the Zapatista struggle. This touchstone is democratic theory. The meaning of democracy in the Zapatista uprising will be explored in Part III. The intent is not to valorize this touchstone as an ultimate, absolute, fixed point of reference. The goal is two explore how democratic theory and the Zapatista uprising can work dialogically to mutually inform our understanding of each topic.

In Part III I examine how the goals of rural social actors like the Zapatistas illuminate the limitations of a strictly procedural conception of democracy. I will use the EZLN demands to argue that democratic theory must be broadened to incorporate more substantive conceptions of rural citizenship. I will ask how issues of land are critical to developing a more inclusive conception of democracy. More specifically, I will examine the importance of Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution to understand how the EZLN uprising pushes out the conventional theoretical boundaries of democracy. In Part III I also examine the tensions involved in seeing the EZLN as a pro-democratic force. In what ways can an armed military movement be pro-democratic?

Using an optic of democratic theory cannot explain everything in Chiapas, and it does not comprise a new metanarrative of emancipation. To reiterate, I use democracy theory as an emancipatory touchstone. It offers a specific normative reference point, albeit one that is provisional, constructed, and capable of multiple interpretations. It is a provisional, yet important normative prop that we can refer to. It is a *critical* touchstone, because it comprises a normative reference point capable of making judgements on what

is conducive to, and what is dangerous for democracy. It is not a key that reveals all truth, but a guide to garner further insight into a specific aspect of the emancipatory struggles in Chiapas - the struggle for democracy.

An emancipatory touchstone is a dialogical reference point. On the one hand it enhances understanding of a particular empirical problem, pointing out the *pro* and *anti* emancipatory forces. On the other hand, the emancipatory touchstone is not fixed, but is a contingent concept, that is revised and refined through encounters with empirical examples. Our conception of democracy is also not fixed, but operates in dialogue with actual struggles for emancipation. This dialogue will aid both our understanding of Chiapas, and help revise democratic concepts which are currently tied to highly procedural interpretations (ie. democracy is seen as a method of leadership selection instead of a way of organizing social life).

Now that my goals and strategies have been outlined, it is possible to proceed with the first task of this thesis: exploring the theoretical roots of emancipation.

1. Terms such as "Western", "Southern", and "developing" are used in this thesis with great ambivalence, and awareness of their passivity vis à vis the Oriental-Occidental dichotomy. Certainly, figures like Gayatri Spivak, Edward Said, and Paulo Freire demonstrate the fragility of the boundary between West and non-West. I retain their usage because of: 1) lack of a better alternative, and 2) the need to sustain some recognition of the hegemonic relationships which continue to structure inequitable power relations on a global level.

2. I use the term "postmodern" with extreme caution. The Modern Day Dictionary of Received Ideas has defined postmodernism as follows: "This word has no meaning. Use it as often as possible". (as in *The Independent* 24 Dec 1987). Obviously the matter is more complex, but even a less cynical interpretation would find it difficult to pin down a precise meaning of the term. Featherstone notes that many features of aesthetic modernism, such as "aesthetic self-consciousness", "reflexiveness", "rejection of narrative structure in favour of simultaneity and montage", "exploration of the paradoxical, ambiguous, and uncertain open-ended nature of reality", are features which are ironically incorporated into definitions of postmodernism (1988:202). Bauman notes that the concept of modernity is often defined in retrospect to include qualities which stand in opposition to the more benevolent qualities associated with post-modernism (1988:219). Kellner and Best highlight the great ambiguity involved in the prefix "post" (1991:29). It is not clear whether this is intended as descriptive or prescriptive, whether the negation of modernity is involved, or a continuity with prior trend in a new phenomenon of "hypermodernity".

   A more detailed discussion of postmodernism will occur in Chapters Two and Three. Until that point, I will use the term cautiously to suggest a certain 'scepticism-of-modernist-narratives' flavour in the research soup.

3. See Ross (1995) and Collier (1994) for two excellent accounts of the uprising and its historical roots.

4. On April 10, 1997, a group of Tzeltal women at the "Encounter for Peace and National Dialogue" in Chiapas made an official announcement of their intention to radically reshape the division of labor between women and men. In the words of Tzeltal Indian Maria Meza Guzman, "We want the men to wash their dishes. We want the men to wash their clothes, and that they start learning when they are boys". The group also demanded that women earn the right to inherit land (Chiapas95, April 12, 1997).

5. *Campesino* means one who works the *campo*, or land. The term is used to refer to small-scale private farmers, *ejiditarios* (*ejido* members), and *jornaleros* (farmworkers). A collective body of *campesinos* is referred to as *campesinado* (roughly meaning, the peasantry).

6. The PRI is remarkable for both its longevity and the efficacy of its corporatist arrangements. It has held power longer than any other party in Latin America (Levy, 1989:472), and only recently, in the July elections of 1997, has its absolute hold on Mexican politics significantly diminished. In these elections, the PRI lost official control of the Mexico City as well as its absolute majority in the Chamber of Deputies and the two-thirds necessary in the Senate to unilaterally pass constitutional reforms (Paulson, 1997b). It should not be forgotten, however, that the PRI retains a solid majority in the Senate. Even though Cuauhénoc Cárdenas's PRD (Democratic Revolutionary Party) now controls Mexico City, it is unclear how effective this leadership can be with the continued PRI control over resources and policy making at the national level.

7. Chantal Mouffe, one of the most prominent and brilliant reconstructive postmodern theorists, theorizes the implications of a pluralistic, postmodern, radical democracy, without giving any concrete empirical data or looking at any specific cases of democratic pluralism (1993:9-20). Similarly, Mouffe and Laclau's insightful book, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy (1985) fails to provide concrete advice on how counterhegemonic alliances could be formed, what they might look like, nor do they give any concrete analysis of the new social movements they valorize.

8. I deliberately employ the term "recognize", rather than "explain", to suggest the limitations of interpretation given the situatedness and contextuality of the 'outsiders' viewpoint. This distinction is based on the philosophical work of Ludwig Wittgenstein. On this point I am indebted to Claude Denis (1997:162).

PART I: DEFENDING AND REFINING EMANCIPATION IN AN AGE OF INTELLECTUAL SCEPTICISM

Before proceeding with an analysis of emancipation, it is important to clarify why I have chosen to focus on this particular term. The concept of emancipation is not set apart by divine intervention. I have chosen it deliberately, recognizing that it is not a perfect or complete conceptual tool.

Other useful, overlapping reference points exist: empowerment, participation, resistance. My preference for the term emancipation is that it implies a transformative, reconstructive element which does not automatically follow from other terms. Empowerment, for example, is a term which has become popular in development discourse, education, and women's movements. When defined broadly as, 'groups taking power unto themselves', empowerment might include anything from struggles for racial equality, to strategies for getting rich, and does not necessarily imply the development of a critical consciousness (Nederveen Pieterse, 1992:10-11). Participation is a popular term, but is ambiguous enough to include taking part in exploitative activities. Resistance, another fashionable term among the sceptical 'left', may involve a constructive element, but may also refer to a deeply conservative process of defending a status-quo of inequality and oppression. Clearly all of these terms are closely linked, and usually defined in terms of each other.

I believe that what differentiates emancipation, however, is its ability to include elements which transcend critique and deconstruction, and move into a more proactive territory of reconstruction and structural transformation. I concur with Nederveen Pieterse's interpretation that "emancipation is a matter of critique and construction, of which resistance represents the first step and transformation, in the sense of structural change, the second" (1992:13). Many contemporary 'left' and postmodern representations of emancipatory processes stress resistance and not the creative moment - the moment of hope and transformation. For these reasons I have chosen to stay focussed on "emancipation", recognizing that this term cannot be seen as the 'final word', or peremptory reference point.

There is, of course, no historically fixed definition of emancipation. In the ancient Roman world the word *emancipatio* referred to the release of juveniles from parental authority (Nederveen Pieterse, 1989/90:52). The term later applied to the release of slaves from their 'owner's' authority, and in the 18th century, it applied to a range of releases from authority.

In 18th Century Europe emancipation first referred to a process of granting rights to the economically powerful, but politically disenfranchised bourgeoisie (Wertheim, 1992). During the French Revolution the term emancipation referred to the release of the bourgeoisie from "bonds of absolutism" (Nederveen Pieterse, 1989/90:52). In the 19th Century the concept of emancipation was extended to include the rights of other groups such as the proletariat, slaves, Jews, Catholics, women, and referred more generally to an "extension of political rights to non-privileged groups" (*ibid*).

Gradually in the 20th Century, the process of emancipation came to refer to the process of collective groups struggling to grasp rights for themselves, rather than implying that these rights were granted upon them. Although it referred to a variety of different struggles, it was used as a unifying theme, and as an expression of the desire to move towards greater equality and freedom. The civil rights movement, the women's movement, and the peace movement all worked to give the 1960s the reputation of being the decade of emancipatory struggles in the Western world. Even though these were politically active times, concepts like liberation and emancipation were often poorly defined. In the 1970s and 1980s the terms of "participation", "emancipation", "empowerment" continued to be bandied about, but clear, consistent meanings of these terms were not always present. Although the concept of emancipation has been important for 20th century intellectuals, the subtleties and predicaments of this concept were not always thought out.

Currently, the concept of emancipation is embroiled in a debate between theorists of modernity and postmodernity. In this section of the thesis I will discuss the dominant debate between modernity (Chapter One) and post-modernity (Chapter Two), both in a general sense and through two specific responses to emancipatory theory. These two responses are exemplified by the work of Jurgen Habermas and Michel Foucault, or what

can also be seen as representatives of the modern and post-modern strands of critical theory, respectively (Morrow, 1994:28; Leonard, 1990). These two chapters will examine the important theoretical issues drawn out by the modernity-postmodernity debate, but will ultimately point towards the need to transcend the limits of these largely theoretically driven discussions.

The dangers of such an approach must be acknowledged. Edward Said began his epic on Orientalism with the honest admission, "[m]y two fears are distortion and inaccuracy, or rather the kind of inaccuracy produced by too dogmatic a generality and too positivistic a localized focus (1978:8).

Writing on the divisions between modern and postmodern theories of emancipation creates concern that my generalizations are too severe. Writing about such a broad idea like 'emancipation' causes even greater worry that the tack is too general, and that certain exceptions will be always be found to disprove general points. On the other hand, the risk of focussing on the minutiae of emancipation - such as one particular theoretical point - is that one will miss making important observations which pertain to the field of social theory and intellectual life in general.

I will try to walk the delicate balance between these two extremes, sometimes sacrificing theoretical parsimony for the sake of recognizing particularities, and at other times minimizing detail in order to make a generalized point. This type of approach is admittedly imperfect, but it is a lesser evil than a totalizing approach which is either exclusively generalizing or particularistic.

Before proceeding, a tentative, working definition of emancipation is required. Since part of the goal of this thesis is to reconceptualize the concept of emancipation, such a definition can only be partial at this moment. Given the structure of my argument, the meanings, subtleties, and implications of the term will become more clear as the reader proceeds.

For now, let it suffice to define emancipation in a minimalist fashion, borrowing from Dutch development theorist Franz Schuurman. He defines emancipation to refer to a dynamic process "whereby social actors try to liberate themselves from structurally defined hierarchical relations which are discriminatory and as such give unequal access to

material (e.g., land, housing, services) and immaterial resources (e.g., ideology, political power)" (Schuurman, 1993:31).

With these clarifications and definitions in order, it is now possible to move on to Chapter One, which looks at the modern conception of emancipation more specifically.

CHAPTER ONE A MODERN PROJECT OF EMANCIPATION

Before proceeding with my discussion of modern emancipation a caveat is in order. This discussion is not intended as a full-scale, comprehensive critique of modernity. Such a prodigious task obviously exceeds the spatial constraints of this chapter.

This discussion is instead focussed on the modern conception of emancipation which is centred around reason. In the first part of this chapter I outline the implications of this connection with reason. Modern emancipation has been flawed by its totalizing attitudes and over-reliance on rationality, which can no longer be seen as a guarantor for the fulfilment of Enlightenment ideals of progress, equality, and freedom. The application of instrumental reason has been used both to liberate and oppress, and the modern conception of emancipation therefore has an ambiguous heritage. I suggest that reason is an inadequate grounding point for a renewed conception of emancipation - a point which will be taken up in greater detail in Chapter Five.

In the second part of this chapter I look more specifically at Jurgen Habermas's attempt to salvage a modern program of emancipation. Although Habermas's vision is complex, sophisticated, and makes useful distinctions between different types of reason, I argue that his theory suffers from some of the problems of modern theoretical approaches, and offers limited help in understanding concrete struggles for emancipation.

i. Modern Emancipation - Reason as a Force of Liberation and Oppression

We might begin by asking what is meant by the term *modern* in this analysis of *modern* emancipation. There is of course, no exact date marking the starting point of modernity. Still, I would argue that useful markers include the appearance and spread of capitalism in Europe (which can be dated as early as the 14th Century), the religious upheavals that characterized the 15th Century, and the 'discovery' of America in 1492. These dates are helpful in understanding modernity's association with processes of

rationalization and commodification. These processes began before the Enlightenment, and existed alongside the genesis of European imperialism.

Although processes of rationalization preceded the Enlightenment, the Enlightenment (the "Age of Reason") was important in cementing a link between emancipation and reason. Craib's definition of modernism is useful in reminding us of the importance of rationality to modern emancipation:

> Modernism is associated with the Enlightenment...involving the idea of universal rationality - a search for a knowledge that is more or less certain, and for a control over the natural and social world. (1992:178).

The crucial point here is that a modern conception of emancipation is based on the belief that the application of rationality will increase human freedom.

The Enlightenment was much more complex than the single concept of rationality. Its thinkers also championed freedom of thought, a commitment to social justice and equality, a belief in the dignity of the individual, and criticized clericalism and religious hierarchy. The Enlightenment also focussed on laudable goals of citizenship, equality, justice, and liberty - goals which were an important part of the French Revolution, the American Revolution and the decline of monarchies in Western nation states. The Enlightenment philosophies were a complex configuration of ideas, which were not always accepted as a complete package. But at the centre of Enlightenment ideals lay reason. As Bunge writes:

> The catchwords of the Enlightenment were *nature*, and *humankind*, *reason* and *science*, *liberty* and *equality*, *happiness* and *utility*, *work* and *progress*. Reason was placed at the very centre of this constellation: if only men were to think and act rationally, the rest would follow (1994:27, emphasis of author).

Clearly Western intellectuals and activists are still indebted to Enlightenment ideals. It would be ludicrous to deny their importance, or pretend that it is possible to move into a new postmodern era where we can abandon some aggregate conception of the Enlightenment. What is at question in this analysis is not the utility of Enlightenment philosophy in its entirety. What is at question is the appropriateness of seeing reason (and especially instrumental reason) as an adequate tool to achieve Enlightenment ideals such as equality, freedom, and self-determination.

Why was rationality seen as the great provider of Enlightenment ideals? As

traditional and religious sources of legitimation declined in Europe and in the empires, rationality emerged as an important source of legitimizing power. The Enlightenment ushered in an era where the moral sphere was no longer dominated by religion, but instead governed by the laws of science and rationality. The concept of emancipation officially left the realm of divine intervention, and entered the human realm of science.[1]

Of course, there were always critics within modernity who doubted that rationality was a panacea for social malaise.[2] Counter-Enlightenment traditions arose almost immediately. Romantic philosophers saw reason and science as soulless, while Conservatives thought that the Enlightenment emphasis on equality was too radical. Max Weber's well-known position was that science could not provide a reasonable moral equivalent to religion, and he theorized about a rationalized 'disenchanted' Western world (Hall, 1985:150). Weber did not believe that Enlightenment reason would inevitably bring progress, but that instrumental rationality might also structure social life into an "iron cage of bureaucracy". Weber's pessimism regarding this type of Enlightenment reason was adopted by Adorno, Horkheimer, and the Frankfurt school.

But even if we share Weber's pessimism about reason, it would be fatuous to reject all Enlightenment ideals because reason is incapable of delivering the goods consistently. And it would be equally ludicrous to suggest that the application of Enlightenment reason has always been oppressive. Formal reason has had an impressive influence on the fields of science and technology, allowing humans to find solutions to suffering, poverty and disease (Kurtz, 1994:15). Formal reason has also been used to argue for the expansion of knowledge, literacy and education as a universal right.

There are many historical examples that demonstrate how rationality has been used as an emancipatory tool which brought greater freedom to specific communities. Eighteenth century European bourgeois used arguments of rationality to escape from the ties of clericalism and feudalism; they convincingly argued that these systems, and their accompanying privileges, were simply not rational according to the economic logic of capitalism. This rationalism was extended to the proletariat, and radicalized by Marxism. The argument was similar: the bourgeois system and its accompanying privileges were simply not rational according to the logic of Marxian political economy. Similarly, the

first wave of the Western women's movement sought to demonstrate that the exclusion of women from the political system was not rational, and their inherent inferiority could not be proved using scientific data.

Although rationalism has been the basis for many modern projects of emancipation, it has never been clear exactly which version of rationality is liberating. The debate over what constitutes the 'true rationalism' continues into the present age, with different factions claiming to understand the one authentic rationalism which holds the key to human freedom.

This search for a true rationalism is seen in Popper's criticism of Marxism for being affiliated with "Platonic irrationalism" as opposed to the true, liberating rationalism of Socrates (Nederveen Pieterse, 1989/90:54). It is also seen in Althusser's problematic claim that Marxism was the true *science* of liberation, which could be distinguished from bourgeois *ideologies* of oppression (James, 1985:155). The true rational ideal is identified by Habermas and some modern critical theorists in the utopian ideal of communicative rationality, which is defended as separate from, and superior to potentially oppressive instrumental rationality.[3]

Before examining the uses of rationality in projects of imperial domination, certain qualifications must be made about the term rationality. In the examples that follow, I cite examples of instrumental rationality, or formal rationality. I acknowledge that to generalize about a specific conception of instrumental rationality can be problematic. Even so, I maintain that it is viable, and useful to discuss the uses of instrumental reason in a general, historical sense. I acknowledge that instrumental rationality has been an important part of technical 'progress', but my goal here is to excavate the history of formal rationality in projects of imperialism and human oppression.[4]

Leaving aside these debates about what constitutes the 'true' rationality, it is clear that certain aspects of instrumental rationality and its application through science allowed Europe to make what is referred to as technological and social 'progress'. In his work on the "Rise of the West", historical sociologist John Hall attributes a key role to the importance of the rational realm of science, and its successful application to industry

(1985:150). Importantly, the 'progress' of Europe, or, "Rise of the West", allowed the continent a global geo-political power which imposed a severe price on the rest of the world. Exposing the dark side of European modernity reveals a project of unprecedented global imperialism. This is why Dussel and other post-colonial theorists argue that European modernity truly began in 1492, the date that Europe "could constitute itself as a unified ego exploring, conquering, colonizing an alterity that gave back its image of itself" (1995:66; Quijano, 1995:202).

Post-colonial writings remind Western theorists that the achievements of Europe also include their achievements of empire, which were justified in part by reason. Said reminds the Western intellectual that in 1914 a small number of European countries controlled 85% of the earth's surface, and between 1878 and 1914 Europe attained direct control of outlying territory at an astounding rate of 240,000 square miles each year (1986:44). Nederveen Pieterse clearly articulates the crucial link between Enlightenment reason and power:

> While Enlightenment rhetoric solemnly spoke of reason in one breath with *freedom*, in actuality reason and science were increasingly mobilized as a foundation and instrument of order and *power*. Reason signified also method and system, it denoted science and technology, and as such it served as a principle or foundation of order and control (1989/90:54).

Rationality was used as an important demarcation device in Orientalist philosophy. In one of the letters Christopher Columbus wrote to his sponsor, the Queen of Spain, he explained (and foreshadowed) that his troops "seized by force the several Indians in order that they might *learn from us*" (as in Ross, 1994:53, emphasis mine).

The Orient was perceived by Europeans as an irrational dark abyss, whereas the Occident was held as the bearer of light and rationality which would bring liberation to the 'dark continent'. Rationality was used as a grading system that left 'colonized' people subject to a European classification schema, and clearly posited the non-European as Other. Edward Said summarizes this position, "the Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, 'different'; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, "normal" (1978:40).

The scientific achievements of the West were used as evidence to prove the

inherent superiority of 'rational' Western peoples. Said provides a mocking description of this position: "We had our Newtonian revolution; they didn't. As thinkers we are better off than they are." (1978:47). David Hume articulated a common intellectual opinion when he wrote in 1754:

> I am apt to suspect the Negroes, and in general all the other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even an individual eminent in action or speculation. No indigenous manufactures amongst them, no arts, no sciences (as in Nederveen Pieterse, 1989/90:56).

Europeans' ideas about themselves were shaped on this dichotomy of Rational, Enlightened Occident verus irrational, dark Orient. Orientalism is, in part a "Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient", but it is also a way for the Occident to define itself as being made up of rational, liberated subjects (Said, 1978:3).[5] Scholasticism, and the Enlightenment ideal of the rational pursuit of knowledge proved to be amenable with positions of extreme racism, and advocacy of brutal colonization schemes.[6] Nederveen Pieterse writes:

> Outside of Europe, the philosophy of reason formed part of imperial culture, part of its philosophy of order, its secular crusade against savagery, barbarism, darkness, in the name of civilization, exploitation and progress (Nederveen Pieterse, 1989/90:61).

The use of formal rationalism by Orientalists is not confined to the 18th or 19th Centuries. Said cites an article from the American Journal of Psychiatry written in 1972, which contends that the rational Western point of view is diametrically opposed from the Arab perspective, which is not "governed by this kind of logic, for objectivity is not a value in the Arab system" (1978:48). As we will see below, even Habermas supports the idea that rational argumentation, and its ultimate manifestation in the ideal speech situation, is part of the moral evolution of the European Enlightenment. Implicitly, Habermas suggests that this Enlightenment heritage should be expanded throughout the rest of the non-Western world, which is assumed to lack in the modern quality of communicative rationality.

Clearly formal reason can be used to liberate at the same time it can be used to control and dominate subjects of the empire. But it would be simplistic to create a

hermetic dichotomy where the winner of emancipatory rationality was Europe, and the losers were the dominated colonies. Rationality brought impressive prizes in science and technology for groups within core European nations and even within the colonies, as it also brought oppression and contradiction in core and periphery.

Just as formal reason served to bring political and economic power to certain strata, it has also been a tool to dominate nature, suppress difference, alienate marginal groups, encourage self-constraint, and has proved highly compatible with a whole host of social evils ranging from slavery to the atomic bomb. The same reason that brought antibiotics, anaesthetics, and clean water, has also been used to design and justify the arms race, the use of the atomic bomb in World War II, and other ecologically destructive technologies. Environmental theorists trace the intense destruction of the earth's resources to the discourse of rational control of the natural world. Bacon first articulated this concept, arguing that the calculating mind would become nature's master, controlling and taming it with knowledge (Agger, 1978:171).[7] Instrumental reason, as manifested in economic logic, supports a national accounting system which views environmental degradation and the pornography industry as productive, and unpaid woman's household labour as invisible and unproductive (Waring, 1989).

The writings of Michel Foucault have also shown us how reason and its application through science have been used to control the sphere of everyday life and human body. While the Frankfurt school examined how reason was used to control nature, Foucault wrote seminal studies describing how modern rationality controls individuals through social institutions and discourses like modern psychiatry. Foucault saw the Enlightenment not as the source of liberating reason, but as a starting point for the expansion of "reason's political power" into the most personal, private realms of human sexuality and sanity (Best & Kellner, 1991:35-36).

Recognizing the use of formal rationality in projects of domination does not mean that all concepts of reason should, or even could be abandoned, and that we should take a deliberately *irrational* approach. What is critical is to realize the limits of formal reason as a cornerstone of an emancipation project. We simply expect too much of reason. The tools of formal reason may be useful in showing us how to get from point A to B, but it

cannot always explain why we choose the values we do. Formal reason cannot always tell us what emancipatory goals are, or why we should pursue them, or even how we can pursue them in a way that is consistent with our values.

Nederveen Pieterse describes reason as a "donkey that is given a burden too heavy to carry" (1989/90:61). Instrumental reason has been associated with Enlightenment ideals which are not rational or irrational, but can instead be seen as part of the realm of *values*. Values such as liberty, equality, freedom, justice, happiness have an *extra-rational* dimension, meaning that they may not automatically be prioritized by a framework that prioritizes reason above all else. These values can certainly be discussed and prioritized using procedures of rational consensus, but it is not clear that these values can be totally reduced to the outcome of rational discussion.

Weber realized the limits of rationality as a tool for choosing values when he distinguished instrumental rationality from value rationality:

> Examples of pure value-rational orientation would be the actions of persons who, regardless of possible cost to themselves, act to put into practice their convictions of what seems to them to be required by duty, honour, the pursuit of beauty, a religious call, personal loyalty or the importance of some 'cause' no matter in what it consists. (as in Calhoun, 1991:70)

Calhoun observes that it is not at all clear why Weber terms these actions "*rational* actions", since it appears Weber was looking for a way to explain why people will eschew making instrumentally rational decisions in order to act in accordance with their normative principles (1991:70).

I have shown that the concept of modern emancipation has focussed on formal rationality as *the* means to bring greater human freedom. The application of instrumental reason may bring greater human freedom, but it may also bring greater hierarchy, exploitation, inequality, and suffering. This suggests that reason is not a very consistent, or universally acceptable cornerstone of emancipation. The key assumption of modern emancipation - that the application of reason will bring increased freedom - has been discredited by the lessons of modern history. The application of reason simply cannot insure the prioritization of Enlightenment ideals like equality and freedom. The idea that formal rationality is an insufficient basis for an emancipatory program will be explored

further in Chapter Five, where I argue that a reconstructed program of emancipation(s) must focus more explicitly on values.

Before proceeding we must briefly acknowledge that modern emancipation has had other failures besides an over-reliance on formal rationality. Arguably the great error of modern movements of emancipation has been to generalize emancipatory visions across time and space, without adequate attention to historical context or the pluralistic character of these movements. The modern project of emancipation has often been used in a singular sense which erased crucial differences, as postmodern theorists have rightly criticized. Emancipation has frequently been used as the great unifier, even though the member groups it applied to were never unified.

Emancipatory politics has proven highly susceptible to annexationist theories attempting to create a singular vision of emancipation. The modernist tendency has been to create rigid dichotomies between dominance and liberation - binaries which occlude the complex, heterogenous ambiguities inherent in any movement for liberation. The corollary to this position has been to focus on one factor (class, gender, ...), and the one agent (the proletariat, women....) which hold the key to this one-dimensional view of liberation. The archetypical example of this position was the idea that communism was "the riddle of history solved", which as Gardiner notes, absurdly implies that "human history could be reduced to a cipher that could be decoded in a definitive fashion" (1997:102).

Not only has this totalizing narrative "run roughshod over the cultures of non-Western people", but it has also "ignored the national and local conditions within the European experience" (Gardiner, 1997:101). For example, certain ethnic groups within core countries were not always extended the rational universal rights available to propertied white males. The American Declaration of Independence was written as 'We the people', but the people did not include native Americans, black slaves, workers and women.

The dangers of the modernist emancipatory metanarrative have been widely recognized by many 'post' theorists, including post-Marxists and feminists. Feminist praxis has shown the dangers of speaking of 'woman' in a totalizing universalizing sense

that erases important inequalities in power. Most famously, white heterosexual feminists have been widely criticized for generalizing their experiences of oppression, and ignoring their role in the oppression of other women and marginalized groups (hooks, 1984:43-66; Lorde, 1984:67; Frye, 1983:110).[8] These contradictions ultimately necessitate a multidimensional emancipatory framework, which I will explore in greater detail in Chapter Six.

To reiterate, in this section I have argued that a modern conception of emancipation based on formal reason has been used to liberate, but that its totalizing program has also facilitated oppression within countries, within bodies, within social movements such as the feminist movement, and within the European empire. We cannot casually dismiss the achievements of the Enlightenment, reason or modernity. This in fact, would be a grave, totalizing sin! What we must do is see the promise of modern emancipation as having a contradictory heritage, recognizing that instrumental reason was used both for and against the project of human liberation.

Having looked at the place of rationality in the program of modern emancipation, it is now useful to go beyond generalities and look more specifically at the attempts of Jurgen Habermas to reconstruct a modern concept of emancipation.

ii. Jurgen Habermas - Emancipation through Modernity

Habermas is one of the most famous and sophisticated exponents of a modern project of emancipation. Habermas is important because of his role as heir to the Frankfurt School tradition, which was unified by the objective to "radically reconstitute the project of human emancipation" (Piccone, 1980:21).[9] In this section I first set Habermas's approach within the broader framework of the Frankfurt tradition. I then outline Habermas's search for a normative foundation, and evaluate the benefits of this foundation for emancipatory social movements. Finally, I question whether rational discussion is the only factor behind consensus, and examine some evidence of eurocentrism in Habermas's work.

Habermas's work is incredibly prolific, complex, and continually expanding. One reviewer calls him not just a writer, but a "writing factory" (Breines, 1993:1245). In the remainder of this chapter my goal is *not* to provide a comprehensive portrayal of Habermas's writings, nor evaluate the philosophical significance of his work. Instead, I will attempt to answer the following query: how does Habermas attempt to salvage the idea of emancipation and how successful is this attempt? More specifically, how effective is his attempt to build a normative foundation and practical model of emancipation using an ideal of communicative utopia? My overall goal is to evaluate the relevance of Habermas's approach for contemporary emancipatory social movements.[10]

a. the Frankfurt legacy

The Frankfurt school reacted to the failings of modernism long before the term postmodern was coined. Although this makes the work of the Frankfurt School similar to that of many postmodern theorists, the Frankfurt theorists made more strident attempts to salvage positive aspects of the Enlightenment heritage. As we shall see below, this is also Habermas's aspiration.

Although members of the Frankfurt school attempted to reconstruct modern emancipation, they are also famous for losing a connection with practical struggles, particularly after members emigrated to America (Leonard, 1990:48; Best & Kellner, 1991:221). The Frankfurt theorists abandoned the idea of the proletariat as a "universal class", but maintained an interest in universal emancipation (Leonard, 1990:47). Yet they were "unwilling to ground this interest in the historical situation - the suffering - of any identifiable class or group" (*ibid*). Leonard argues that the effect was to "strip critical theory of any explicit identification with specific political practices"(*ibid*). The loss of this practical connection lead to a loss of faith in the unity of theory and practice, and the implicit belief that intellectual writings and certain aesthetic forms were the only viable form of resistance (Leonard, 1990:48). Best & Kellner write of the Frankfurt School's incapacity to conceptualize practical programs of emancipation: "[n]o alternative politics other than individual resistance is posited by Horkheimer and Adorno; consequently, an

inadequate politics remains a problem with critical theory to this day" (1991:221).

Having rejected the classic Marxian idea of the universal class agency of the proletariat, other suitable terrains of emancipation had to be found. The tools of emancipation chosen by each theorist varied: Horkheimer relied on the notion of immanent critique; for Adorno, the idea of negative dialectics played a central role; Marcuse developed a theory of human instincts (Best & Kellner, 1991). Eventually all the major theorists fell back on a type of critique that they had rejected in deterministic Marxist analysis where "an ahistorical essence becomes the criterion for the evaluation of the present" (Held, 1980:371). Ultimately, critical theory failed its own standard of uniting theory and practice, and was left interpreting the world, unable to make practical changes or help the dominated better understand their domination (Leonard, 1990:50).

As the key successor to the Frankfurt school, it is important to look at Habermas's response to this particular shortcoming of critical theory, and of modern emancipation more generally. Habermas is a major influence on the current generation of critical theorists, and his program to salvage the modern program of emancipation has been highly influential.

Unlike Foucault and other 'post' theorists, the purported guiding thread of Habermas's work is the desire to unite theory and practice (Giddens, 1985:124). He claims to be reconstructing historical materialism, or as Giddens puts it, "producing a version of Marxism relevant to today's modern world" (*ibid*). Held writes that Habermas's project is "an attempt to develop a theory of society with a practical intention: the self-emancipation of people from domination" (1980:25). Habermas believes that philosophy and social science should be united, and criticizes his intellectual forefathers in the Frankfurt school for taking "refuge in an abstract critique of instrumental reason", and for not taking seriously the need to make contributions to the social sciences (as in Dryzek, 1995:100).

It seems important to conduct an analysis of the "sincerity" of Habermas's claims to be interested in practical emancipation. Does Habermas prove the sincerity of his speech by actions which fulfil his promises and honour his commitments, as per his own requirements for a sincere truth claim? (Giddens, 1985:129). I will return to these

questions after I outline the basis of Habermas's search for a normative foundation, and the role played by rationality.

b. the search for a normative foundation within the modernity project

Unlike many post-structuralist/post-modernist thinkers, Habermas believes in a future, and this future involves the completion of the modernity project. Although Habermas readily agrees that there has been exclusion within the modernity project, he maintains that there is also unfulfilled emancipatory potential (Craib, 1992:232; Best & Kellner, 1991:234). Habermas believes that members of the Frankfurt school, especially Horkehimer and Adorno, reacted too strongly against the modernity project, and fail to recognize its unfulfilled potential (Best & Kellner, 1991:233).

Also unlike many 'post' writers, Habermas spends tremendous energy attempting to find a normative foundation from which to engage in social critique (Held, 1980:330). Hints of this normative standpoint can be found in his early writings on modernity, especially The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. In this work he describes a period of early capitalist modernity where a "bourgeois public sphere" sustains an arena for rational inquiry and debate that "mediates between the state and the private sphere" (Best & Kellner, 1991:235).

The ideals which Habermas valorized in the historical analysis of the bourgeois public sphere found a more abstract and universal basis with Habermas's linguistic turn. With this linguistic turn, and the development of the ideal of communicative action, Habermas conceptualized a normative reference point which is universal, and rooted in the structures of language and speech. Best & Kellner intelligibly summarize Habermas's complex approach:

> Instead of deriving the norms of critique from immanent historical forms, Habermas seeks the basis of a critical standpoint in the universally taken-for-granted features of language and communication. He thus moves towards a quasi-transcendental perspective that derives norms for social critique and the foundation of critical theory from the very structure of language and communication, and the capacities for communication and understanding developed historically in the human species (1991:24).

To understand Habermas's development of a quasi-transcendental communicative ideal, it is necessary to identify briefly the role played by rationality. Habermas argues that the Enlightenment and rationality have a "dual heritage of both progressive and regressive features; democracy, cultural differentiation and critical reason are for Habermas progressive, while the extension of instrumental rationality to all spheres of life is destructive" (Best & Kellner, 1991:241; also White, 1995:8). Habermas is highly critical of what he calls the "scientisation of politics", which describes the expansion of technical, instrumental rationality in modern politics, and the concomitant suppression of meaning (Giddens, 1985:134; Held, 1980:250,254). In the tradition of hermeneutic thought, Habermas also berates the exclusive use of instrumental reason in positivist models, arguing that these models of society create iron laws of social structures which do not leave room for human agency, and ignore humanity's inherent "self-reflection" and "reflexivity" (Giddens, 1985:125). Habermas criticizes scientific variants of Marxism for adopting a positivist approach, and not recognizing that an emancipated society would be one where humans were self-reflective, and controlled their destiny (Giddens, 1985:127).

Although Habermas believes that Western society overestimates the importance of science and instrumental rationality as the only form of knowledge, unlike earlier members of the Frankfurt school such as Marcuse and Horkheimer, he does not believe that all formal reason and positivist models must be destroyed. He instead attempts to reconcile hermeneutics with positivism (Giddens, 1985:126).

Habermas does this by positing three types of theory which reflect three universal "cognitive interests". Habermas wants to reject a Kantian approach of grounding these interests in a transcendental, ahistorical subject (Held, 1980:255). Habermas views these cognitive interests as universal, but concretely grounded in the specific historical-material conditions of the human species - a species that works, speaks, and uses power (*ibid*). These cognitive interests are thus given the status of "quasi-transcendental". The three sciences/theories can be thought of as representing the procedures required for successful human activity (Held, 1980:256).

The first type of theory is "empirico-analytic sciences" which is rooted in the

"technical interest". This science is manifested in positivist models, and is rooted in the universal human medium of work. Habermas does not see the use of instrumental reason as inherently evil, but instead criticizes how it has gained excessive power in modern society, which has taken decision-making power away from people. The second "hermeneutic science" is rooted in the "practical interest" which is concerned with human interaction. The hermeneutic sciences work through the universal human medium of language, and Habermas is specifically concerned with how linguistic interactions are distorted and confused by social structures.

The "critical sciences" are the third type of theory identified by Habermas. These critical sciences are rooted in humanity's 'emancipatory interest', which aims to rid communication and interaction of its distorted elements, and seeks to create knowledge which allows humans to be self-reflective and self-determining (Craib, 1992:234). The emancipatory interest works through the universal human medium of power, and is rooted in humans' ability to think and act self-consciously, to reason, and to make decisions based on known facts (*ibid*; Held, 1980:317). The model for the critical sciences is psychoanalysis, which attempts to clear the paths of distorted thought processes to allow for more rational, self-knowledgeable action.

The ideal state of humans' emancipatory and practical interest is represented by the ideal speech situation. In this state, all pertinent interests are brought forward, all participants have an equal chance of joining the debate, and a consensus is reached based on logical, reasoned argumentation - no manipulation or force is involved (Giddens, 1985:131). Clearly most situations are not like this, so why is the ideal speech situation important? For two reasons (*ibid*):

First, the ideal speech situation is not an arbitrarily constructed ideal, but is seen as inherent in the use of language. This is what is referred to as Habermas's linguistic turn, which is not exclusively 'his', but reflects broad trends in philosophical thought. In communicative uses of language the goal is to reach agreement, and Habermas sees this as the original mode of language; strategic uses of language are oriented towards compliance and seen as parasitic (Warnke, 1995:121). The very structure of human speech therefore anticipates a "form of life where truth, freedom, and justice are possible"

(Held, 1980:256).[11] An outcome of emancipation is built into the model of communication, and is seen as latent in even the most repressive systems (Slater, 1993:31; Piccone, 1980:26). Underneath every social system, and every form of domination, lies the critical emancipatory interest which is the basis for trying to undermine domination (Morrow, 1994:149). With Habermas's linguistic turn, a potential foundation for social change was found, which seemed to solve the leftist problem of finding an agent to carry out such change (Piccone, 1980:26).

The second reason why the seemingly unattainable ideal speech situation is deemed relevant is because Habermas believes that this ideal can measure deficiencies in the current system, and identify instances of distorted communication. The ideal speech situation is the ideal state at the end of the evolutionary tunnel. It holds out a goal where everyone participates in rational discussion, and communication is not distorted by power imbalances or manipulation.

The ideal speech situation reflects Habermas's belief in the idea of cognitive ethics, which holds that moral questions can be rationally justified through discourse (Held, 1980:330). Habermas is not saying what norms should be reached through rational discourse; he is setting up a procedural ethic which specifies what procedures will allow us to accept and reject different knowledge claims. The content of the norms will vary depending on the particularities of context. What is universal is the ideal of reaching these norms through free rational discussion where the norm is accepted by everybody affected without the presence of coercion. This is referred to as a deontological approach to morality which focuses on procedural justice and rights, as opposed to a teleological approach to morality which is organized around a substantive notion of what constitutes the good life (White, 1995:10).

From this discussion it should be obvious that Habermas is not suggesting that instrumental reason is an emancipatory panacea for the modern world. Habermas thought that by carving out a distinct concept of rationality which exceeded a instrumental-technical conception, and which corresponded to a notion of a just emancipated society, he could salvage the modern project of Enlightenment (White, 1995:5-6). Habermas is revising the modernity project by making a distinction between *social/communicative*

rationality and *instrumental rationality*. Instrumental rationality relates means to ends without considering the rationality of ends. In contrast, Habermas's ideal speech situation represents communicative rationality, where action is directed towards understanding, agreement, and rational, free consensus (Best & Kellner, 1991:238). An increase in communicative rationality is a measure of social progress, and is characterized by "a willingness to engage in rational discourse on topics of controversy, to allow free and equal access to all participants, to attempt to understand the issues and arguments, to yield to the force of the better argument, and to accept a rational consensus" (Best & Kellner, 1991:237).

Now that we have seen the general strategy behind Habermas's attempt to salvage modern emancipation, we can use this background to evaluate its practical implications.

c. *The practical lessons of Habermasian emancipation*

As mentioned above, by establishing the ideal of communicative action as a normative reference point Habermas believed he had found a way to diagnose oppression. and provide social reconstruction. Emancipation is seen as a process involving transcendence of systems of distorted communication (Held, 1980:256).

This conception of emancipation still leaves open the question: how is the actual struggle for emancipation going to be carried out? Habermas suggests one answer in psychoanalysis, which links theory with practice by incorporating self-reflection (Held, 1980:348). Even with this suggestion, it is still not clear how this model would be transferred to broader levels of social and political interaction, or why self-reflection should be seen as the main process of emancipation. Karl-Otto Apel criticized Habermas for equating self-conscious reflection with practical engagement in emancipatory struggles (as in Held, 1980:326).

Habermas has responded to these concerns by denying that he ever intended to conflate these phenomena, and putting forward a theory of three levels of enlightenment (as in Held, 1980:348-9). The first level involves the "formation and extension of critical theorems" which can "stand up to scientific discourses". The second level involves the

"organization of process of enlightenment" which occurs when individuals and groups use theory to eradicate the repressive, distorted nature of communication. This second level is necessary for the confirmation of theorems developed in the first level. Finally, the third level of enlightenment, which is clearly distinguished from the second level, involves the "selection of appropriate strategies, the solution of tactical questions, and the conduct of the political struggle". Habermas suggests that the first level of enlightenment needs to work with the second level where the processes of enlightenment are organized, to help the development of agents capable of full participation in rational discussions about action (Held, 1980:349). However, the third level, which involves a high level of uncertainty, risk, context-specific variables, cannot be validated by enlightenment theorems in the same way (*ibid*). To put it another way, theory cannot aid the day-to-day political decision-making process, and cannot be used to justify actions or political strategies.

To this we might respond by asking, how relevant is Habermas's vision of emancipation? Is it capable of providing significant practical advice for emancipatory movements? It is exceedingly difficult to criticize Habermas for a lack of theoretical sophistication. He avoids the dogmatic certainty of orthodox Marxism and bravely confronts the complexity of the modern world (Giddens, 1985:138). Even so, Habermas can be criticized for creating a highly abstract theory with weak emancipatory potential.

Giddens writes that Habermas's stated goal to reunite theory and praxis is scarcely fulfilled, given that the practical implications of his work are so difficult to discern (1985:137). It remains unclear how his theory relates to traditional conceptions of socialism (*ibid*). It is not clear what forces will change capitalism, what the new society would resemble, or how latent structures of emancipation will emerge (Held, 1980:376-378).

Habermas is critical of positivism's neglect of human agency, yet he provides little help in specifying what agents, or which actions are needed to bring socio-economic emancipation (Love, 1995:59). Presumably Habermas would support new social movements, which he believes interject questions of meaning into the 'scientized' political sphere, but he does not expand this point beyond a general level of discussion,

nor does he determine which agents will deal with broader questions of economic distribution. The focus on new social movements as the only bulwarks against the encroaching functionalist logic of a progressively rationalized system creates a rather bleak image of "struggle at the margins", where movement participants can "only hurl themselves against an administrative Leviathan" (White, 1995:11). Habermas writes that for new social movements, "the issue is not primarily one of compensations that the welfare state can provide [of redistribution], but of defending and restoring endangered ways of life" (as in Love, 1995:56). This focus on the colonization of the lifeworld ignores the more systematic material colonialism involved in many Southern emancipatory social movements.

Other than these general comments on new social movements, Habermas is insistent that communicative action follows its own development logic, and "refuses to posit a revolutionary subject or to prescribe a rational society" (Love, 1995:59). Held writes of the resulting problems of agency in Habermas's work:

> there is little approaching a revolutionary subject in Habermas's argument; and this despite the fact that he recognizes the need for a theory such as his to be able to identify the subject of emancipation. Processes of actual transformation remain unthematized: we remain very much in the dark as to the nature of political processes and events...the practical implications of the theory are underdeveloped.(1980:376).

Although Habermas does not suggest answers to these 'mundane' practical questions, this is not always seen as problematic by his supporters (Piccone, 1980:26).[12]

It is also not clear how the ideal of communicative ethics would ever be approached (Spivak, 1990:72), or when humans' highest stage of "inner cognitive logic will arrive" (Held, 1980:375). Held writes that "at the empirical level there is no ready evidence to support Habermas's contention of the potentially imminent realization of a communicative ethics" (1980:375). How helpful is the ideal of communicative rationality, when it remains light years away from the practical reality of many Southern social movements struggling to survive in violent, oppressive conditions? What advice can Habermas give these movements?

Take the example of the Zapatista peace talks with the Mexican government. When the theoretical ideal of rational consensus is looked at in a specific case study, we

find that the communicative ideal is difficult, if not impossible to even approach. Can Habermas's ideal speech situation only point out the extreme distance between empirical reality and the theoretical ideal?

From the very beginning of the peace process, the Zapatistas warned that the government would sign agreements without any intention of carrying out what they had signed on to. Like their historical predecessor, Emiliano Zapata, the EZLN were wary of the prospects of reaching any consensus with the powerful federal government. Historically in Mexican post-revolution politics, "consensus" has meant either co-optation into the highly corporatist one-party system, or outright betrayal and repression. Because the Zapatistas resisted PRI co-optation, and insisted on being equal partners in a genuine dialogue, betrayal and repression was the outcome of the recent peace process. The Zapatistas then saw dissensus - not consensus - as the only acceptable option.

On February 16, 1996 the federal government and the EZLN signed the first set of accords on Indigenous Rights and Culture, resulting from the Dialogue of San Andrés. On November 29, 1996 the government legislative commission, the Commission on Concordance and Pacification (COCOPA) formulated legislation on these accords which was accepted by both the EZLN and the Federal government representative. Both negotiating parties agreed to respond in a simple 'yes' or 'no' fashion to the drafted legislation, without offering any further observations, revisions, or corrections.

Soon after, however, both the Interior Ministry and President Zedillo back-tracked and made an entirely different counterproposal which essentially rejected COCOPA's initiative and the San Andrés Accords in their entirety. The EZLN reacted by insisting that it would not return to the bargaining table until the San Andrés Accords on Indigenous Rights and Culture were implemented.[13] From that moment up until the present day, the government has responded not by 'rational discussion', or attempts to reach consensus, but by heightening military presence and repression in the state of Chiapas.[14] This 'low-intensity' warfare appears designed to wear down and provoke the Zapatistas in order to justify a full-scale military intervention.

For the Zapatistas, there was value in not reaching a consensus with the PRI, and leaving the bargaining table. This allowed them to avoid co-optation, and maintain their

dignity. This example suggests that in some cases, particularly where the power differentials between dialogue participants are extreme, the ideal of communicative consensus may be impossible to even approach. Dissensus is the only alternative for a weaker, persecuted party being forced into an 'artificial' consensus. Achieving a genuine consensus based on communicative rationality in the Zapatista case would have been nearly impossible, and Habermas's ideal offers little practical advice in this situation.

Habermas is a highly sophisticated thinker who clearly recognizes the continued presence of distorted communication and dissensus. Although he recognizes these possibilities, his theoretical focus is on the possibility of coming to an understanding, an agreement, a consensus, and he generally "thinks that it is possible to delineate procedures to adjudicate differences and come to consensus" (Best & Kellner, 1991:241-242). Because of this focus, little light is shed on the possible value and strategies surrounding questions of dissensus and difference - questions which seem particularly important in highly inequitable situations when even a glimmer of communicative rationality is not present.[15]

This brings up the question of whether Habermas's approach takes attention away from practical, historical problems of emancipation. His quasi-foundationalist approach has been challenged by postmodern critics for its use of universals. I would argue that the problem is less Habermas's insistence on the importance of universals, and more the manner in which he grounds universals in transcendental abstraction. This tactic takes attention away from actual historical struggles for emancipation. As will be made more clear in Chapter Five, I argue that provisional, quasi-universal values such as 'democracy' are a politically important source of social critique and solidarity. However, I also argue that the focus should not be on deriving values from a transcendental grounding strategy, but on understanding how specific values are validated by historical and empirical struggles for emancipation, as well as from dialogue between and within emancipatory movements. This approach is not fundamentally incompatible with the Habermasian ideal speech situation, which, as mentioned earlier, is a procedural ethic. But it is different in that its focus is on an explicit examination of the values that are appropriate in different contexts, rather than strictly focussing on the means used to reach these

values.

This argument does not intend to dismiss procedural ethics in favour of a teleological conception. My point is that a strict focus on procedural ethics may lead to a neglect of the specificities of oppressive and emancipatory forces. As White notes, "the precise shape of [Habermas's] more just society - what he had earlier called "emancipated" - remained obscure"[16] (1995:10). With the Habermasian turn in critical theory, attention is taken away from agents of history and moved to a more general level of systemic theory and assumptions, diverting attention away from concrete and practical emancipatory activities. Held writes, "as the universalistic elements in the theories of communication and social evolution have come to the fore, the situational and practical aspects of social inquiry have declined in importance" (1980:375). This distancing from actual emancipatory struggles leads Whitebook to claim that Habermas's framework is fundamentally non-utopian (1988), while Antonio argues that his emancipatory theory is so immersed in linguistic worlds, that it cannot detail "emancipatory possibilities within specific historical settings and concrete historical time" (1984:47). Although several practical theories could be considered critical theories as per Habermas's epistemological standards (e.g. Feminism, Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed, liberation theology...), Habermas has taken little interest in these theories, as Dryzek notes, "preferring to confine his discussion of critical social science to the epistemological and metatheoretical level" (1995:100).[17] It is also interesting that as Habermas's work has progressed, "any notion of a socialist democracy seems to have receded almost completely from view" (White, 1995:13).

Habermas takes the contemporary need for emancipation seriously, and for this he should be commended. Habermas also gives a highly sophisticated vision of emancipation which avoids crude Marxist determinism, and totalizing rejections of rationality. This too is laudable. However, in his attempts to ground his emancipatory vision and find a quasi-transcendental normative reference point, Habermas ultimately moves towards abstract philosophy, and away from social theory and practical political struggles. This is a direction of dubious utility for those experiencing tremendous repression and material exploitation, such as the indigenous people in the state of

Chiapas. Best & Kellner write:

> [Habermas's] linguistic and communicative turn has steered him away from developing a critical theory of the present age and toward neo-Kantian philosophical perspectives, developing a theory of communicative action in the realm of theoretical, practical, and aesthetic reason. While the classical critical theorists charted developments within the capitalist system from the death of Marx to the present...[Habermas] has turned to interrogations of philosophy and classical social theory rather than to developing a critical theory of the present age (1991:253-254).

d. is rational discussion the only, or most important factor behind consensus?

Although Habermas has attempted to reconstruct the Enlightenment program of reason using an ideal of rationality based on the theory of communicative action, he still prioritizes the development of rational communication above other values, arguing that only through communicative rationality - the paramount value - can agreement on other values such as justice, peace, or love be reached. Habermas wants norms to be rationally grounded in a situation of rational consensus. Viewing rationality as the paramount social value/procedure may purportedly be grounded in the universal condition of speech acts, but it does not necessarily have universal appeal.

A comparison between Gandhi and Habermas reveals the situatedness of Habermas's faith in rationality (Nederveen Pieterse, 1992:30). In striking contrast to Habermas's faith in rationality, Gandhi argued that "the attribution of omnipotence to reason is as bad a piece of idolatry as is worship of a stick and stone and believing it to be God" (*ibid*). It is not that Habermas's notion of communicative rationality should be abandoned. It is not to deny Habermas's claim that rational dialogue is an important and even fundamental part of any value assessment. The point here is that moral judgements do not, and perhaps will never, rest solely on rational evaluations, but will also involve extra-rational elements of forgiveness, patience, humility, compassion, and gratitude (Cortese, 1986:152,153).

Although a consensus on moral judgements may be accompanied by rational discourse, might it be possible that this consensus is not necessarily *caused* by the presence of rational emancipatory discourse? When consensus is achieved, does this only occur because participants agree on the ideal of undistorted communication? It seems

that consensus may also occur because people share values such as justice, love, dignity and peace. Sometimes these values are important enough to force movement participants to act in ways that make communicative ideals of rationality appear secondary. For example, Chinese student protestors in Tiananmen Square in 1989 actively chose death, but not because of a rational consensus on its value, or because these students were victims of distorted communication. Death was seen as the only way to act in accordance with a particularly important value in the protestors' identity: honour (Calhoun, 1991).

e. eurocentric remnants

It appears that for all Habermas's sophistication, he does not succeed in helping us bridge the gap between theory and practical emancipatory struggles, particularly in the developing world. One final point must be made on this topic. Although he brilliantly criticizes many of the assumptions of modernity, there is an implicit Eurocentrism residing in his work.

Habermas's conception of modernity focuses on the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and the French Revolution, and does not consider the important role of the Conquest in constituting the modern ego (Dussel, 1995:74). Habermas's theoretical approach also parallels modernization theory in that he assumes modernity will bring goodness and development to 'backward' nations (Nederveen Pieterse, 1989/90:52).

Habermas is too sophisticated a theorist to postulate a simple, direct relationship between social evolution and repression. He clearly recognizes that the rationalization of the social system which occurs with social evolution involves a form of oppression as the system imposes its functionalist reason on the individual and effectively "colonizes the lifeworld" (Craib, 1992:241; White, 1995:8). Still, Habermas also believes that with modernity, different areas of our lifeworld are rationalized in a positive sense, meaning that they come to be based on mutual, rational agreement rather than tradition. As White puts it, "an increasing number of spheres of social interaction are removed from guidance by unquestioned tradition and opened to coordination through consciously achieved agreement" (Craib, 1992:241; White, 1995:8). In this sense, Habermas does imply that

modernity brings a general, yet contradictory and uncertain trend towards less repression and distortion (Craib, 1992:237).

Habermas's notion of progress and development also employs a system of ranking based on the criterion of "cognitive adequacy". Only the West is seen as having "post-conventional" cognitive domains which dominate (ie. institutions of law and science). These domains are free from traditional codes of conduct, and are organized according to warranted principles (Giddens, 1985:133). This evaluation leads Giddens to write that although Habermas is highly critical of the West in his work, there is also a "real sense in which the West is best" (1985:133).

Habermas also sets his theory within a hierarchy of social evolution, where cultures move up the social ladder from "mythical", to "metaphysical-religious", to "modern", all assuming that the lifeworld becomes more rationalized (and more emancipated) at the last stage (Nederveen Pieterse, 1989/90:52). Habermas does not clearly specify what mechanisms move societies from one state to another (*ibid*). Although he suggests economic mechanisms are important, he does not pay much attention to the power of transnational economic forces in colonial and neocolonial relationships, and their effect on the status of peripheral societies. Most of Habermas's discussions of economic tendencies pay little attention to these coercive international economic relationships, even though the development of capitalism was inextricably intertwined in the colonial process, and issues of international resource transfers remain critical today (Held, 1980:376).

Habermas's universal concepts also draw heavily from the specific circumstances of Western capitalism, which may lead him to minimize the continued importance of conflicts over distribution. Habermas's Western focus is evident in his crisis theory, which is based on the fiscal, legitimation, and latent motivational crises of advanced capitalist welfare states (Morrow, 1994:186-187). He also theorizes about topics such as the diminished importance of class conflict, the effects of "welfare capitalism" on our inner integrity, and the attenuation of economic cycles by government intervention (Giddens, 1985:134-6). All of these topics have questionable relevance in a non-Western context where conflicts over distribution and extreme cyclical fluctuations persist.

In sum, Habermasian innovations of a modern program of emancipation are theoretically sophisticated, and offer important contributions to our understanding of communication, language, and rationality, but they are less useful in understanding concrete emancipatory struggles such as the one in Chiapas. Habermas's quasi-foundational approach takes attention away from practical emancipatory exigencies as well as empirical and historical questions. As will be seen in the next chapter, ignorance of the practical manifestations of the imperialist project play an important part in the continuation of Eurocentric scholarship. Habermas's approach also appears congruent with the Eurocentric notions of progress/reason described in the first half of this chapter. These tendencies reinforce my earlier claim that Western theories of emancipation, even in their most sophisticated manifestations like Habermasian critical theory, have great difficulty understanding movements of emancipation in ways that are not essentialist, totalizing, or Eurocentric.

In Chapter Two, we will examine how postmodern theorists have responded to the problems of modern emancipation, and examine what contributions they make to a project of non-essentialist, non-Eurocentric understanding of emancipatory movements.

1. The events unfolding in Europe certainly attest to a substantial transference of loyalty from religion to reason. Nederveen Pieterse describes the movement towards the worship of science:

> ...in the French Revolution, Paris...was also referred to as the 'True Rome', and the 'Vatican of Reason'. Notre Dame was converted to the Temple of Reason and for the occasion it was the site for the Festival of Reason (1793)...Robespierre instituted the Cult of the Supreme Being as a new paganism in which Reason was worshipped as a goddess. In a similar vein, Comte devised a rational substitute for the traditional religious society...This thrust toward rational utopias played a part in Condorcet's social physics, in Bentham's utilitarianism, and in positivism...the Enlightenment inherited the crusading zeal, the messianic fervour of Christendom - Christian universalism and globalism, but now in the name of reason (1989/90:57).

2. It would be highly misleading to imply that there was a unilateral movement towards a monolithic paradigm of rationalism, since an alternate, yet subordinate paradigm of resistance have always existed. Polanyi speaks of the "double movement" of 19th century social history: the extension of economic logic was always accompanied by the principle of social protection, based on the fear that leaving the fate of soil and people to technology and the market would destroy them both (1960:130). Similarly, Taylor describes the importance of Counter-Enlightenment thought [eg. Romantic thought, Hegelian organicist traditions] in resisting the move towards a scientific ideology (1992). Taylor terms the dominant paradigm the "expansionist" world view, and places the "ecological" world view as its contra position. This ecological world view espouses a non-dualistic view of humans and nature, insists on the interrelatedness of the parts of the universe, and views nature as intrinsically valuable. This tradition has more recently been carried on by deep ecologists, eco-feminists, and social ecologists.

3. Although Habermas agrees with Weber on the dangers of instrumental rationality, he also believes in the possibilities of a "liberating reason". This should not be dismissed as a flaw, but recognized as a source of tension and potential confusion, since rationality is held both as a source of oppression (in its instrumental form), and a potential source of freedom (in its manifestation as communicative rationality). Habermas's position on rationality will be elaborated in the second part of this chapter.

4. Given the postmodern tendency to casually dismiss blanket conceptions of reason and rationality, it is important to acknowledge that instrumental rationality is much different than traditions of "practical reason" and "emancipatory rationality". But my goal here is not to assess the potential of these alternate rationality projects and debates, or evaluate Habermas's success in developing these alternatives. Some attention will be given to these questions in the latter half of these chapter, but this is an immense project, and a comprehensive treatment would greatly exceed the framework of this thesis.

5. Said's writings have shown how the idea of a rational Occident was supported through European studies of the 'Orient'. These 'scientific studies' played an important part in managing the colonies and justifying the logic of imperialism. Said uses the example of Lord Balfour's writings on Egypt (1978:33-38). These writings make clear that the European ideal of the rational pursuit of knowledge is closely linked to the rationalization and facilitation of colonization. In Said's words,

> knowledge of subject races or Orientals is what makes their management easy and profitable; knowledge gives power, more power requires more knowledge, and so on in an increasingly profitable dialectic of information and control (1978:36).

6. Todorov describes how formal rationalism was also used by Spanish scholar and philosopher Ginés de Sepúlveda to justify the inherent inferiority of the native Americans and an aggressive program of colonization in the Americas (1982:152-3). Sepúlveda participated in a scholarly debate in Spain against Dominican bishop of Chiapas, Bartolomé de Las Casas. Sepúlveda, an authority on Aristotle, used Aristotelian logic to establish a distinction between those reasonable creatures who are born masters, and inferior creatures, who understand but don't possess rationality, who are born to be slaves. Sepúlveda declared that hierarchy is natural state of human kind, and examined this hierarchy in an Aristotelian spirit to justify conquest against the Indians:

> In wisdom, skill, virtue and humanity, these people are as inferior to the Spaniards as children are to adults and women to men; there is as great a difference between them as there is between savagery and forbearance, between violence and moderation, almost - I am inclined to say - as between monkeys and men (as in Todorov, 1982:153).

7. The Baconian doctrine, prevalent up until the present day, has equated scientific knowledge with technological control over nature. William Leiss, one of the most sophisticated ecological leftists, argues that Bacon was an important source of the belief that science and technology could be a panacea for society's woes - if only we could destroy the "idols" which worked against the scientific method! (1990). The irony is that Bacon's dream has been fulfilled in such an extreme way that we have created our own "idols of technology" based on an unrealistic faith in science, technology and rationalism. These idols lead us to believe that technology controls us, as society forgets that choices are grounded in value positions (Leiss, 1990:64). The paradox of this control is that modern science appears to give us the tools to control nature, but our lack of self-control as a species has lead to environmental problems which are well beyond the scope of technological fixes (Leiss, 1990:65).

8. Audre Lordre writes:

> ...to imply...that all women suffer the same oppression simply because we are women is to lose sight of the many varied tools of patriarchy. It is to ignore how those tools are used by women without awareness against each other. (1984:67).

9. Theorists such as Ray Bhaskar demonstrate that Habermas is not the only heir to the Frankfurt tradition and proponent of a modern conception of emancipation. I focus on Habermas, however, because he is arguably the most influential theorist of modern critical theory.

10. This type of 'hands-on' approach to Habermas might not be acceptable to many Habermasian specialists, who can invariably produce some point in Habermas's prolific writings to shelter him from any criticism at hand. Although I acknowledge the difficulties of having an uninformed debate about any theorist, I believe that it is vital for non-specialists interested in emancipation to participate in debates about Habermas's writings. Too often a partial understanding of Habermas's work is used as an intimidation factor, and a reason for staying silent in debates about the relevance of his work. If his theory is so complex that one must study it for a decade before being ready to fully participate in a rational debate, then this too, is an pertinent comment on Habermas's relevance for emancipatory social movements.

    This point is especially relevant given Habermas's belief that a critical social science should be verified not by experimentation, nor by a judgement on interpretive plausibility, but by what Dryzek describes as "action on the part of its audience who decide that, upon reflection, the theory gave a good account of the causes of their sufferings and effectively pointed to their relief" (1995:99). For such reflection to take place, the issues of the critical theory must be made accessible to an audience beyond a roomful of experts, and in a language that is accessible to more than a handful of Habermasian-jargon-specialists.

11. A full depiction of Habermas's linguistic turn, and its use of Austin's distinction between illocutionary and perlocutionary effects, exceeds the constraints of this analysis. More detail on Habermas's linguistic turn can be found in Warnke (1995:121-124).

12. Some of Habermas's supporters, however, are very interested in exploring the practical applications of his work (Dryzek, 1995; Pensky, 1995; Love, 1995). Dryzek concedes that there is a "shortfall between the programmatic statements of Habermas...and what has actually been accomplished in terms of putting critical theory into social science practice", and writes that "it is probably fair to say that [Habermas's] idea of emancipatory social science never really inspired much in the way of empirical work". Even with these concessions, Dryzek gives a provocative analysis of the potential practical application of Habermas's concept of communicative rationality (1995:100-116). He suggests that communicative action can serve as a framework for policy making (encouraging legitimation based on communicative interaction rather than

on technical expertise), an evaluative principle used to judge social practices like the mass media and public inquiries, and a methodological standard in policy analysis (*ibid*). Theorists such as Cohen and Arato have also been inspired by Habermas's theory of communicative action, and developed novel conceptions of democratization which see civil society as a vital sphere for rational, public discussion (1992).

13. Even before the government reneged on the San Andrés accords, the EZLN felt forced to suspend a consultation process they felt was a farce. On August 29th, 1996, the EZLN laid out five "minimum conditions" which had to be met before negotiations continued. These conditions included the release of presumed-Zapatista prisoners, the need for serious and concrete proposals by the federal government on the issues of democracy, an end to police and military persecution of indigenous communities in Chiapas, and a commitment by the federal government to a true dialogue - characterized by a government negotiating team with respect for the Zapatista delegation, a will to negotiate, and decision-making capacity.

14. On March 8, 1997 state judicial police violently kidnapped two Jesuit priests and two *campesinos*. All four were held without charges and tortured. On March 14, 1997, public security forces, the judicial police, and the Mexican army attacked unarmed Zapatista supporters in *San Pedro*, leaving four supporters dead, 29 beaten, detained, or disappeared, and the remaining *San Pedro* residents expelled from their homes which were subsequently looted (Chiapas95, April 2, 1997). On April 17th Cocopa visited Chiapas and its spokesperson reported that he saw more police and soldiers than civilian officials, and what he did *not* see was development projects and attempts at reconciliation in the poverty-stricken region (Chiapas95, April 19, 1997). In early April, the Mexican army announced the establishment of four new military camps in "strategic" areas of Chiapas (Chiapas95, April 23, 1997). A coalition of NGOs (CONPAZ) criticized the low-intensity war against the EZLN, and reported that in the first three months of 1997 alone, there were 22 politically-motivated murders, 768 detentions and arrests, and 2,419 people expelled from their homes and communities (*ibid*).

15. Love theorizes that Habermas's close proximity to liberal philosophy explains why he recognizes, yet minimizes the value of difference (1995:57-63). She questions whether Habermas is sufficiently self-reflective about the tensions between socialist and liberal conceptions of democracy that his work embodies (1995:57-58). These tensions are reflected in the ideal speech situation, which Habermas interprets as a situation of "symmetrical intersubjectivity", or in more human verbiage, the idea of equality between individuals where there is unconstrained consensus, unimpaired self-representation, and universal norms (1995:58). This is a universal ideal where no communication differences between classes, genders, or races are recognized, and where every human has equal access to speech (*ibid*).

As Love, and others feminist critics like Iris Young have noted,

> the problem with these equivalences - or symmetries - is that they treat different people by the same standard. That is, they abstract from concrete individuals' specific abilities and needs, to establish relations of "formal reciprocity" between "generalized Other" (Love, 1995:58-59).

Love argues that Marx himself recognized the insufficiencies of equal rights, and postulated that at a higher phase of communist society the basic organizing principle would instead be, "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" (1995:59). Although Habermas recognizes the problem of translating different needs into equal rights, he moves towards a liberal perspective that sees the specificities of cultural traditions as "too integrative, too unreflective", and reaffirms the need for "autonomous and publicly conducted debate" (as in Love, 1995:60). The forms of cultural traditions cannot be eliminated, but should adapt themselves though a learned capacity for impartial application of universal norms (Warnke, 1995:131).

The feminist ethic of care, which Love and others feminists juxtapose against Habermas's symmetry, goes "beyond the liberal principle of equal rights", and "allows individuals to embrace cultural traditions, to express their specific needs, and to speak in their own voices" - all in a way that is more congruent with a Marxian ethic of "from each according to her ability..." (Love, 1995:60). Love and others such as Charles Taylor argue that it is only by recognizing difference, and aiming to form a "heterogeneous public" can oppression be overcome (1995:62). Taylor advocates a different relationship between universal principles

and cultural values than Habermas; he favours a "politics of recognition" where universalism may sometimes be "willing to weigh the importance of certain forms of uniform treatment against the importance of cultural survival, and opt sometimes in favour of the latter" (as in Warnke, 1995:135-6). Warnke suggests that not only should "forms of life" be "molded to meet liberal principles halfway, as Habermas stresses", but that "the meaning of consensually justified principles must be molded to meet cultural values and traditions half-way as well" (1995:136).

Indeed in the case of Chiapas, overcoming the specific nature of the oppression of indigenous peoples might require more than a situation of equal rights. Overcoming this oppression might mandate a situation where indigenous communities were allowed a disproportionate amount of discursive space and resources in order to catch up to standards of the 'equal citizen', as well the resources to maintain the vitality of their specific cultural traditions, and influence the criterion of universal standards of citizenship in Mexico.

16. Important exceptions to this trend include Habermas's writings on democratic and legal institutions. White writes,

> Even though the precise institutional implications of Habermas's conception of democracy remained unclear through the 1980s, there were other aspects of it that were developed in enough detail to permit a fruitful engagement with various issues in democratic theory (1995:11).

17. Habermas tellingly admits that his work in the last two decades has primarily focussed on "problems of theory construction" (as in Antonio, 1984:47).

CHAPTER TWO POSTMODERN EMANCIPATION FROM MODERNITY

> Not all people exist in the same Now. They do so only externally, by virtue of the fact that they may all be seen today. But that does not mean that they are living at the same time with others.
>
> Ernst Bloch (1977:22).

> Postmodernism, like modernism, may well turn out to be, in some respects, another internalization of the international role of the West.
>
> Kumkum Sangari (1995:147).

This chapter looks at the attitude of postmodern theorists towards emancipation. In the first section, I examine the postmodern position generally, trying to point out where it succeeds and falls short addressing emancipation. In the second section of this chapter, I will look briefly at Michel Foucault's position towards a program of change and emancipation.

The postmodern theoretical turn has certainly brought enabling components. Even so, I criticize postmodernism for its totalizing attitudes toward modern analytical tools, its covert eurocentrism, its removal from practical struggles, and its general ambivalence towards the concept of emancipation.

In this discussion I will use the term 'postmodern' in a general sense, acknowledging the shortcomings of such an approach. There is certainly cause to be suspicious towards general statements about 'postmodernism', since they are often employed to dismiss a huge, and varied body of work. However, I also believe that postmodern proponents can share general traits such as a strangely modern sense of certainty about the 'postmodern' approach, totalizing attitudes towards modernity, and a resistance to critically examine the political implications of their writings. Although I recognize the huge variations in work labelled 'postmodern', I put forth what I believe to be some postmodern *tendencies* - as opposed to omnipresent traits.

i. Postmodern Anti-Emancipation

To put the matter rather simply, postmodern emancipation is a program of emancipation from the modernity project. In this sense, we can think of postmodern sensibilities as representing the *anti*-emancipation option. Seidman writes that postmodernism "gives up the modernist idol of human emancipation", and "carries no promise of liberation - of a society free of domination" (1991:131).

Although postmodernism shares with critical theory a critical attitude towards traditional philosophy, postmodern theories go further in rejecting traditional philosophy, suggesting the existence of a new historical moment, and proposing a radically new theoretical approach (Best & Kellner, 1991:216). For example, Baudrillard dismisses categories of traditional class analysis (class, political economy, emancipation) retained by critical theory, and Lyotard rejects the rationality and systematization that a critical theorist like Habermas retains (Best & Kellner, 1991:216).

Although certain exceptions exist[1], the majority of postmodern research does not think in utopian terms, and does not possess an underlying, substantive political project of emancipation (McLaren, 1986:390). Best & Kellner suggest that most postmodern theory is characterized by "anti-utopianism, political pessimism, and renunciation of hopes for radical political change", and motivated by a "disillusionment with liberal ideals of progress and radical hopes for emancipation" (1991:293). Nederveen Pieterse does envision an emancipatory project underlying poststructuralism and postmodernism, but it is a program of emancipation from the Enlightenment project (1992:24).

Postmodern scepticism towards emancipation is not surprising if we view these theories as a sort of rear-view mirror perspective on the dark side of modernity. The two great metanarratives of Capitalism and Socialism - both intended to liberate through their rational politico-economic projects - have produced incredible dogma, disillusionment, waste, and human suffering. The great promises of modernity to emancipate are tainted by historical experience, or as Lyotard so vividly writes:

> After Auschwitz and Stalinism, it is certain that no one can maintain that the hopes which were bound up with modernity have been fulfilled. To be sure, they have not been forgotten, but rather destroyed (as in Nederveen Pieterse, 1989/90:48).

Indeed, it is not ground-breaking news that the "once hegemonic emancipation projects of

modernity are under heavy post-modern fire" (Schuurman, 1993:187).

What are the components of this anti-emancipation position? As suggested in Chapter One, modernism was never unified, and critics of modernity existed long before the term 'postmodern' became fashionable. Traits associated with 'postmodern' such as "self-reflexivity, ambiguity, indeterminacy, paradox" can be found in key modern traditions (Best & Kellner, 1991:279). Sayer argues that the analyses of modernity offered by Marx and Weber presage many post-modern themes (1991). Callinicos contends that skepticism towards metanarratives is as old as the Enlightenment itself (1989). Benhabib disputes that postmodernism was the first to deny that truth is transparent, and insists that Western philosophy is complex, and has not always claimed to have direct access to the truth (as in Kaufman, 1994:70). Antonio observes that nearly a century ago "pragmatists launched an unrelenting anti-foundationalist attack against Newtonian and Cartesian meta-assumptions", with critics like John Dewey defending the autonomy of local communities, the partial and plural nature of truth, the diversity of modes of understanding, and the intermingling of values and facts (1991:157). Best & Kellner write:

> A whole tradition of modern theory (i.e., Marx, Dewey, Weber, and hermeneutics) calls for theory to be reflexive and self-critical, aware of its presuppositions, interests, and limitations. This tradition is thus non-dogmatic and open to disconfirmation and revision, eschewing the quest for certainty, foundations, and universal laws (although most modern theory fails to avoid some of these sins). (1991:257).

Contemporary 'postmodern' movements against modernism have much in common with these earlier intellectual movements, yet there is obviously some sense in which they are distinct and unique. Although commonalities with past theoretical traditions are often ignored, it would be equally ludicrous to insist that *nothing* new is going on. Postmodern arguments are at least distinct in that they exist in a specific time and place in intellectual history.

The strength and direction of postmodern movements is difficult to define in an absolute sense. First of all, what do we mean by 'postmodern'? It could be argued that postmodernism is perhaps the most disabused term in the entire social science lexicon, often more a symbol of 'hipness', than a signifier indicating substantive analysis (Kellner,

1995:43-46). This term is used to apply to a vast array of subjects; everything from the writings of Michel Foucault, to 'postmodern Sundays' on local radio station Power 92, to the 'postmodern' Zapatista rebels.

For this reason, any criticism of postmodernism must be made with extreme caution, because it is not altogether clear which postmodernism is being referred to. Kellner & Best make a useful distinction between "extreme postmodern theories (Baudrillard, some aspects of Lyotard, Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari)", and "reconstructive postmodern theories (Jameson, Laclau & Mouffe, Flax, plus other postmodern feminists)" (1991:257).[2] Whereas extreme postmodern theories focus on radical critiques, transcendence of modernity, and tend to prematurely "abandon the progressive heritage of the Enlightenment, democracy, and social theory", reconstructive theorists manage to combine aspects of both modernity and postmodernity in their political perspectives (*ibid*). Indeed, any criticism of postmodernism must recognize the critical difference between an "extreme postmodern" theorist like Baudrillard, who holds one of the most nihilist positions and suggests that every collective emancipation project is doomed to failure, and a "reconstructive postmodern" position of Chantal Mouffe, who is looking to reconstitute modern themes such as democracy with a new, postmodern sensitivity.

Schuurman compares the perils of criticizing postmodern theory to the Paradox of Epimenides: the Cretan who stated that all people from Crete were liars (1993:190). Postmodernism is about questioning representation, so questioning how well postmodernism represents social phenomena is in a sense, subscribing to what postmodernism is all about. Ways to resolve this quandary include questioning the assumptions underlying postmodernism, and examining how well postmodern theorists live up to their own standards. The goal here is not to discredit postmodernism in its entirety, or make claims to any knowledge of the totality of postmodern theory, but to develop an increased sensitivity to both its enabling features and covert Eurocentric tendencies.

a. elements of postmodern theory

Several powerful 'post' trends can be noted, even at the risk of oversimplifying the phenomena. Postmodernism's close cousin, post-structuralism, questioned structural Marxism's focus on economics as 'determinant in the last instance', and refocused attention on culture as a critical terrain of politics. Postmodern approaches have challenged epistemologies of causality and determinism, and championed an epistemology of constructivism - a move which has left epistemologies based on foundationalist principles extremely vulnerable (Gonzalez Gaudiano & de Alba, 1994:135). Writers such as Foucault have challenged simple conceptions of power, and rethought boundaries, totalities, and fixations in a more diffuse and fluid manner. More generally, Morrow identifies a three-fold postmodern loss of faith affecting modern ideals of politics, science/reason, and the moral sphere of universal values and rights (1994:21). Because of this loss of faith, another sign of the postmodern times is a low priority placed on translating theoretical insights into practical ideas for addressing material inequality and power imbalances (McLaren, 1986:392; Leonard, 1990).

The postmodern challenge has left the terrain of modern emancipation more complex, fragmentary, and filled with scepticism and doubt. Theorists from Baudrillard to Foucault distance themselves from the rhetoric of hope and emancipation. Suspicion of ideologies accompanies a suspicion of utopias, often interpreted as authoritarian strategies developed to lead society towards an oppressively unified future (Hopenhayn, 1995:97). Postmodernity is also part of post-rationalist scepticism and is suspicious of the modern claims that rationality - in whatever guise - will advance human freedom. Lyotard attacks the meta-narratives of the Enlightenment and this of course includes the grand narratives of modern emancipation:

> the grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses, regardless of whether it is a speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation (as in Nederveen Pieterse, 1989:48).

Those who do not abandon the idea of social change altogether employ the word "resistance" rather than emancipation, a term which Nederveen Pieterse calls the "default discourse of the left" (1992:11). Emancipation, which implies both an element of critical deconstruction and social reconstruction, is a term which seems too strong for such intellectually sceptical times. While emancipation commits to transgress situations, and

achieve social change, resistance restricts itself to a defensive strategy against local oppressions.

Hassan describes the postmodern tendency as one towards 'unmaking', with a focus on:

> decreation, disintegration, deconstruction, decentrement, displacement, difference, discontinuity, disjunction, disappearance, decomposition, de-definition, demystification, detotalization, delegitimation (1987:92).

Although this tendency towards 'unmaking' seems useful, we might ask if a focus on deconstructing oppressive metanarratives goes far enough. The phrase 'necessary, but not sufficient' springs to mind. If one expands their view beyond academia, it is relatively easy to think of phenomena (poverty, hunger, AIDS, homelessness) which force people to construct (not deconstruct!) emancipatory programs, policies, and movements. I would go further and suggest that a preoccupation with the discursive aspect of these phenomena occludes the important material nature of oppression, and the need to come up with practical solutions for these problems.

It seems that postmodern theories, especially extreme postmodern theories, perform well at the moment of deconstruction, but can fall short when it comes to reconstructing new, post-Enlightenment emancipatory programs. As Slemon argues, in relation to postmodern readings of post-colonial literature:

> Western post-modernist readings can so over-value the anti-referential or deconstructive energies of post-colonial texts that they efface the important recuperative work that is also going on within them (as in Brydon, 1995:142).

b. enabling aspects of postmodern theory

Before discussing how the post-structuralist/modernist current creates an inhospitable environment for ideas of emancipation, it is critical to acknowledge the positive contributions of 'post' writing. It is impossible to deny that some theories have positive political applications, and it would be misleading to argue that all postmodern work is nihilistic, having faith in nothing outside the text (McLaren, 1986:390; Schuurman, 1993:25). There are *vast* differences between a resistance/oppositional

postmodernism which is capable of addressing systems of power, and the more sceptical, nihilistic variety which is politically desensitizing, obsessed with detotalizing, and unable to locate difference within social and historical hierarchies (McLaren, 1994:204).

Postmodern critiques have created a greater awareness of paradox, the dark side of modernity, and as such represent "heightened sensibilities" (Nederveen Pieterse, 1992:23). Slater argues that postmodern scepticism can be employed in an enabling sense - in the service of "iconoclasm, openness and reproblematization of fixities" (1992:311). Skinner astutely comments that the Great Sceptics (Foucault, Derrida, Feyerabend, Gadamer) are actually some of the greatest "grand theorists" (1985:12). Even those theorists which set out to theorize against theory have redirected social philosophy towards a greater general appreciation for the idea that "concepts are not timeless entities with fixed meanings", and that understanding is contingent on the perspective of the theorist (1985:13). Postmodern theory is a valuable corrective and warning against reductive, totalizing, and dogmatic tendencies of modern traditions (Best & Kellner, 1991:262).

Postmodernism can be a powerful analytical tool which enables the deconstruction of metanarratives which have marginalised peripheral experience (Schuurman, 1993:189). A postmodern discourse destroys the illusion that a single definitive meaning exists, opening the way for a plurality of voices (Richards, 1987:10). This strategy can subvert old hierarchies, creating a space in the decentred, postmodern inn for peripherals.

Kaufman is sensitive to the dangers of postmodern approaches, but argues that the term can be useful to those on the 'left' (1994). Any time a system is deemed unjust, it is judged so on the basis of notions of justice, oppression, and liberation (1994:75). Kaufman argues that postmodern theory can help increase sensitivity towards the historical and cultural situation of these values, and forces the theorist to pay attention to the embedded status of the claims they make, thereby removing "the veneer of innocence from the practice of theorizing" (*ibid*).

c. postmodern predicaments

Postmodern sensitivities inform the approach of my thesis, and I have recognized the diverse and enabling components of postmodern theory. Even so, I criticize postmodern tendencies on several counts. Ironically, postmodern theory is often guilty of the same totalizing crimes it theorizes against, in the process discarding important tools of analysis and continuing modern traditions of essentialism and eurocentrism. Can postmodernism be a clean and simple rejection of the grand *récits* of modern emancipation?

In the first part of this section I critically examine the postmodern dismissal of important analytical tools. Second, I explore how the term 'postmodernism' is applied with little recognition of the situatedness of this concept in the specific experiences of Western intellectuals. Finally, I will look briefly at the picture beyond Western academia, and explore how the postmodern label obscures important similarities and differences between core and periphery. These points respond to Said's challenging query: "how does Orientalism transmit or reproduce itself from one epoch to another?" (1978:15).

In a rush to dump modern baggage, some 'post' theorists have developed surprisingly totalizing positions towards Enlightenment ideals and modern analytical tools. The problem with totalizing movements away from modernity, materialist politics, and emancipatory projects is that they sound suspiciously modern. Best & Kellner maintain that postmodern theory frequently displays "postie syndrome", characterized by a "radical rejection of previous positions to create new discourses and theories adequate to the allegedly novel social conditions" (1991:276). They also find it ironic that in a postmodern war against totality, theorists such as Baudrillard and even Foucault produce "extremely totalizing theories which are often abstract, overly general", and which may even "oversimplify complex historical situations" (1991:280).[3]

Postmodern theories can also be accused of creating totalizing caricatures of modernity. Such caricatures reduce modernity to "Enlightenment metanarratives (Lyotard), oppressive semiological systems which produce hyperreal simulation (Baudrillard), or a 'vast carceral society' (Foucault)" (Best & Kellner, 1991:282). Even

the definition of postmodernity as an opposition to metanarratives, as given by Lyotard, comprises a totalizing theory of postmodernity. Kellner calls this interpretation of postmodernity "the dark night of the metanarrative to end all metanarratives"(1995:43). We might also dispute the contention made by some postmodern theorists that we are living in a radically different postmodern epoch, especially since this claim contradicts the postmodern critique of totalizing analysis (Callinicos, 1989; Antonio, 1991:156; Best & Kellner, 1991:261).

The postmodern tendency to have a totalizing reaction against modernity is seen in the disappearance of important analytical tools associated with modernism, especially systematic tools which allow analysis of the state and economy. Particularly alarming for those interested in neo-colonialism is the disappearance of economic analysis.

Few postmodern theories have a theory of the economy or capitalism, encouraging the view that powerful institutions of capitalism are dissociated from power at best, and non-existent at worst (Best & Kellner, 1991:220). In reacting so firmly against economic determinism, one gets the impression that material issues no longer exist. Baudrillard even makes pronouncements on the "end of political economy" (1981). Cultural studies, a field heavily influenced by postmodern theory, has paid only minimal attention to issues of production and political economy (Kellner, 1995; McGuigan, 1992). I concur with Best & Kellner when they write that:

> Postmodern theory wants to decentre the economy in order to focus on microphenomena and although this move might produce some important results, as in Foucault, we would argue that the economy remains a central structuring institution in a capitalist society and that it is a mistake to ignore the economy to the extent evident in postmodern theory (1991:262).

In much postmodern theory there is a lonely, under-developed space between the abandoned *Scylla* of economics, and the favoured *Charybdis* of culturalism (Nederveen Pieterse, 1992:27). Not only does the postmodern approach frequently leave the problematic dichotomy between materialism and culture untouched, but it does not question whether culturalism is an appropriate singular strategy for subaltern groups who explicitly express material demands.

Even Laclau and Mouffe, exemplars of the oppositional postmodern variety, argue

in their classic work Hegemony and Social Strategy that radical politics must forget "narrow productivist logic", and instead use cultural politics to struggle over issues of identity formation (as in Best & Kellner, 1991:198). The movement away from matters of class and production is characteristic of much of social theory generally, including even critical modern theorists such as Habermas.[4]

At least part of the reason that many postmodern theories veer away from emancipatory projects is that in their rush to abandon the crudely deterministic variants of Marxism, they throw out the materialist baby with the deterministic bath-water. Discarding materialism means a diminished importance for issues of poverty and inequality. It is questionable whether we can so radically discount the importance of struggles over production - particularly in the periphery where colonization of the "life world" may be deeply intertwined with overt material and political colonization.

Another reason for the postmodern aversion towards emancipatory programs is found in postmodernism's characteristic ontological skepticism, or "the idea that we cannot confidently posit realities independent of our consciousness" (Morrow, 1994:77).[5] In their rush to do away with the evils of positivism's 'objective' representations of reality, 'post' theorists abandon commitments to comprehending and representing social reality, and instead focus their concerns on critiques of truth (*ibid*, 128,312). Ironically, radical postmodern scepticism may share an important similarity with positivists: "The belief that to be worthy of the name, knowledge must be absolutely certain" (*ibid*, 77).

The desire to understand and level inequitable material conditions diminished with the postmodern reaction against economic analysis and objectivist epistemologies. When we become less certain that there is a reality behind concepts such as class exploitation, infant mortality rates, and homelessness, the need to develop practical responses to these concerns diminishes.

Denying any possibility of objectivist epistemologies creates solipsistic positions, or what literacy theorist and advocate Paulo Freire calls, "people without a world" (1970:32).[6] For Freire it is politically incapacitating, naive, and elitist to deny the possibility of comprehending some sense of objective reality (as in Olson, 1992:7). If we deny any ability to understand an objective reality, we are apt to find a reality where

political commitment is absent, and there is no preferential support for marginalized groups (McLaren, 1986:392). Some form of ontological realism may prove necessary to sustain a connection between the social sciences and human emancipation (Morrow, 1994:78; Bhaskar, 1989).[7]

Related to postmodernism's ontological scepticism is an abandonment of analytic tools of structure and causality. Although postmodern theory pays attention to micro and marginal phenomena often ignored by modern theory, it "tends to map in fragments and to ignore the more systemic features and relations of social structure that were the focus of modern social theory"(Best & Kellner, 1991:259). Baudrillard argues that since it is apparently impossible to distinguish between image and reality in a media-saturated hyperreality, it is impossible to employ systematic tools of modern theory (*ibid*, 258). Extreme postmodernists believe that "social reality is indeterminate and unmappable, and the best we can do is to live within the fragments of a disintegrating social order."(*ibid*, 258).

There is convincing evidence to suggest that an analytic abandonment of structuralism is also problematic for emancipatory theory (Morrow, 1994:126-131). Without structure, difference is treated as a discursive category divorced from broader historical narratives and empirical regularities (McLaren & Lankshear, 1994:7). Dissolving structure also undermines causality, and falsely implies that every political force has equal weight (Best & Kellner, 1991:202). For example, without an analysis of structure it is difficult to understand how the industrial revolution and the capitalist system of production contributed to the power of the British empire. Without structure, it is difficult to even speak of European colonialism as a system which imposed itself on other countries.

Without an analysis of structure, postmodern theory often succumbs to the fetishization of difference. Mohanty argues that the challenge is not just to construct a 'feel-good' discourse of benign difference, but to define difference as "asymmetrical and incommensurate cultural sphere situated within hierarchies of domination and resistance" (1989:146). As Slater similarly notes, a recognition of diversity is insufficient without an explicit concern with inequality, more specifically: "inequality of access to power, to

resources, to a human existence - in short, inequality in emancipation" (1993:30). Richards warns that "celebrating difference as exotic festival" is not the same as "giving the subject of this difference the right to negotiate its' own conditions of discursive control", and to "practice its difference in the interventionist sense of rebellion and disturbance" (1995:221).

Clearly understanding and resisting hierarchy and inequality both require some analysis of social structure, as opposed to a total surrender to 'unmappable fragments'. The postmodern attack on the grand narrative destroys valuable holistic tools which aid understanding of global, national, and international hierarchies and interdependencies (Antonio, as in Morrow, 1994:129). With the postmodern tendency to scorn economic analysis, ontological realism, and structuralist explanations, it is easy to see how phenomena such as the debt crisis and structural adjustment policies - phenomena with very real and severe human consequences to people residing in peripheral nations - can be frequently ignored.

'Post' theories have also had a totalizing reaction against the humanism of modern theories, especially Marxism. This reaction against traditions of Western humanism have often lead to the obfuscation of the "suffering, bleeding, breathing subject of history", and diminished the apparent need for theories of emancipation (McLaren & Lankshear, 1994:7). In the words of Alan Megill:

> ...all too easy is the neglect or the dismissal of a natural and historical reality that ought not to be neglected or dismissed...For if one adopts, in a cavalier and single-minded fashion, the view that everything is discourse or text or fiction, the realia are trivialized. Real people who really died in the gas chambers at Auschwitz or Treblinka become so much discourse (as in McLaren & Lankshear, 1994:7).

For these reasons, the postmodern rejection of humanism may be at odds with the aims of post-colonialism. Appiah argues that postcoloniality, like postmodernism, also challenges "earlier legitimating narratives", but postcolonial writings challenge these narratives in "the name of the suffering victims" of the colonized world, and in "the name of the ethical universal; in the name of humanism" (1995:123).[8]

This postcolonial humanist position is consistent with the writings of the EZLN. Their communiqués frequently mention that their desire to restore fundamental human

dignity has been a key motivating factor behind the struggle. Marcos writes:

> It is necessary to refer to history as to what makes a human being, or their dignity as we say in the EZLN, without converting them into nothing more than a consumer or producer or another number in profit indexes or the statistics of the multinational corporations (Chiapas95, April 1/97).

Marcos says that although the "body" of the Zapatistas is "fundamentally indigenous", "the heart has to do with the problem of human dignity on the international level". The "heart" of the Zapatista struggle "has to do with the problem of putting value back into one's word and giving feeling to the question of humanity" (*ibid*).

Considering the postmodern flight against ontological realism, economic analysis, structural understanding of hierarchy, and humanism, it is no great surprise that postmodern theorists generally do not focus on developing a broad emancipation program. Often the greatest resistance many postmodernists can conceptualize is the Nietzschean option - the 'great overcoming' - based on heroic, individual acts of resistance. Postmodern strategies of diversity, aesthetic individualism, and multiplicity of languages and life-projects are admittedly vague, but defended by postmodernists as appropriate given the perceived indeterminacy of the future (Hopenhayn, 1995:97). Even proponents of postmodernism like Linda Hutcheon acknowledge that postmodernism is politically ambivalent. She writes:

> as can be seen by its recuperation (and rejection) by both the Right and the Left, postmodernism is politically ambivalent: its critique coexists with an equally real and equally powerful complicity with the cultural dominants within which it inescapable exists (1995:130).

A politically ambivalent position is of questionable utility for many social movements struggling for emancipation. It is an obvious, but infrequently made point that many social movements in the South simply cannot afford the luxury of political ambivalence. How can a theory of resistance to colonization of the life-world explain the multiple levels of colonization that occur in Chiapas? Can analysis of discourse offer a complete understanding of the brutal colonization of natural resources in Chiapas? Can a Nietzschean account of individual resistance account for over ten years of organization by a para-military organization like the EZLN?

The tendency of postmodern theories to accept politically ambivalent approaches,

discount important analytical tools like political economy, and dismiss humanism suggests a certain existential privilege of the theoretical commentator. To some extent, these questions can only be forgotten if the theorist is not personally worrying about death squads, finding a subsistence plot of land, or 'three square meals a day'. This introduces the second theme of this discussion: covert eurocentrism behind a postmodern agenda.

It may well be that one of the "metasensibilities" that postmodernism has inherited from modernism is "occidental arrogance and myopia" (Nederveen Pieterse, 1989/90:67). Spivak makes the important point that the problem of Eurocentrism is not confined to Western writing on the 'third world', but also involves "*sanctioned ignorance of the imperialist project*"; Slater refers to this phenomenon as "the persistence of absence" in Euro-Americanism (emphasis mine; as in Slater, 1992:285). Said similarly argues that the problem is not just one of exclusion, but of an institutionalized, "silent and incorporated disparity that persists in a variety of forms"; the colonial must always take the colonizer into account, but the colonizer can forget his conquest, move on to other things, and occlude the persistent and deeply symbiotic relationship of the colonial 'encounter' (1985:58-59).[9]

Slater writes that most of the "well known exponents [of postmodernism]...tended to remain rather silent on third world development', with the notable exception of Spivak and Said" (1992:283). The trend is not just confined to development theory, but extends into social and literary theory. Brydon suggests that "[p]ostmodernism cannot account for such post-colonial resistance writing, and seldom attempts to" (1995:137).

Postmodern theorists might deny that there is a eurocentric dimension underlying the movement away from economic and structural analysis, ontological realism, humanism, and emancipatory theory in general. They might insist that they are only theorizing about a specific situation and nothing else, since to broaden one's scope would be *totalizing*! Postmodern theorist Linda Hutcheon concedes that postmodernism does not "emit any clear signals" about political direction, but argues that its saving grace is that "it does not try to", because that would betray its "anti-totalizing ideology" (as in Brydon, 1995:141).

But can postmodernism's claims to an acceptable political ambivalence be

considered apolitical? Haven't critiques of positivism taught us to be suspicious of theory which claims to be divorced from normative suppositions?

Brydon argues that surreptitiously, postmodernism does offer answers: "in ambivalence itself, in the relativity of liberal pluralism, in the cult of authenticity that lies behind its celebration of differences" (1995:141). She asserts that the refusal to give answers for fear of totalizing, inadvertently helps to "preserve the status quo and the myth of an objectivity that itself totalizes" (*ibid*). The ability to abandon a search for clear emancipatory 'signals' cannot be considered apolitical, or without consequence. It must be seen as a position at least partially grounded in the privileged position of the commentator. As Lovibond writes:

> What, then, are we to make of suggestions that the project has run out of steam and that the moment has passed for remaking society on rational, egalitarian lines? It would be only natural for anyone placed at the sharp end of one or more of the existing power structures...to feel a pang of disappointment at this news. But wouldn't it also be in order to feel *suspicion*? How can anyone ask me to say goodbye to 'emancipatory metanarratives' when my own emancipation is still such a patchy, hit-and-miss affair? (1989:12, emphasis of author)

The postmodern ability to eschew traditional political approaches (i.e.party politics) in favour of a vague nihilism[10], deconstructivist theorizing, or a Nietzschean heroism must also be thought of as having political consequences. These strategies may be presented as the only options for a postmodern world wise towards the perils of metanarratives, but these choices are grounded in the existential experiences of Western theorists. To advocate such tactics universally (and condemn broader political strategies employing modern ideals) would not only be inconsistent with postmodernism's stated efforts to avoid totalizing approaches, but would sound suspiciously like the words of someone who was not experiencing great suffering under the existing order.

To make these points about privilege more explicitly, consider the contrasting existential situation of Subcomandante Marcos. In the face of extreme poverty, death, disease, political repression, and three-years of 'low-intensity' warfare waged surreptitiously by the Mexican army, a position of political ambivalence is hardly an option. In fact the EZLN has stated that the "primary objective" of their actions was to "inform the Mexican people and the rest of the world about the miserable conditions in

which millions of Mexicans, especially us, the indigenous people, live and die" (Marcos[11], 1995b:55).[12]

In an interview Marcos was asked to give a general message to a broad audience. Marcos' response about the necessity of struggle suggests that political despair, ambivalence towards emancipation, and resistance to broad claims of solidarity may well be, at least in part, a function of material and political privilege. In Marcos' words:

> ...[the] daily struggle of all these indigenous men and women is a struggle that also has a mirror and dignity in other parts of the world. We are not the only ones. There are other social groups and other people that are struggling...our struggle is a struggle for dignity, for human dignity, and that is also the duty of any human being wherever they are. It is not important the colour of their skin, their culture or their language. *What is important is to struggle to be better* (Chiapas95, April 1/97, emphasis mine).

Before declaring the age of emancipation dead and gone, it is critical to examine the underlying motives behind such proclamations. As Cornel West writes:

> ...the anti-metaphysical radicalism of post-structuralism may be an emerging form of ideology in late capitalist societies which endorses the existing order while undergirding sophisticated anti-epistemological and anti-metaphysical tastes of postmodern avant-gardists (as in McLaren, 1986:391).

I argue that it is important to examine closely the specifically Western context in which postmodern theories arose, instead of assuming that the entire world is living in the same postmodern "Now" as Western intellectuals. Even theorists sympathetic to postmodernism insist on examining the role of intellectuals (Featherstone, 1988:200; Bauman, 1988). Postmodernists who declare the end of emancipatory values may not be making a substantive empirical observation, but may instead be "generalizing their own sense of isolation and hopelessness" (Best & Kellner, 1991:285).

Postmodernism has several theoretical origins which originate mainly within the West. Featherstone traces the roots of postmodernism to the critiques of artists in New York in the 1960s, as well as to European theory in the 1970s (1988:208). Postmodernism also grew out of post-structuralism. This approach has strong roots within the French intelligentsia, who after the uprisings of 1968, became incredibly disillusioned with class-based politics, orthodox Marxism, and party politics (Gardiner, 1992:153). This precipitated an embrace of Nietzschean scepticism, and sensitivity to the

power-knowledge dynamic, as seen in the writings of Foucault (*ibid*).

Seemingly unable to lead major social changes, Western intellectuals turned away from organizing proletarian struggles, and towards more nihilistic positions. Mary Douglas suggests that intellectuals often turn to nihilism and relativism when it seems impossible to solve practical problems, a phenomenon which she documents in the 19th century Russian intelligentsia (as in Featherstone, 1988:213). Callinicos writes:

> What could be more reassuring for a generation...drawn first towards and then away from Marxism by the ups and downs of the past two decades, than to be told...that there is nothing that they can do to change the world? (1989:170).

Best & Kellner also support this idea when they write:

> With the defeat of radical politics in the late 1960s, the collapse of Eurocommunism, and the rise of the New Right which has dominated politics for the last decade, postmodern discourse offered solace for isolated and embittered intellectuals who gave up hope for social change and retired from social involvement to retreat to the academy and in some cases to the stylized hedonism of the 'new intellectuals'...they espouse not only a pessimism of the intellect, but also a pessimism of the will, thereby passing from the extreme of 1960s revolutionary optimism which naively envisioned a new and exciting world on the immediate horizon to the opposite extreme of 1980s-1990s revolutionary defeatism that cynically deride political commitments *per se*...These attitudes, representative of the collapse of the post-1968 radical will, lack a historical perspective on the cyclical patterns of mass resistance and quietism (1991:285-286).

Not only was the postmodern position a result of the disillusionment with practical Left politics, but it may also have been in part a reaction to the undermining of the status of the intellect in Western society. Bauman argues that in the past, Western intellectuals were more responsible for giving authoritative solutions to questions of truth, moral judgement, and aesthetic taste (1988:219). With the collapse of the idea of a progressive history, intellectuals lost their role as facilitators and educators of this progressive movement, and were left with the less politically important areas of cultural resistance and interpretation.

Bauman also traces the loss of Western intellectual prestige to the erosion of the global structure of Western hegemony, the forced western consideration of 'non-western' partners, as well as the shifting nexus of the cultural domain out of the intellectual field into the market (Bauman, 1988:219; Featherstone, 1988:213). The role of the intellectual

as universalistic educator declined, and the resulting sense of anxiety and loss of direction became a main reference point for postmodern theory (Bauman, 1988). Postmodernism was defined in terms which reflected the unique position of intellectuals. Key terms like irreducible, plurality, and impermanence reflected the disintegration of universal standard (Bauman, 1988:225). Modernity was defined in retrospect to include all the 'bad' qualities of the previous era: uniform standards of truth, and judgement, absence of relativism, and unrecognition of pluralism (*ibid*).

Best & Kellner support the idea that postmodernism was part of a reaction by intellectuals to their displaced/uncertain importance in Western societies:

> ...intellectuals in the humanities threatened with obsolescence have attempted to postulate a new postmodern era and discourse to legitimate their continuing relevance in technocratic societies where the sciences are increasingly displacing the humanities. Decentred in relation to technicists, the postmodern intellectual is an 'interpreter' whose cultural authority is safely confined within the academy....postmodern discourse has provided the opportunity for some intellectuals to position themselves as new avant-gardes to garner new sources of cultural capital, or to theorize 'just for the fun of it'. Here postmodernism becomes just another specialized discourse that promotes what Edward Said (1983) calls the 'cult of expertise and professionalism' (Best & Kellner, 1991:297-8).

Given the specific context in which intellectuals developed theories of postmodernity, Featherstone argues that "we need to work from more systematic data" and "not rely on the readings of intellectuals" (1988:200). We need to resist the tendency to use the new postmodern perspective as *the* perspective through which all phenomena can be comprehended. Postcolonial theorist Kumkum Sangari makes this point very well when he writes:

> Postmodern skepticism is the complex product of a historical conjuncture and is constructed as both symptom and critique of the contemporary economic and social formation of the West. But post-modernism does have a tendency to universalize its epistemological preoccupations - a tendency that appears even in the work of critics of radical political persuasion...a 'specialized' skepticism is carried everywhere as cultural paraphernalia and epistemological apparatus, as a way of seeing; and the postmodern problematic becomes *the* frame through which the cultural products of the rest of the world are seen...this for some reason, is one 'master narrative' that is seldom dismantled as it needs to be if the differential economic, class, and cultural formation of 'Third World' countries is to be taken into account. The writing that emerges from this position, however critical it may

> be of colonial discourses...relocates the impulses for change as everywhere and nowhere. (1995:147)

In order to resist the tendency to use postmodernism as *the* primary reference point, it is necessary to look at a broader picture beyond Western academia - which I will attempt to do in the remainder of this section. But first it is important to acknowledge the difficulties of viewing the picture beyond Western academia, given the persistent inequality between 'first' and 'third' world academics. Although some theorists speak of an international intellectual community, the ultimate test of equality - the penetration of 'third' world concepts into Western theory - has scarcely occurred. Said writes that it would be surprising news to many in the West that the debate in the South about colonialism and imperialist ideologies continues in a lively and diverse fashion (1986:45).

Weeks argues that there have been two post-colonial challenges to the Western tradition of grand theory (1990). The first is the postcolonial critique generated in the West, usually by citizens of 'Southern' countries, and reflecting trends in philosophy and literary criticism. The first tradition refers to theorists such as Said and Spivak, focuses on questions of representation, and carries a mandate which attempts to:

> disclose the enduring paradigms of epistemic violence in the theoretical and cultural practices of the West, revealing in those conventions a latent space of "neocolonial" representation - or effacement - of the Other (1995:51).

The second reaction arises more directly out of the 'South', and uses a version of dependency theory to criticize the unequal international division of intellectual labour, and the persistence of unequal politico-economic structures in the superstructural realm. This second, "new dependency" school criticizes the disproportionate amount of research controlled by core universities, the core country monopoly over journals and organizations, and the greater prestige given to core scholars, even in peripheral universities (Weeks, 1990:237). The new dependency school calls for the indigenization of Western theoretical concepts, some radical strands even calling for a moratorium on international cooperation in the social sciences (Weeks, 1990:239). Weeks summarizes the major objections of the third world new dependency school:

> Like economic dependency, academic dependency entails the export of raw materials (in the form of data collected by foreign academics) from the third world to the first. The raw data are fashioned into theories and exported back to the

> third world - making the latter dependent on the former for theoretical models (1990:237).

The first postcolonial response has gained some currency in the 'first world' academy, given that its basic approach is deconstructionist.[13] In contrast, the existence of the new dependency response is barely acknowledged in core institutions, indicative of the persistence of academic colonialism into the 21st century. Although the indigenization debate has been in existence for over 50 years, academics have only recently, and scarcely become aware of these issues (Weeks, 1990:241). Ignorance of the power differential between core and peripheral academics goes a long way in explaining how the first world 'postmodern' condition can be applied so casually to situations in the periphery.

I will now look at *similarities* between postmodern positions and phenomena that have long gone on in the 'third world', albeit under the largely oblivious Western academic gaze. This will lead me to examine how the postmodern label works to obscure crucial *differences* between core and periphery.

Put simply, the claim that postmodernism is a unique development is based on an ignorance of similar non-Western phenomena. Many postmodern sensibilities have been expressed outside the West, as part of earlier critiques of modernity. Nelly Richards writes that the process of creating Latin American identities has always been unstable, as modern European ideas are imported, regrouped, distorted, transformed and inserted into local settings, so that the final product differs greatly from the original frame of reference (1987/88). The example of Peruvian theorist, José Mariátegui, who synthesized Marxism with indigenous Quechua philosophy, is an obvious case in point (Slater, 1992). Richards writes:

> [the] periphery has always made its own mark on the series of statements emitted by the dominant culture and has recycled them in different contexts in such a way that the original systematizations are subverted, and their claim to universality is undermined (1987/88:12).

Such strategies of de-centralization and re-adaptation, such as those practices of Mariátegui, suggest that perhaps the postmodern may be a "rhetorical exacerbation" of what has long gone on in the periphery (Richards, 1987:12).

Even though a postmodern discourse can resemble what has long gone on in the periphery, and even though many of its components can be enabling, the centre may still tend to act as a centre (Richards, 1987). During defines postmodern thought as "that thought which refuses to turn the Other into the Same" (1995:125). Does postmodernism always hold true to this promise?

As we shall see below, the centre may project its own images and agenda on the periphery and subtly ignore difference. One post-colonial text argues that the proclamation that we now live in a 'Postmodern Age' is a case where an "essentially European..cultural movement makes yet again the same claim upon world history that other European movements have made in the past" (Ashcroft et al, 1995:117-8). Hall berates this tendency, an aversion he shares with other British cultural theorists, when he writes:

> What raises my political hackles is the comfortable way in which French [postmodern] intellectuals now take it upon themselves to declare when and for whom history ends, how the masses can or cannot be represented, when they are or are not a real historical force, when they can or cannot be mythically invoked..now that the intellectuals have renounced critical thought, they feel no inhibition renouncing it on behalf of the masses - whose destinies they have only shared abstractly...I think that Baudrillard needs to join the masses for a while, to be silent for two-thirds of a century, just to see what it feels like" (as in Best & Kellner, 1991:294).

Many postmodern theorists seem to have ignored that "not all people exist in the same Now", a concept developed by Bloch in his idea of "non-synchronicity". Non-synchronicity "indicates that we live in several different times and spaces at once" (Best & Kellner, 1991:279). This concept helps us understand how Zapatista qualities could simultaneously be classified by intellectuals as pre-modern, modern as well as postmodern.

If we believe not all people exist in the same "Now", we must ask whether postmodernism's crisis with meaning is necessarily everyone's crisis. It is even questionable to assume that this crisis of Western intellectuals represents a cross-cultural crisis within Western societies. Sangari contends that postmodernism ignores alternative Southern strategies of de-essentialization which are "socially and politically grounded", and intertwined with different "perspectives, goals, and strategies for change" (1995:146).

He also charges postmodern skepticism with "dismantling the 'unifying' intellectual traditions of the West -whether liberal humanism or Marxism", but at the same time using their authority to deny "to all the truth of, or the desire for totalizing narratives" (1995:146).

Richards warns that under postmodern discourse, "difference" can be furtively transmogrified into "sameness" as the significance of domination and power differentials between centre and periphery is neutralized. Difference is valued, then subsumed into an "undifferentiated meta-category", erased by this "new sophisticated economy of sameness" (Richards, 1987/88:11). This is a move which ultimately stifles attempts to build an independent postcolonial identity (During, 1995:125). Seidman writes that:

> Postmodern portrayals of "dedifferentiation " on a global scale are parodies of classic grand narratives; they describe an exceedingly flat and homogenous cultural topography spreading worldwide from Western sources (1991:156).

In postmodern writing we can have respect for difference, without any attention paid to inequality. But if we do not recognize inequality along with difference, we cannot see the important ways in which core and periphery differ. Clearly we cannot indisputably itemize the ways in which core and periphery differ, nor can we deny the intertwined realities of 'South' and 'North'. It is also not altogether clear how well the postmodern label describes phenomena occurring in the North - a subject worthy of another thesis. The important point for this discussion is that the label of postmodern can work to obscure important power differentials between core and periphery.

One important difference is the disparity of resources between core and periphery. and the differential positions in a broader system of neocolonialism. These differences result in very different meanings for postmodern concepts in core and peripheral contexts. George Yúdice, a commentator on the question of Latin American postmodernism, observed that "celebrating parasitism (whose Latin American correlate is the problem of informal economies) or the hyperreal (which in Latin America is wrought by the hyperinflationary effects of the external debt and narcotraffic) is like cheerleading on the sidelines as neoconservatives sell out the country" (as in Beverley & Oviedo, 1995:3). Beverley and Ovideo also warn that the effort to link postmodernism and a leftist project in Latin America may have "culturalist" benefits, but may also be a "potentially

demoralizing and division" move - "something like an attempt to yuppify left cultural politics" (1994:13-14).

Some Latin American critics have also noted that postmodernism conveniently arrived on the scene at the same time as neoliberalism (Hopenhayn, 1995; Beverly & Ovideo, 1995:6). Although this connection is not preordained or absolute, it is important to acknowledge the potentially supportive role postmodernism can play in neoliberal economic projects. Hopenhayn identifies several connections where postmodernism can serve to provide valuable euphemisms which 'dress-up', and serve the interests of economic and political power centres promoting a neoliberal project (1995:99-101). It is more exciting to talk of diversity, desire, and autonomy, than it is to talk about the market, the maximization of profits, the end of public planning, and private appropriation of public wealth. As Hopenhayn writes:

> The economic crisis - the worst we have experienced in this century - is hidden under the euphemism of a beautiful anarchy, and structural heterogeneity is converted into the creative combination of the modern and the archaic, "our" peripheral incarnation and anticipation of the postmodern (1995:100).

The postmodern celebration of diversity can lead to an "exaltation of the market, considered as the only social institution that orders without coercion, guaranteeing a diversity of tastes, projects, languages, and strategies", with deregulation serving as the policy correlative (1995:99). The postmodern critique of vandguardist politics can be used to justify a broader condemnation of the transformational function of politics, as well as the importance of state planning and intervention in the economy (1995:99). The critique of utopias can lead to a paralysing position where it is difficult to promote egalitarianism, an ethical concern with material development, or a redistribution of social wealth and power; structural differentiation can even be come to be seen as a source of diversity! (1995:100). Hopenhayn writes that:

> without an emancipatory dynamic that runs beneath events or that guides the actions of humanity, nothing permits the questioning of consumer society, waste, the alienation of work, the growing split between the industrialized and developing countries, social marginality, technocracy, or the way in which productive forces are misused (1995:99).

The concept of postmodernism is also intimately linked with a theory of Western

post-industrial information societies, and assumes that the importance of labour is replaced by the dominance of consumption and knowledge in a model referred to as post-Fordism (Bromley, 1991:131; Schuurman, 1993:24). The assumption that the world has entered a new postmodern era (read: postindustrial world) is based on a specific evaluation of Western experience with industrialization and technology. These assumptions appear ignorant of the truncated attempts of most third world states to industrialize, and the obvious importance of production and labour as opposed to information in contemporary Southern nations. Beverley and Ovideo write that postmodernism seems a particularly inappropriate term for nation-states that have not fully experienced modernity, or which have experienced the modernization process in a highly uneven manner (1995:2). Ashcroft et al. write: "[p]ostmodernism, whether it is the cultural logic of late capitalism...or not, doesn't appear to be the primary framework within which most of the world's population carries out its daily life" (1995:118).[14]

Erasing difference under a postmodern label is indicative of how a supposedly destabilizing post-structuralist/modern project can actually be quite status-quo.[15] Sawicki warns of the domestication and assimilation of radical postructuralist themes in the academy, and suggests resistance to "those appropriations of poststructuralism which subtly undermine gender, race, and class based critical theories" (1991:7). She writes that "we have reached a point where it is important to ask whether [poststructuralism] itself is in danger of becoming as normalizing as the discourses that it criticizes" (1991:7). Slater makes a similar warning:

> the postmodern sense is emancipatory in relation to the certitudes of modern universalism and modernization theory and enabling in its destructing of Marxist totality, but when the realities of oppression and subordination in global politics are occluded or anaesthetized, postmodern politics becomes a barrier to emancipation (1992:290).

Keeping this in mind, we might ask how labelling the Zapatista rebels 'postmodern' works to undermine the radical nature of their demands. In the next chapter I argue that labelling the uprising in Chiapas 'postmodern' is indicative of a dangerous tendency of Eurocentrism with postmodern writing.

Before proceeding with this argument, I will look briefly at the case of Michel

Foucault, in order to give more substance to my argument about implicit eurocentrism within 'post' writing. In the next section, I will examine how Foucault's vision of social theory related to a project of emancipation.

ii. Foucault - forget emancipation!

If Habermas presents a theoretically isolated vision of emancipation, Foucault reacts against the idea in its entirety. No radical new future is deemed credible, and the goal of transcending present oppression is seen as misguided. Only an alteration of discourse is possible, and new forms of struggle are seen as necessarily producing alternate forms of domination (Nederveen Pieterse, 1992:14). In Foucault, the concept of emancipation is reduced to a pessimistic crumb of resistance. In this section I will briefly look at how this relates to Foucault's ideas on power and agency.

Before examining Foucault's views on emancipation, it is critical to acknowledge the difficulty in classifying or reducing a complex figure like Foucault. His work is vast, and his positions shifted and evolved from his earlier works to his later writings. Even given the difficulty of making definitive statements about Foucault's work, I believe that it is necessary to make some general remarks for this purpose of the study. As perhaps the most influential theorist of postmodern approaches, Foucault's work can give much insight into the postmodern retreat from emancipatory programs.

Foucault's conception of power helps us understand his tendency towards political despair. Foucault wanted to move the concept of power out of identifiable institutions - like the state and the economy - and into the discourse of bedrooms, prisons, and mental institutions. Foucault argued that the modern industrial period ushered in the "disciplinary society", where subjects internalize power and are self-policing. Power is no longer repressive, but relational and productive (Gardiner, 1992:156-7). Power is seen not as a unilateral, omnipotent force, but as a dynamic web of constant "provocation and opposition", resistance and force, where "freedom and power are two sides of the same coin, and where there can be no winners and losers" (*ibid*). This type of power lacks a centre, and is not consciously held or directed by any specific class or individual. It

operates primarily at the micro-level, and therefore Foucault believed that theories of power should focus on the profane social existence (Gardiner, 1992:157).

There are several advantages to this conception of power. It allows a more sophisticated conception of discursive power relations. It allows us to theorize about how power operates at many levels of the social system which were previously unexplored, including such intimate terrains as sexuality and mental health. It also helps avoid the assumption that power is as simple and straightforward as the forces within institutions like the state, or the police (Gardiner, 1992:159).

This conception of power, if treated as an exclusive conception of power, can lead to a dead end. Although Foucault clearly illustrated that power relations are not *always* deliberately organized, he explained less about instances where power is deliberately and strategically employed (Gardiner, 1992:160). Foucault's approach to power has less success explaining varying methods of domination. Why is power repressive and coercive in some circumstances, and productive and relational in others? Institutions like the Mexican state undoubtably still hold power which they are able to wield in coercive and repressive ways against the Zapatista rebels. Although there are certainly productive power relations going on within this struggle, repressive power relations can be easily identified in institutions like the state, the PRI, the army, and the landowning class and the private armies they hire.

Foucault leaves us with a kind of "pessimistic anarchism" (Craib, 1992:183). In abandoning the classical notion of Marxist revolution, Foucault also abandons the notion that the state is an important instrument of power and control in people's lives. Instead:

> ...the social world is seen as a kaleidoscope of power struggles which can never be transcended. All that can be done is to encourage the resistance that arises wherever power arises. In place of a revolution we are confronted with an endless series of power struggles which cannot be resolved because power is a necessary and inherent part of any relationship. (Craib, 1992:184).

Is this satisfactory? Should we, *can we*, tell the Zapatistas (or any emancipatory movement, North or South) to give up their struggle because intellectuals in the Western university have figured it out: we have discovered that power is an endless struggle, from which you can't escape. Although Foucault would not have made such a bold claim, we

should not deny that his approach can lead others to these dangerous and Eurocentric conclusions.

The limitations of Foucault's conception of power can be seen by examining Edward Said's work on Orientalism. Said explicitly acknowledges his debt to Foucault (1978:23). He also subscribes to Foucault's conception of the power/knowledge matrix, and uses discourse analysis to reveal the use of Orientalism as a corporate institution used to manage the Orient. However, Said also tends to make "frequent appeals" to what he calls "an old fashioned existential realism" (as in Bertrand Monk, 1995:516), and criticizes the logic of Orientalism using a macrophysical conception of power, instead of sticking exclusively with a productive notion of power (*ibid*, 514).

In a later essay Said specifically criticizes Foucault's denial of strategic uses of power (what he calls, Foucault's "passive" conception of power) stemming from Foucault's conscious distancing from Marxist schemata (Bertrand Monk, 1995:516). Said writes of Foucault: "even if one fully agrees with his view that what he calls the micro-physics of power is exercised, rather than possessed", phenomena such as class struggle, class, economic domination, the forcible colonial seizure of state power, imperialist war, and dependency relationships cannot be totally reduced to "superannuated nineteenth-century conceptions of political economy" (*ibid*, 515). Foucault's unwillingness to recognize strategic power is related to another of Said's criticisms of Foucault: his inability to appreciate the importance of the colonial experience in the formation of European discourses (1986:62).[16]

Having observed the prevalence of coercive power in a system of Orientalism, Said insists on the necessity of having a counterhegemonic project of developing "Counter-Knowledge" - a suggestion which is susceptible to post-structuralist critiques of totalization (Bertrand Monk, 1995:516). It could be argued that however paradoxical Said's position - a suspicion of Orientalist totality combined with an appeal to a generalized notion of counter-hegemony - it is an example of a useful and necessary "strategic use of essentialism". This is a term developed by Spivak to address her similar concern of wanting to avoid essentialist positions towards human needs, but at the same time seeing a need to develop an effective subaltern insurgency (*ibid*).[17]

This leads to the final criticism of a Foucauldian approach, which is its difficulty theorizing active resistance. The overall vision is one of little hope, and great emphasis on intellectual opposition. Foucault conceptualized resistance as occurring through intellectual strategies such as genealogy and archeology of knowledge, both of which sought to distance themselves from Marxism and historical materialism (Burr, 1995:166; Gardiner, 1992;154). Writing within a general current of post-structuralism, Foucault tended to inherit structuralism's propensity towards a de-emphasis on the subject. There is some sense of agency within Foucault's writing, but it is limited to actions such as critical reflection on discourses, and possibly some choice in the employment of different discourses (Burr, 1995:90).

For Foucault, the construction of discourse is not accomplished in the heads of individual subjects; discourses are produced and maintained in the decentred realm of language (Gardiner, 1992:155). Subjects do not produce meaning; relations between signifiers in the linguistic system produce meaning. This limits the possibility of understanding how subjects can actively resist hegemonic discourses, and create alternate meaning systems. Gardiner writes that Foucault's rejection of subjectivity veers towards the pessimistic conclusion that there is no room for interactive, reflective consciousness through which subjects can resist, and recreate dominant systems of norms and disciplines (1992:163).

To avoid this pessimistic conclusion, there must be more weight given to the power of subjects[18] as agents in active dialogue with broader social forces like dominant discourses. As this thesis explores, the powerful discourses of Mexican history crafted by the PRI were creatively refashioned by the Zapatistas to create an alternate discourse of emancipation. This is why it is possible to see the image of Emiliano Zapata in both PRI literature, and in the words of EZLN soldiers. In Part III the focus will be more specifically on democracy, as I examine how the Zapatistas did not simply take on the accepted discourses of democracy, but creatively refashioned the language of the dominant discourse to their own advantage.

Where does this evaluation of modern and postmodern emancipation leave us? Both modern and postmodern theories maintain a conception of social movements which

is unacceptably totalizing and Eurocentric. It seems that a better understanding of emancipatory movements must avoid both the problematic certainty of modern essentialism (which sees rationality as a panacea), and the political ambivalence of postmodern skepticism. This is an issue which will be explored further in Part II. Before looking at this issue, however, in the next chapter I will discuss the implications of labelling the EZLN uprising 'postmodern'.

1. Important exceptions to this tendency include the works of F. Jameson, who draws from the utopian theories of Ernst Bloch, and Laclau and Mouffe, who attempt to reconstitute a utopian project with decentred postmodern sensibilities (Best & Kellner, 1991:293). Seidman and Nicholson edit a collection entitled Social Postmodernism which attempts to anchor postmodernism in the specific political situations of new social movements (1995).

2. There may currently be a tendency toward greater specificity when discussing postmodern thought. For example, Schuurman distinguishes three sub-directions including neo-conservative (part of a desire to return to a mythical tradition), progressive communitarianism (a focus on local struggle and resistance), and nihilism (simulation is all that can be analysed) (1993:25). Agger distinguishes a variant of "critical postmodernism", which is aware of the limitations of modernity, but continues to strive towards progressive political change and critical praxis (as in Gardiner, 1997:98).

3. Although Foucault is far more sensitive to sociohistorical details than many postmodern theorists, Antonio argues that his "careful inquiries into the rise and development of the modern era focus on huge blocks of time and space, with only approximate boundaries", and his studies of the relationship between power and knowledge "are all of very broad scope and have indefinite spatial boundaries" (1991:156).

4. Habermas argues that the locus of protest has shifted from class based distribution material questions, to the realm of cultural production and the lifeworld: "new conflicts are not ignited by distribution problems but by questions having to do with the grammar and forms of life" (as in Morrow, 1994:189).

5. Defending the idea that there is a material reality beyond discourse will likely produce the criticism that I am a crude realist. To clarify, I identify with a critical realist position. Morrow classifies critical realism as one of the two post-empiricist alternatives, the other being "post-modern scepticism" (1994:76,92). Unlike crude realism, a critical realist position attempts to build a post-empiricist metatheory which accounts for both empiricism and subjectivism. It subscribes to a form of ontological realism, but not one where concepts are thought to perfectly replicate reality (*ibid*. 77). Although reality cannot be represented "literally and absolutely", reality can still have a "consistently identifiable nature", and a causality and structure which can be provisionally identified by concepts (*ibid*. 137).

6. Freire also recognizes the dangers with a purely objectivist approach to knowledge, which assumes that consciousness can produce a simple copy of reality (Torres, 1994a:438). Denying subjectivity creates what Freire terms a "world without people" (1970:32).

7. As theorists of critical realism like Roy Bhaskar suggest, postmodern skepticism is not the only post-empiricist alternative. He posits a distinction between "intransitive" and "transitive" objects. Intransitive objects are "the relatively unchanging real objects which exist outside and perdure independently of the scientific process", while transitive objects include "the changing (and theoretically imbued) cognitive objects which are produced within science as a function and result of its practice" (as in Morrow, 1994:78).

8. Appiah contends that Western postmodernism can learn from the postcolonial position about a humanism which is not essentialist, or modern, but which can be:

> provisional, historically contingent, anti-essentialist ....and still be demanding. We can surely maintain a powerful engagement with the concern to avoid cruelty and pain while nevertheless recognising the contingency of that concern. Maybe, then we can recover within postmodernism the postcolonial writers' humanism - the concern for human suffering, for the victims of the postcolonial state...while still rejecting the master-narratives of modernism (1995:123).

9. An anecdotal encounter can bring this tendency towards 'sanctioned ignorance of the imperial project' into sharper focus. An African feminist scholar at a recent presentation at the U of A described an "alarming"

conference on "women in development". She recounted how Africana theorists (Western theorists studying Africa) preoccupied themselves with discussions of postmodern theory, while African scholars watched in disbelief as their immediate material issues - issues of "three square meals a day" - were completely marginalized from the conference. One African scholar complained to her, "if we start and end with Foucault, how are we going to make it back to Africa?".

10. Best & Kellner write, "if there is a positive political strategy for extreme postmodernists, it is a fatal strategy of hastening the process of nihilism without also advancing any positive social and political alternatives" as when Kroker & Cook promote nihilism as "the only possible basis of historical emancipation" (1991:285). Best & Kellner conclude that "no postmodern theorist has formulated an adequate political response to the degraded contemporary conditions they describe" (1991:285).

11. For the sake of consistency, I have used Marcos as the reference point for citations taken from the book, Shadows of Tender Fury, a collection of EZLN writings. This is convenient, but somewhat misleading since this work contains writings which are signed by the General Command by the EZLN, and should not be attributed to the sole personality of Marcos.

12. Publicizing details of the daily reality of Mexico's poor has been a primary objective of EZLN letters and communiqués. In a recent communiqué, written to commemorate the May 1st labor celebrations in Mexico, Marcos gives a stunning example of the existential reality of poverty for workers in Mexico - a reality often forgotten by both intellectuals and elites. He writes, addressed to Fidel Velazquez, former head of the state-sponsored worker's union (CTM):

> I could give you some facts, and point out, as an example, that the daily sustenance requirements, which in 1987 could be purchased with 8 hours and 36 minutes of labor, in January of 1997 now require 25 hours and 13 minutes of labor in order to purchase the same. Perhaps you don't remember, Mr. Velasquez, but the day only has 24 hours (even with daylight savings time). Since the political system which you represent has been capable of everything, except the ability to change the length of the day, this means that workers must, if they still have a job, survive with less than one third of what is minimally necessary to survive.

(Chiapas95, May 2 1997)

13. Weeks argues that a major problem with the deconstructivist approach (which has many overlapping issues with postmodern theory) is that it may, but is not required to examine the unequal relationships between academics in the core and the periphery; it can still maintain Western universities and schools of thought as its central reference points and Subject positions (1990:241). Weeks writes:

> Deconstruction has..passed over the critique of the international academy offered by third world academics...Deconstruction stresses what is shared among academics world over, i.e., the construction of texts. The process of writing/constructing has replaced the scientific method of the 'positivist' in its claims of universalism. By contrast, the dependency theorists stress what is different between the experience of being an academic in the first and third worlds. Deconstruction addresses the issue of the power differential between social scientist and native/object but has ignored the power differential among academics. (1990:241).

In addition, first world universities have an advantage in the field of deconstruction since they have more money to spend in this field, especially compared to third world universities where most funds are committed to applied research (1990:241).

14. Western academics who theorize about 'postmodern' technological change might be shocked by a statistic recently published in Harper's Index.

> Chance that a human being alive today has never made a telephone call: 2 in 3
> (Vol. 294, No. 1764; May 1997)

15. The use of Western intellectual labels to obfuscate core-periphery power differentials can also be seen in the new social movement literature, which has many linkages with postmodernism. Theorists writing on

new social movements in the West often implicitly assume a universality of the phenomena that they study. Even within the literature on Latin American social movements, there is a tendency for North American scholars to ignore the contributions of Latin American scholars, and to instead rely on theories developed to interpret North American movements (Escobar & Alvarez, 1992:5). Melucci makes the point that both proponents and critics of new social movement paradigm share one commonality: they both see "contemporary phenomena as a unitary empirical object" (as in Escobar, & Alvarez, 1992:7).

16. The task of explicating the role of colonial experience in the formation of Occidental discourse was tackled directly by Said in Orientalism. He writes:

> Part of the impulse behind what I tried to do in Orientalism was to show the dependence of what appeared to be detached and apolitical cultural disciplines upon a quite sordid history of imperialist ideology and colonialist settlement (1986:63).

He cites the work of Gauri Viswanathan as an example of a similar type of approach which "maps out a much more varied and intertwined archeology for knowledge" than seen in Foucault's work. Viswanathan's work has "uncovered the political origins of modern English studies, and located them in the system of colonial education imposed on natives in nineteenth century India" (1986:63).

17. An example of stategic essentialism can be seen in the words of Subcomandante Marcos. In an interview with La Jornada, he comments on the role of indigenous people in the struggle for a more just Mexico. He says:

> Right now the Indigenous people are the prime example of what a dignified and honest Mexican should be, not only in Chiapas but in the whole country. They are, right now, the vanguard of this country. I'm not suggesting any political implications by using that term, what I'm saying is that they're the human vanguard. Everything they have given and are willing to give, knowing that they won't reap anything because no one's going to offer these people ambassadorial posts; they're illiterate....They can't give them anything, nothing more than lead, in any case. And, however you want to see it, they're doing what they're doing, and they're doing it with such dignity and such a sense of democracy, even given the absurd military requirements of a war. That is the lesson the country has to learn if it wants to continue being a country.(Zapatistas! 1995: ch.5 p.141)

Although Marcos might be rightly accused of making broad generalizations about indigenous people, it serves the important political point of identifying, and publicizing valuable qualities of resistance which are obfuscated in a highly repressive, inegalitarian social climate.

18. Leonard points out that Foucault gradually moved away from his attack on the subject, as he needed to leave open some space to explain how social subjects change their practices (1990:71). The end result, however, was still only a 'thin' theory of the subject (1990:74). His theory might eventually have allowed subjects to choose from different webs of interpretations within a central discourse. It did not allow subjects to make legitimate normative judgements, or set standards from which they could rank preferences and evaluate different models of freedom.

CHAPTER THREE THE IMPLICATIONS OF LABELLING THE ZAPATISTA UPRISING "POSTMODERN"

> If the [postmodern] crisis of meaning in the West is seen as the product of a historical conjuncture, then perhaps the refusal either to export it or to import it may be a meaningful gesture, at least until we can replace the stifling monologues of self and other (which, however disordered or decentred, remain the orderly discourses of the bourgeois subject) with a genuinely dialogic and dialectical history that can account for the formation of different selves and the construction of different epistemologies.
>
> Kumkum Sangari (1995:147).

In this chapter I will examine the implications of journalists and academics labelling the EZLN rebels and Subcomandante Marcos "postmodern"[1]. Leonard argues that social theorists must ask "whose interests are being served by the claims theory provides", given that "no theory is politically neutral" (1990:26).

Whose interests are being served by labelling the EZLN uprising 'postmodern'? Does this label bring greater understanding of indigenous struggles in Chiapas? Or does this label provide validation of Western theoretical concepts without offering substantive analysis of the situation in Southern Mexico?

This analysis proceeds in three sections. In order to critique the understanding provided by the postmodern label, it is necessary to provide some background information on the multi-layered rural situation in Chiapas and Mexico more generally. This will be the task of the first section. After outlining the complexity of the situation in rural Southern Mexico, we can turn to the central question of this chapter: what is involved in labelling the situation in Chiapas 'postmodern'? Does this label shed light on the complex situation which has been unfolding for centuries in Southern Mexico?

It certainly might be tempting to label the Zapatista uprising 'postmodern'. For those jaded by unsuccessful socialist models of change, the term postmodern suggests the presence of something new, different, and exciting. Sovina Lovibond writes that:

> The term 'postmodernism' exerts an instant fascination. For it suggests that 'modernity' is, paradoxically, already in the past; and consequently that a new form of consciousness is called for, corresponding to new social conditions. (1989:5).

However tempting such a label might be, I argue that labelling the EZLN uprising "postmodern" indicates the presence of an implicit normative evaluation, rather than substantive empirical analysis. It is a covert way for theorists to give approval to certain movements who capture the collective imagination, and provides distance from those old-fashioned, outdated, modern guerillas (e.g. *Tupac Amaru* in Peru -who for whatever reasons, were never exciting enough to make the postmodern pop-chart). The problem is not that normative evaluations of the EZLN movement are being made. The problem is that the 'postmodern' label makes covert, uninformed judgements which substitute for rigorous empirical and historical analysis. As Hopenhayn writes, postmodernism tends to transform "itself into an ideology, disguising its normative judgements as descriptions, and ends up seeing what it wants to see" (1995:9).

In the second section of this chapter I argue that calling the EZLN 'postmodern' is, at best, an example of sloppy empirical work. In the third section I argue that this label is, at worst, indicative of Orientalism packaged in a new, more sophisticated postmodern bottle.

i. Conditions in the Mexican *Campo*

The Zapatista uprising and the exploitation of the indigenous population in Southern Mexico are not isolated events. They must be seen within a broader historical framework of socio-economic struggles in the Mexican and Chiapan *campo*. Even after the Mexican revolution and subsequent land reform, numerous battles were fought to minimize land distribution, to keep capitalist agriculture at the forefront of modernization efforts, and to keep the indigenous agricultural sector underdeveloped, producing cheap labour and subsistence goods.

The battles over the *campo* are especially important in understanding the situation in Chiapas, where 88% of the indigenous population is employed in agriculture (compared to 22% of the economically active Mexican population) (Barry, 1995:159-160). At the same time, seeing the larger picture of marginalization in the Mexican

campo is vital in understanding the severity of the threat posed by the Zapatistas. When the EZLN rebelled, the government faced not just an isolated peasant army in a remote tropical forest, but a group that was able to actuate sympathy and support from *campesinos* across the Mexican countryside.

In 1911 Emiliano Zapata and his peasant army struggled for the goals of *tierra y libertad* (land and liberty). Even though Zapata was later assassinated by government emissaries, and the peasant movement subdued within a corporatist state project, the *campesino* movement was partially successful in enshrining its demand for land within the 1917 Mexican Constitution, as embodied in Article 27. Article 27 designated that all natural resources belonged to the state, which could then designate them as private property or "social property" in a way that was consistent with the public interest. Social property included agrarian communities and *ejidos*. Agrarian communities were indigenous lands given title based on historical claims. They were usually smaller in number, existed in more remote locations and operated more autonomously than *ejidos* (Barry, 1995:13). *Ejidos* were community based land tenure holdings which involved a more complex form of petitioning from the state.[2] Usufruct rights were given in lieu of outright ownership, meaning that *ejido* land could not be rented, bought, or sold, and if land was not worked for more than two consecutive years, that plot would be returned to the communal body and redistributed.

Government officials did not necessarily support the conception of the *ejido* as a self-sustaining, productive socio-cultural unit. In the 1920s the social sector was seen as the last resort to alleviate political pressures for land (Stavenhagen, 1986:264). President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-40) was the first president to see the *ejido* as a productive agricultural unit in its own right, which could supply Mexico with food supplies and provide a surplus to finance industrialization (Barry, 1995:22). Even so, Cárdenas was not interested in extending democratic power to allow self-determination of the *ejidos*. He recognized the need to satisfy peasant demands within the corporatist system, but was a "proclaimed opponent of bourgeois democracy, and kept a firm control over access to land, capital, and other inputs[3] (Levy, 1989:465).

Although land distribution accelerated under the Cárdenas regime, attention to the

ejidos' productive capabilities began to decline by the end of his term, and plummeted dramatically throughout the 1940s and 1950s. Changes to the agrarian code in 1942 reaffirmed the state's commitment to private property, gave increased protection to landowners, and derided the *ejido* sector as a "socialist threat (Barry, 1995:26; Foley, 1995:61). In the late 1940s *certificados de inafectibilidad* (certificates of immunity) were issued to large landowners which gave immunity from land redistribution (Thiesenhusen, 1995:37). Legal limits to landholding were ignored by the state, or eluded through the use of *prestanombres* (borrowed names) (Foley, 1995:61).

The state encouraged the subservience of the social sector by concentrating investment funds and infrastructure spending in capitalist agriculture, mainly through extensive irrigation projects in the north-west, and subsidies to large, capital-intensive agricultural operations[4] (Barry, 1995:238; Arzipe & Botey, 1987:69). Southern areas (like the state of Chiapas), where a high percentage of *ejidos* were located, continued to lack roads, irrigation, credit[5], investment, and new technology[6] (Thiesenhusen, 1995:37). With the exception of a few profitable irrigated *ejidos* in the northeast of Mexico, the plots distributed to *campesinos* were mainly small[7], located on marginal land, and became even smaller with demographic pressure and a declining state commitment to land redistribution. These conditions made it difficult for *ejidatarios* to maintain the survival of their members, let alone become self-sufficient, self-contained alternatives to capitalist agriculture (Stavenhagen, 1986:283-84). Unable to survive on infrasubsistence plots[8], *campesinos* were, and are forced to leave their land to find additional employment in agribusiness and on capitalist farms (Collier, 1994:375).

Not only were *campesinos* in Chiapas and the rest of Mexico constrained from developing a self-determining economic course, but political independence also eluded them. Instead of receiving land and liberty, *campesinos* received some land, and the state (Barry, 1995:165). Rather than become autonomous units of self-governance, the importance of the *ejido* was as a mechanism which facilitated authoritarian control over rural areas. Material benefits were handed out not based on citizenship rights, but as part of a clientelistic system of patronage which helped the ruling PRI consolidate and maintain its hold on the country's political system. Every *ejido* member was given

automatic membership in the CNC (National Campesino Federation). The CNC was designed by Lázaro Cárdenas as a PRI substitute for autonomous *campesino* organizing, and did not hold consistent positions on important issues of food security, land distribution, or government support programs (Barry, 1995:139). Repression, combined with the CNC's privileged access to state resources and the promise of land, kept autonomous peasant organizing at a minimum (Barry, 1995:23).

The *ejidos* were an important part of the initial land reform process. But it was in the interest of the industrializing Mexican state to maintain a numerous, unstable peasantry from which it could draw inexpensive labour, rather than create a stable, autonomous, self-sufficient social sector where peasants could exercise rights of self-determination and land ownership. The *ejido* provided minimum subsistence to its members, while also providing a labour surplus that could be employed on large agriculture farms and in the expanding industrial sector. In short, social property never did become a real alternative to capitalist agriculture, but instead became its poor cousin that would work for relatively nothing, and produce subsistence goods cheaply.

This system did deliver macro gains in productivity for at least three decades. Between 1934 and 1965 agricultural production increased 325%, which was a larger gain than any other Latin American country (Thiesenhusen, 1995:41). The benefits provided to the state by capitalist agriculture diminished with the onset of agricultural crisis, however, and eventually forced an abandonment of the dual model of agriculture. By the late 1960s Mexico faced a severe crisis in agricultural productivity, and a concomitant rise in the import of basic food stuffs. Although the sources of this productivity crisis were numerous, the bimodal structures of agricultural, and the neglect of productivity issues in the *ejido* sector is one important explanation (Barry, 1995:29).

In the Lacandón jungle in Eastern Chiapas, where the Zapatista forces are concentrated, the general economic and political exploitation of the *campesinado* was worsened by other deleterious circumstances. The region was relatively unpopulated until the 1950s. Migration into the "Southern Agrarian Frontier" intensified in the 1960s, encouraged by a state who saw the region as a "safety valve" where it could "siphon off the potential explosiveness of southern Mexico's displaced indigenous farmers, a reserve

of the poorest of the poor far from the centre of power" (Ross, 1995b:10). The population jumped from 6,000 in 1960 to 300,000 at the time of the Zapatista uprising in 1994 (Barry, 1995:217).

Cattle ranchers also moved into the region during this period, bringing their heavily armed attack squads (*guardias blancas*, or "white guards") which they used to forcibly seize the best lands away from indigenous settlers (Ross, 1995b:10). Chiapas emerged as one of the main suppliers of beef for Central Mexico, and impoverished *campesinos* were pushed onto even more marginal land in the steadily diminishing jungle (Barry, 1995:160). By 1980 cattle pastures comprised 80% of the cleared land in the Lacandón jungle, yet general nutrition levels in Chiapas remained among the worst in the country, with more than 50% of the population rarely eating beef (Barry, 1995:218). The government wavered over awarding land decrees to the settlers, and eventually attempted to stem the overwhelming flow of landless *campesinos* to the region.

Environmentalists entered the scene in an effort to save the fragile region which had literally become a battleground between indigenous *campesino* settlers and ladino ranchers. The fragile tropical soils sustain cultivation for an average of five years, after which the settlers are forced to move further into the disappearing jungle (Barry, 1995:160). A full 70% of the region's original forest cover is currently gone (Barry, 1995:217). The struggle to secure a piece of cultivatable land not only created violence conflicts with ranchers, but lead to tensions and fighting among *campesinos* themselves.

Added to the pressure-cooker of tensions in Chiapas is the presence of government agencies trying to exploit the region's hydro-electric power, oil and uranium reserves (Barry, 1995:160; Collier, 1994b). On top of pure economic exploitation, racism against indigenous peoples is unparalleled in this state. Another inimitable feature of the Chiapan landscape is the incredibly tight political connections between Chiapas' ruling family (*familia chiapaneca*), the political elite, the military, and large landowners (Barry, 1995:159).

In sum, the canyons (*cañadas*) of the Lacandón emerged as a focal point of numerous conflicts: over land, over trees, over ethnicity, and over the right to survival. As Ross summarizes:

> the *ejidos* organized and fought the ranchers, fought government decrees that sought to evict them from the jungle, fought the loggers who tried to swindle them out of their trees, fought the trees for a little room to grow their corn in, fought the environmentalists who wanted to protect the disappearing Lacandon, fought each other over boundaries and politics (1995b:10).

The settlers in Chiapas were not the only Mexican *campesinos* who found it difficult to fulfill their constitutional right to a piece of land. The number of landless or land-poor looking for seasonal work was recently estimated at 4.5 million to 5.6 million (Astorga Lira, as in Barry, 1995:82). In Chiapas the frustration was especially pronounced because of myopic government promises that everyone would receive a piece of land in the Southern frontier - a pledge which contrasted sharply with the precarious reality of the masses of impoverished settlers (Barry, 1995:162). Adding to the settlers' frustration was their isolation in the Eastern region separated from the traditional support structures of their villages, as well as from even minimal government services concentrated in other parts of the state (*ibid*).

Changes on the national level turned the tide even further away from *campesino* self-determination. When President Echeverría became president in 1970, he made one last attempt to revive agriculture in the social sector by focussing on *ejido* productivity, and implementing violently contested land redistribution in the north-west (Barry, 1995:36). His efforts largely failed, however, and did not alter the unequal distribution of land, water, or capital (*ibid*). Echeverría's efforts to redistribute land, and his failure to solve the productivity crisis, had the effect of strengthening business class antagonism towards the social sector.

Influenced by this antagonism, Echeverría's successor José López Portillo refused to tolerate further land invasions, and reversed land claim decisions made by Echeverría. In 1982 the crisis in productivity was compounded by the debt crisis and its accompanying neoliberal adjustment packages. The fiscal crisis solidified the choice to favour capitalist agriculture over a commitment to equitable resource distribution and productivity in the social sector. In the place of the agrarian principle of providing "land to those who work it", Portillo instead saw the state's role as "proletarianizing the *campesino* at a fair wage" (Sanderson, 1986:281). Public spending in agriculture fell

from 8.1% of the total budget in 1980 to only 3.5% in 1986, while the budget of rural government agencies dropped 62.3% between 1983 and 1987 (Harvey, 1990:6). These austerity programs had, and continue to have a particularly pernicious effect on the rural poor.[9]

During this decade of fiscal crisis, Mexico incurred massive trade deficits,[10] and production continued to stagnate.[11] As one author wrote, "the indisputable reality is that low productivity in the agricultural sector is among the greatest unresolved economic challenges facing Mexico in the 1990s" (Cornelius, 1992:6). The growth of the past paled in comparison to the severity of the agricultural and fiscal crisis. Steven Sanderson aptly summarized the situation:

> In a word, the five decades of rural growth in Mexico since the grand *agrarian* reform of President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940) have created a system not only incapable of reproducing the conditions for the survival of the rural population but one fundamentally threatening to peasant agriculture and nutrition (1986:8, emphasis mine).

Everyone agreed that reform was needed, but the question was, what type of reform would be chosen? Would the state choose to bolster the social sector, or would it strengthen its commitment to capitalist agriculture and go with the tide of neoliberal logic?

Some questioned Mexico's ability to compete with a northern neighbour that had much higher productivity levels, technology levels, and substantial subsidization for domestic producers.[12] Despite these obstacles, a market-based trade strategy was favoured. After joining GATT in 1986, Salinas lead a unilateral liberalization of agricultural trade in 1990 which paved the way for NAFTA (Foley, 1995:62). Tariffs, subsidies, guarantee prices were all dramatically reduced, at the same time credit sources were retracted.

The increased integration into international structures of trade and finance reduced the state's capacity to make independent decisions regarding the social sector and agrarian solutions. For example, a 1991 sectoral adjustment loan designated for agriculture was contingent on very specific measures such as removing agricultural tariffs and price controls on basic food items, and eliminating price guarantees for corn producers which

are mostly *ejidatarios* (Barry, 1989:94). The *campo* was also increasingly starved of capital[13] as the austerity packages mandated high interest rates and low social spending. Not only did the state lack investment funds, but international investment was not filling the gap. In 1991 agriculture received less than 1% of the $9.2 billion (US$) of foreign investment that flowed into the country (Cornelius, 1992:6).

In his State of the Union address on November 7, 1991, Salinas made it even more explicit that the capitalist path for agriculture would be chosen. He announced that in preparation for signing NAFTA, major changes to the system of property relations were required, and the constitution would be amended. In particular, Article 27, the clause that had enshrined *campesino*'s rights to land, was under attack, and was radically amended in 1992.[14] The principle idea of the amendment was to end the state's commitment to land reform, and encourage the privatization and capitalization of *ejido* land.[15] Although *campesinos* had difficulty enacting their formal constitutional rights to land, now the right itself was being retracted. The amendment had especially severe ramifications in Chiapas, where nearly 30% of the nation's *rezago agrario* (land reform backlog) was concentrated (Barry, 1995:160). The Zapatistas identified this amendment as a major factor in their decision to stage an armed uprising. The amendment was described by Marcos as the most "powerful catalyst in the communities", as it "canceled all legal possibilities of their holding land" (Zapatistas! 1995: ch. 5 p.141).

The amendment to Article 27 reflected the historic tension between social property and capitalist private property. Behind the dualistic system of social-capitalist agriculture described above, lay a conceptual difference between an "agrarian vision" and an "agricultural/productivist" vision (Barry, 1995:25). Broadly speaking, an agrarian vision concentrates on farming systems which include *campesinos*, and is based on an ideal of equitable land distribution. This vision targets poor *campesinos*, and was the motivation to enshrine social property and the right to petition for land within Article 27. On the other hand, an agricultural/productivist vision has at its centre production issues. It targets capitalist farmers and ranchers, especially in the north, who are engaged in large scale production, often for export. After years of struggle and attempted accommodation between these two visions, the state decisively moved to resolve the tension. Rather than

reinforce and reform the marginalized social sector, as many members of *campesino* organizations had hoped for, the Mexican state moved decisively to integrate social property into the rules and norms of capitalist agriculture.

The withdrawal of agrarian reform was escorted by the valorization of private property, based on the questionable assumption that market logic would distribute resources in a way that naturally produced social and economic development.[16] This assumption was reflected in the government's claim that there was simply no more land left to distribute, which is less an objective statement of empirical reality and more an ideological measure of the state's commitment to the sanctity of private property.[17] In Mexico, estimates on the amount of land available to redistribute in Mexico vary widely, from "zero", as claimed by Salinas's technocratic team, to five million hectares, the figure claimed by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas (son of Lázaro Cárdenas, and leader of the opposition PRD party). The latter figure is supported by *campesinos*, who protest that "neo-*latifundios*" are found throughout Mexico, protected by special exemptions regarding hectare limitations, and now further protected by the amendment to Article 27 (Barry, 1995:118).

Another characteristic of the policy shift towards productivist logic was the state's depiction of national food policy as a matter of comparative advantage. In the 1970s an agrarian approach to food policy was stressed which placed a *social value* on self-sufficiency in basic food stuffs such as corn, beans, and wheat. The amendment to Article 27 attempted to eliminate an important source of food self-sufficiency: corn production on the *ejido*. At the time of the amendment, and in preparation for NAFTA, the state made an explicit commitment to get rid of traditional farms cultivating basic food crops (Barkin, 1994:32).

Under-Secretary of Agriculture Luis Télles stated explicitly the government's intention to encourage emigration of thirteen million people from rural areas, stating that these people were not just "redundant", but were actively preventing progress (Cornelius, 1992:5). The *social* value of two million small corn producers was overshadowed by their low *economic* value. The fact that two-thirds of all *ejidos* land is used to grown corn, or that corn has an important socio-cultural value for *ejidatarios* and most

Mexicans, was not recognized by the purely economic logic of the technocratic policy team. What was seen as important were the market signals indicating that corn production could occur more cheaply in the United States. It is therefore the state's responsibility, according to agricultural logic, to promote exit from the social sector in the name of progress (Cornelius, 1992:5).[18] NAFTA, which the Zapatistas explicitly labelled a death sentence for indigenous people, promised to eliminate the Mayan "Men of Corn" from the Mexican corn market (Ross, 1995b:12). In the words of one indigenous *campesino* in Chiapas, "all these changes mean that we and our families no longer have a future on the land, and because we are *campesinos* working the land, it is all we know. Where will we go?" (Barry, 1995:193).

In keeping with the values of economic logic, Salinas defined food security in terms of comparative advantage, or more specifically, gaining a niche in specific fruit and vegetable markets in the North, and using the foreign exchange to import basic grains from the United States (Cornelius, 1995:7). Maintaining this comparative advantage, based on cheap land, labour and water, requires both environmental degradation and repression of rural wages. The current trend, however, is towards a wage convergence between real wages for agricultural workers in the United States and Mexico (Foley, 1995:72). NAFTA, and the amendment to Article 27 would bolster the comparative advantage strategy by promoting the exodus of an estimated one to two million people from subsistence plots, and thereby lowering wages in the labour market for *jornaleros* (farmworkers)(*ibid*).

Although the general neoliberal agricultural strategy is disheartening for *campesino* groups, certain circumstances in Chiapas made the situation even more bleak and volatile. Chiapas has been called a "rich land with a poor people" (Benjamin, 1989). It has long been involved in the international trade in resources, with very little benefits produced for the majority of the Chiapan population. The state produces much of Mexico's oil and natural gas, and more than half of Mexico's coffee crops (Floyd, 1996:143). Despite the wealth of resources, Chiapas is one of the poorest states in Mexico, with literacy, mortality, and per capita income levels falling well below the national norm (Barry, 1995:159). Almost 60% of Mexico's hydroelectric power is

produced in Chiapas, yet 35% of the population in Chiapas do not have access to electricity, and 42% do not have access to running water (Floyd, 1996:142). These hardships have not gone unnoticed by various leftist and Church groups, which flooded into the region in the late 1960s and 1970s to bolster *campesino* organization efforts, and inadvertently helped to construct organizational foundation for the Zapatista Army.

Other recent triggers behind the uprising include the decision of the International Coffee Organization to let the price of coffee float on world markets which lead to a devastating crash in coffee prices in 1990. Governor Patrocinio González Garrido's decision to ban timber-cutting also made survival for the region's indigenous people's even more precarious (Ross, 1995b:12). As mentioned, in 1992 Salinas unilaterally orchestrated the amendment to Article 27 of the Constitution, and continued negotiations for NAFTA. In late 1992, the Zapatista community assemblies informed the General Command that they should begin preparations for war (Ross, 1995b:12).

On January 1st, 1994, the day that NAFTA was to come into effect, the Zapatista National Liberation Army declared war, rallying around demands for land, justice, and democracy. Their words and actions told Mexico and the world that rural peoples would not be ignored, and would not live out their death sentence quietly. They explicitly identified neoliberal modernization strategies and their economic logic as enemies bent on destroying their livelihood, denying the social value of their traditional ways of life, and obliterating their indigenous agricultural culture.

Since the January 1st uprising, the state of Chiapas has seen massive, covert militarization by the Mexican government, and a continued precarious struggle for survival by the Zapatista forces. The progress made in government negotiations was negated by the Federal government's refusal to carry out the resulting accords, and by the Zapatistas' subsequent refusal to return to the bargaining table. The government's unwillingness to consider the possibility of social and economic reform makes it highly unlikely that a resolution of the situation will occur without massive bloodshed. President Zedillo used the recent elections as evidence that democracy was thriving in Mexico, and that his government could no longer tolerate "radicalisms, intolerance, or violence" (Paulson, 1997b). Many fear that these comments, combined with the dramatic

presence of the Mexican military in the area, foreshadows impending military action against the Zapatista communities.

ii. The 'Postmodern' Zapatistas: Evidence of Sloppy Empirical Work

The paradox of postmodern 'sloppiness' is that the very theory that demands attention to specificity is the theory occluding an examination of the specific context of the uprising. Antonio comments that the stated postmodern goal of being "densely contextual" is ironic since "postmodernists have been notoriously casual about such matters" (1991:156). Calling the EZLN uprising "postmodern" is a case in point.

For example, Frank Burbach argues that the roots of the 'postmodern' Zapatista rebellion lie in the past twenty-five years of victimization of Indians and *campesinos* by processes of modernization and capitalism (1994). The question thus arises: to what extent is this process new, unique, or even remotely postmodern? Given that the victimization of Indians and *campesinos* by capitalist forces has been occurring for hundreds of years, we must question how the label 'postmodern' helps us to understand what is now occurring in Chiapas. Lucy Conger makes similarly nebulous, empirically-unjustified statements regarding the 'postmodern' uprising (1994). She argues that the public response to Chiapas has been postmodern because it stirs deep fears of social unrest and rekindles romanticism associated with left movements, yet she does not make any attempts to clarify these cryptic comments (1994:118).

The casual 'postmodern' label ignores crucial differences between postmodern qualities, and the empirical details of the EZLN uprising. The qualities associated with the postmodern label are not clearly drawn out in any of the cases where it is applied to the Zapatista rebels. Burbach, for example, uses postmodernism as the basis of his essay on "the roots of post-modern rebellion" in Chiapas, but does not discuss what is meant by the term, except to say that it is "used broadly in this essay" (1994:113).

What is 'post-modern' about the uprising must be inferred from the general context of postmodern theory. I will look at three features which might be used as evidence that the uprising is postmodern: 1) a focus on local resistance as opposed to

broader narratives of liberation, 2) the development of new 'postmodern' ways of doing politics, and 3) the use of new 'postmodern' technologies by the Zapatistas.

a. local resistance or broad social narrative?

One could surmise that a post-modern rebellion would be interested in local acts of resistance, and would resist modern universalism's tendency to generalize specific issues to a wider context. There is undoubtably an important local dimension to the Chiapas uprising. Contextual factors such as the militarization of the border with Guatemala, the persistence of colonial elites, the dramatic absence of any agrarian reform in this area of Mexico, and a grossly unequal system of social stratification all play an important role in understanding why the uprising occurred in this particular state (Barry, 1995:4).

Although understanding local issues is necessary to any explanation of the Zapatista uprising, it is not sufficient. Not only did the Zapatista participants explicitly design their efforts to achieve a broad base of solidarity within Mexico and abroad, but movements of Zapatista support came from far beyond the state's boundaries.

The Zapatistas explicitly and forcefully fought against their movement being designated a local resistance movement. When the national government tried to force them to take national issues off the negotiating table, the EZLN solidly refused. Marcos wrote:

> Why does the federal government take the question of national politics off the proposed agenda of the dialogue for peace? Are the indigenous people of Chiapas only Mexican enough to be exploited, but not Mexican enough to be allowed an opinion on national politics? Does the country want Chiapan oil, electrical energy, natural resources, labour, in short, the life blood of Chiapas, but not the opinions of the indigenous people of Chiapas about the future of the country? (1995b:107).

From the very beginning of the uprising the EZLN attempted to garner a broad base of support in order to affect politics at a national level. This hardly resembled a retreat to localism. The Mexican left refers to this phenomenon as *coyuntura*, or the "coming together" of distinct social and cultural groups. Ross calls this *coyuntura* the

"true miracle of the Zapatista uprising" (1995b:9). The Zapatistas called explicitly for this *coyuntura* when they stated in an early communiqué:

> To the people of Mexico:
>
> ...we call all workers, poor peasants, teachers, students, progressive and honest intellectuals, housewives, professionals, and all independent political organizations to join our struggle in your own way using your own methods, so that we can win the justice and freedom that all Mexicans desire (Marcos, 1995b:61).

Yet another reason it is difficult to peg the Zapatistas as postmodern rebels of local resistance, is that the EZLN explicitly identifies itself with other Mexican *campesino* and indigenous movements, with Mexican nationalism more generally, and with the struggles of the oppressed around the world.

It is clear that Marcos and the EZLN believe that the struggle in Chiapas is intimately connected to struggles in other parts of Mexico. In Marcos' words:

> It has been said, quite wrongly, that the rebellion of the people of Chiapas has its own tempo, which does not correspond to the rhythms of the nation. It is a lie. The exploited Chiapans' special genius is the same as that of the exploited in Durango, or the Bajío, or Veracruz...(1995b:46).

Not only does the EZLN stand in solidarity with the oppressed of Mexico, but they cast in their lot with the oppressed people of the world. In one postscript Marcos purports to clear up previous writings when he inferred he was gay, and broadly demonstrates his solidarity with oppressed people around the world:

> About this whole thing about whether Marcos is homosexual: Marcos is gay in San Francisco, black in South Africa, Asian in Europe, Chicano in San Isidro, anarchist in Spain, Palestinian in Israel, Indigenous in the streets of San Cristóbal, ...Jew in Germany...feminist in political parties, Communist in the post-Cold War era...pacifist in Bosnia...artist without gallery or portfolio...*guerrillero* in Mexico at the end of the twentieth century...reporter assigned to filler stories for the back pages...woman alone in the metro at 10 p.m....*campesino* without land, fringe editor, unemployed worker, doctor without a practice, rebellious student, dissident in neoliberalism, writer without books or readers, and, to be sure, Zapatista in the Mexican Southeast. In sum, Marcos is a human being, any human being, in this world. Marcos is all the minorities who are untolerated, oppressed, resisting, exploding, saying "Enough."....all that makes power and good consciences uncomfortable, that is Marcos.

These are hardly the words of a post-modern revolutionary unwilling to move beyond local particularities! Although Marcos and the EZLN are insistent that the Zapatistas are

just one resistance movement among many, they are hardly 'postmodern' in their belief that they can understand, and stand in solidarity with oppressed groups around the world.

When asked in an interview what the Zapatista struggle was about, Marcos answered that 'the protagonist is global" (Chiapas95, April 1/97). Neoliberalism is identified by the Zapatistas a key source of collective suffering around the world. Marcos condemns a neoliberal system ("a gigantic genocide") which "erases the borders for money and erases the borders for problems", and which works to "exclude social groups that aren't economically productive" (*ibid*). These excluded groups are not just the indigenous people of Mexico. He writes:

> I'm not referring only to the Latin American Indians but also to those of North America and to the ethnic groups and social groups that are in the rest of the world, the ones called minorities. I'm referring to indigenous people, migrants, homosexuals, lesbians...the youth, the women. Although difficult to categorize as minorities, they are treated as minorities...(Chiapas95, April 1/97).

Recent international efforts of solidarity with the EZLN are considerable. Various international delegations have visited Chiapas, and lobbied their respective governments on the Zapatistas' behalf. In July of 1996 the Zapatistas sponsored an international conference entitled "For Humanity and Against Neoliberalism" where 5,000 leftist organizers from 42 countries around the world made important linkages, and organized a second and third conference. This paragraph, taken from the Manifesto for the Convocation of the 2nd Intercontinental Meeting, demonstrates the importance of the Zapatista example on a global level:

> In Mexico the armed revolt of the indigenous community of Chiapas, organized by the EZLN, has opened the way towards a different future for us all. Since the 1st of January 1994, the imaginative struggle of the Zapatistas has spurred people worldwide to create alternatives to neoliberalism. Their initiatives have been created outside the bounds of traditional institutional politics and always seek to involve the greatest possible numbers, especially among marginalized people. (Chiapas95, April 26/97)

The issue of international solidarity will be explored further in Chapter Six. At this point, let it suffice to say that the Zapatistas are far from being a sheltered local resistance movement, focussing only on their specific situation for fear of making totalizing generalizations.

b. new postmodern ways of doing politics?

Given the overlap of themes between postmodernism and new social movements one could also surmise that a postmodern uprising would, like the new social movements, employ new ways of doing politics. Indeed, those who believe that the uprising is postmodern often set out to show the uniqueness of the movement, disassociating it from the methods of past guerilla struggles, and especially from socialist discourse (Conger, 1994:117).

There is undoubtably a sense in which the EZLN uprising is unique, especially in its recognition of the necessary plurality of methods of struggle, and its refusal to claim to be the one authentic vanguard. In one of its first communiqués the EZLN stated, "we do not intend to be the one, sole and true historic vanguard" (as in Conger, 1994:117). This might distance them from some Marxist struggles, but it does not mark a total radical distinction from other indigenous *campesino* movements, such as those fighting behind Emiliano Zapata during the Mexican revolution.

These authors seem unaware of these important precedents, and their arguments frequently display a profound ignorance of Mexican and Chiapan history.[19] The EZLN's so-called postmodern methods of struggle do not appear out of thin air, but draw heavily upon modern and pre-modern history. In an early communiqué the EZLN wrote:

> We did not learn our military tactics from Central American insurgent movements, but rather from Mexican military history: from Hidalgo, Morelos, Guerrero, Mena; from the resistance to the Yankee invasions in 1846-47; from the popular resistance to the French intervention; from the great heroic feats of Villa and Zapata and finally, from the indigenous struggles of resistance throughout the history of our country (1995b:56-57).

Other features of the EZLN's unique 'postmodern' way of doing politics include its rejection of traditional leftist goals of seizing state power, its flexibility, and its sense of humour[20] (Conger, 1994:117; Burbach, 1994). This analysis ignores important continuities with past movements of emancipation, forgetting that not all radical agrarian groups have held state seizure as their objective. Ross writes, "the EZLN's lack of interest in taking state power but rather in making the state accountable to the *pueblo* is a vision the rebels have inherited from their namesake, the incorruptible revolutionary

Emiliano Zapata"(1995b:15).

Emiliano Zapata himself did not try to take over the national reins, but his Plan of Ayala was part of a demand for local government. Zapata's cry of "long live the pueblos" reflected his desire to give political power back to village assemblies, and was not a war cry for the Pueblos to take over Mexico City (Barry, 1995:21). Does this make Emiliano Zapata postmodern?

It is also important to remember that although the EZLN do not hold seizing state power as their goal, this does not mean that their ambitions are any less modest. Their goals include not only the implementation of a democratic system which operates on multiple levels, but the creation of a new world where freedom, democracy, and justice reign. In a letter to a Chiapan journalist Marcos notes that triumph would not be "seizing state power", but "something even harder to win: a new world" (1995b:109).

Burbach contends that another piece of evidence demonstrating the EZLN's new strand of postmodern politics is the group's attempts to maintain democratic, grass roots links with local communities (1994:114). Burbach even goes so far to say that this "postmodern perspective" is even found in rainforest villages which had no contact with the EZLN, where demands for education, medicine, and representation are somehow strikingly post-modern (1994:123).

This analysis arrogantly assumes that the first democrats were post-modern, and ignores that communal democracy is not only a part of pre-modern indigenous heritage, but is also an important part of a modern democratic tradition. The idea of having local democratically run communities sounds more like Alexis de Toqueville's writings on early American democracy, and less like a new idea introduced by Baudrillard or Lyotard.

The EZLN also employs a very modern tradition of using nationalism in its struggle. Collier & Quaratiello write that the "Zapatistas have responded to the adversity of eastern Chiapas more as Mexican nationals than as doctrinaire revolutionaries" (1994:8). Once again, it is questionable whether the EZLN exemplifies a radical 'postmodern' break from old ways of doing politics. An EZLN communiqué speaks of this nationalist vision:

...we will try to unite all the Mexican people and their independent organizations

> around them so that, through varied forms of struggle, a national revolutionary movement will be born with a place for all kinds of social organizations whose honest and patriotic goal is a better Mexico (1995b:37).

The theme of Mexican nationalism is also seen in the EZLN's frequent references to the Mexican flag. In Marcos' words:

> We do not claim that all honest Mexicans can fit under our Zapatista banner. We offer our flag. But there is a bigger and more powerful flag that can shelter us all. The flag of the national revolutionary movement can cover the most diverse tendencies, opinions, and different types of struggle, as long as they are united to win a common desire and goal: freedom, democracy, and justice...Under this great flag our Zapatista flag will wave, under this great flag our rifles will be raised (1995b:93).

Another reason to be wary of the claim that the ELZN's techniques are new and 'postmodern', is that the EZLN holds on to the modern political notion of truth in their political communiqués. Bardacke writes:

> Although it is unclear whether Marcos believes in "*the* truth". he certainly believes in "truthfulness", and in the difference between people who speak the truth and people who lie. "The Lie" is one way Marcos names the Mexican political system, and it is clear that within all his talk of masks, there is an idea of a face behind the mask, a "truth" that can be unmasked and revealed. A truth that is not just text. (1995:265)

In an early communiqué the EZLN begin with the following passage which indicates that despite their belief in plurality and difference, they also have a belief in some conception of an overriding truth which can act as a guiding force:

> We have only one face and among us but a single thought. Our word walks with *the truth*. In life and in death we will continue our journey. As yet there is no pain in death, but rather hope in life (1995b:102, emphasis mine).

Another piece of evidence purportedly demonstrating the EZLN's 'new' postmodern style of politics is the group's rejection of state socialism. Historian Lorenzo Meyer writes:

> The EZLN [rebellion] is the first postmodern rebellion of Latin America. The first that is born not only in postcommunism but also, and this is important, [born] in post-anticommunism (as in Conger, 1994:117).

But the EZLN is not the first agrarian group that has framed its demands outside a Soviet-style communist discourse. This discourse was not employed by the original Emiliano Zapata, nor by other *campesino* movements such as those behind the land invasions under

Echerverría's presidency in the 1970s.

In addition, although Soviet-style rhetoric is absent, the discourse of socialism is in fact used by the Zapatistas. In an interesting passage by Marcos, he uses irony to mock the idea that socialism is dead, and the only alternative is capitalism. He writes:

> There is nothing to struggle for. Socialism is dead. Long live resignation, reformism, modernity, capitalism, and a whole list of cruel etceteras. The viceroy and the feudal gentlemen dance and laugh joyfully in their palaces, big and small....Socialism is dead. Long live capital. Radio, television, and the newspapers proclaim it, and some ex-socialists, now sensibly repentant, repeat it (1995b:45).

Although the word 'socialism' is not frequently used in the Zapatista communiqués, socialist and social democratic ideas are omnipresent throughout their writing. For example, in one EZLN communiqué they write: "the main truth...is that what is good for the many is good for everyone" (1995b:151). Although the Zapatistas do not consistently employ Marxist rhetoric, they outline a vision of economic democracy which closely resembles a socialist vision of equality in the productive realm. When the Zapatistas speak of the necessity of "justice", they largely mean economic justice and equality (Bardacke, 1995:261). Bardacke writes: "[t]he new Zapatistas have in mind a great redistribution of wealth" (*ibid*).

And unlike the analysis of postmodern theory, the Zapatistas are well aware of the persistence of crude economic exploitation through capitalism, which follows the "demands of the capitalist looters and not the needs of the Chiapan people" (Marcos, 1995b:35). Unlike many postmodernists, the Zapatistas still hold that the capitalist system is an enemy, particularly in its current neoliberal manifestation. Marcos accuses capitalism directly: "Capitalism leaves its mark: 1.5 million Chiapans have no medical services whatsoever" (1995b:36). Capitalism is not just a matter of discourse, but a matter of material exploitation with its trademarks of "ecological destruction, agricultural waste, hyper-inflation, alcoholism, prostitution, and poverty" (Marcos, 1995:1995b:35).

The EZLN analyses are also intellectually intertwined with and indebted to the dependency analysis of the Latin American left. Marcos writes of the destruction brought by capitalism:

> [Chiapas'] experience with plunder and exploitation goes back hundreds of years.

> Chiapan veins have always bled the very same loot: wood and fruit, livestock and men - all headed for the metropolis. Just like the banana republics of the past, but now at the peak of neoliberalism and "libertarian revolutions," the southeast continues exporting natural resources and manual labour, and, as it has for five hundred years, still imports the primary product of capitalism: misery and death. (1995b:36).

The EZLN analysis of capitalism is not confined to Mexican borders, but implicates the entire global capitalist system. This is evident in the ELZN's demand that NAFTA be renegotiated so it is not allowed to follow its path as a death sentence for indigenous people.

We have seen that is extremely difficult to distinguish between'modern' ways of doing politics, and the so-called 'postmodern' political techniques of the Zapatistas. Are we to conclude that to be a 'postmodern' revolutionary is less about doing new styles of politics, and more about existing in the post cold war era? If it is, then we might ask what does this 'postmodern' label tell us? It seems it would be more accurate just to describe the Zapatistas as 'post-cold-war', instead of using the highly-loaded Western concept of 'postmodern'.

Bardacke is highly critical of the suggestion that Marcos is 'postmodern', and suggests naming the historical period "Late Capitalism". Bardacke outlines his position as follows:

> Postmodern is an idea that the left ought to avoid. "Modern" was a bad enough way to name an age, saying nothing about it except that it is "now', and 'postmodern" is even worse, giving us as the naming characteristic of our time nothing more than "after now". I continue to think of our age as "Late Capitalism", even if it doesn't seem to be as late as we hoped. Calling it "late" suggests that it has an end, and as we no longer believe in the inevitable progressive march of history, the term "Late Capitalism" is not only a theoretical naming, but a call to action . . . (1995:265).

Even if we don't agree with the hopeful pronunciation of "late capitalism", close investigation of the 'postmodern' label suggests that the term does not actually describe very much of the goals or political strategies of the EZLN rebels.

c. News Flash! Zapatistas employ new postmodern technology!

Another reason that the EZLN uprising might be labelled post-modern is because of its judicious use of new technology such as computers and the Internet, especially since "postmodern theorists ascribe extreme power to new technologies" (Best & Kellner 1991:275). Poster argues that an important part of postmodernism is that "the exchange of symbols between human beings is now far less subject to constraints of space and time" (1990:2), and that "distance provid[es] no buffer between remote points that might allow time for reactions to be deliberated" (1990:4). For example, Carolyn Marvin studied the history of electronic communication, and found important changes in "who may speak, who may not, and who has authority and may be believed" (as in Poster, 1990:5).

Certainly there are elements within the EZLN uprising which resemble Poster's description of 'postmodern' technological application. These elements are important, but it is questionable if they are a dominant, or driving force behind the uprising. Best & Kellner note that postmodern theories often make technological change the causal force, ignoring the importance of economic factors or the "dialectic between technology and social relations of production" (1991:276). Although they correctly point out what is new about these technological innovations, postmodern theories tend to downplay "the extent to which ruling groups control and shape these new social forces" (Best & Kellner, 1991:221).

It is true that international news coverage, facilitated by the Internet, diminished the opportunity for the Mexican army to quash the poorly armed rebellion for fear of arousing international condemnation. Many of the EZLN's writings are now available on various electronic web pages. Certainly having access to the Internet broadened the audience that would learn about their plight, and upped their political advantage in the standoff with the Mexican state.

The impact of new, so-called 'post-modern technology', however, should not be exaggerated. In the first twelve days of the rebellion after the initial Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle, the rebels did not issue *any* new press reports (Ross, 1995b:18). The first communiqués after the uprising were written on a manual typewriter, a beaten-up Olivetti portable, and were slow in getting from the jungle into the pages of newspapers

(*ibid*). Although the communiqués are now written on a personal computer and printed on a printer, they are delivered to the Catholic diocese via a human chain of couriers (*ibid*). Marcos himself writes:

> It took a long time for the communiqués to arrive, and they arrived irregularly. The "untimely" nature of our pronouncements is something we have tried to remedy, with no success whatsoever. The speed with which some of the communiqués reached the press was due to lucky circumstances that, unhappily, were never a result of anything we planned (1995b:27).

Marcos even makes jokes about the lack of technology that the rebels have in the jungle. In one letter to a newspaper he concludes with words, "From Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, EZLN.....Still without a fax machine . . . (sigh)." (1995b:125). Marcos also frequently mentions in his writings that even newspapers are usually unavailable to them, and they only receive a few radio signals, which are all from the government.

In addition, it seems important to remember that having access to international media and diplomatic attention is not guaranteed even if one owns a fax and a modem. This was clearly evident with the dramatic March 1994 assignation of PRI Presidential candidate Donald Colosio, which left the Zapatistas alone in Chiapas without a press crew in sight (Ross, 1995:329). Although today there is abundant information on the Internet about recent events in Chiapas, just as there was information before the uprising, such information does not necessarily draw CNN crews into the Lacandon jungle, nor does it makes the television news or the headlines of the major newspapers.

iii. The 'Postmodern' Zapatistas: Orientalism in a New Bottle?

If calling the EZLN uprising postmodern is at best sloppy empirical work, it is at worst Orientalism packaged in a new, more sophisticated bottle. As Foucault has taught, to label somebody, as the rational modern institutions of psychiatry and criminal justice have done, is to have power over them. In an essay on postmodernism Hassan writes: "[l]et us admit it: there is a will to power in nomenclature" (1985:120).

As argued in Chapter 2, the postmodern label can exaggerate sameness, and ignore difference between core and periphery. It is an example of what was described by Richards (1987:11) as a "sophisticated political economy of sameness" where difference is subsumed under a sugar coating of 'politics of difference'. Such labelling confirms Todorov's observation that although in the West we have recently become aware of the distinctiveness of the Other, there is still a tendency for our awareness of our distinct "I" to transmogrify into the homogenizing "we" with all its totalitarian tendencies (1984:251).

We might learn more about this more by comparing postmodern labelling to the labelling of indigenous people by Bartolomé de Las Casas in the early 16th Century. Las Casas, renowned for his advocacy of Indian's rights, also idealized the Indians as Other by making essentialist presuppositions - albeit positive ones. To Las Casas, the Indians, regardless of their differences, living across the continent from Mexico to Chile, were inherently peaceful and obedient. Todorov writes, "Las Casas's perception of the Indians is no more nuanced than that of Columbus when the latter believed in the "noble savage", and Las Casas virtually admits that he is projecting his ideal on them" (1984:163-164). In the words of Las Casas:

> These peoples, considered in general, are by their nature all gentleness, humility and poverty, without weapons or defences nor the least ingenuity, patient and enduring as none other in the world...The Indians are of such gentleness and decency, that they are more than the other nations of the entire world, supremely fitted and prepared to abandon the worship of idols and to accept, province by province and people by people, the word of God and the preaching of the truth (as in Todorov, 1984:163).

Ultimately, the work of Las Casas suffers from the same Orientalism as the writings of Columbus, or as Todorov puts it:

> ...we learn nothing of the Indians..the prejudice of superiority is an obstacle in the road to knowledge...for it consists in identifying the other purely and simply with one's own "ego ideal" (or with oneself) (1984:165).

Las Casas framed every issue in terms of the "entirely Spanish" opposition between believing and unbelieving (*ibid*). He was unique in that he tacked desirable qualities onto the indigenous people, but "the inverted distribution of values, incontestable proof of his generosity of spirit, does not lessen the schematism of his vision" (*ibid*).

There are some startling parallels with the postmodern labelling of the EZLN. Instead of trying to understand the differences, history, or specificities of their struggle, the Western theorist self-referentially projects the postmodern "ego ideal" onto this situation. Instead of the EZLN's issues being seen in the discourse of the movement participants, a ready-made modernity-postmodernity debate is transcribed onto the situation. Labelling the uprising 'postmodern' also continues a longstanding academic tendency to idealize, lump together, and ignore differences within the peasantry (Collier & Quaratiello, 1994:9). Under the blanket term 'post-modern', differences such as class stratification, gender inequality, and religious conflict among the peasantry are obscured.

We can be certain that these theorists do not mean to insult the Zapatistas by calling them postmodern. Undoubtably they intend to award a compliment of the highest order! Hassan suggests that postmodern is a descriptive as well as an normative category, used to valorize writers and movements that the theorist likes (1985:122). It seems important to look beneath these good intentions to find the skeleton of a long tradition of Orientalism.

Using this label to disguise difference is part of what Spivak calls "sanctioned ignorance of the imperialist project" (as in Slater, 1992:285), and what Said refers to as "the power to give, or to withhold attention, a power utterly essential to interpretation and to politics" (1986:62).

Several features are de-focussed by the postmodern optic: the modern demands made by the EZLN, the importance of economic and subsistence issues, and the ways in which the core is implicated in this peripheral uprising.

Burbach claims that the Indian uprising was an "attempt to move beyond the politics of modernity" (1994:113). What this statement camouflages is the very modern nature of many EZLN demands, which explicitly calls for the modern ideals of "freedom, justice, and democracy", as well as the benefits of a modern welfare state.

Slater argues that many social movements in the South are not just reactions against modernity, but demands for access to the modernity project (1993:27). This argument is confirmed by the list of EZLN demands. These are demands which many in the industrialized West take for granted. They are typical of demands made within

'underdeveloped' countries - countries that are more like "aborted modernity projects" than post-modern/industrial societies (Schuurman, 1993:191).

The EZLN and its supporters demand the benefits of 'developed' modern societies, not a return to an impoverished, autarkic local existence. Their list of demands includes not just land, but agricultural implements such as "farm machinery, fertilizers, pesticides, credits, technical advice, and improved seeds" (Marcos, 1995b:158). They want democratic autonomy, but they also want the state to provide hospitals, specialized doctors, rural clinics, and literacy programs (*ibid*). The EZLN does not desire autarky, but rather the tools to participate in markets, and fair prices for their products (*ibid*, 159).

The rebels demand respect for traditional indigenous ways of life, but they also want the gains of modern welfare states. They demand "decent jobs with fair salaries", "indigenous radio stations", vehicles, housing, and basic services like electricity, potable water, roads, telephones, transportation, stoves, televisions, refrigerators, and washing machines (*ibid*, 158-160). *Campesina* women want the rights enjoyed by modern urban women, such as "child-birth clinics with gynecologists", "day-care centres", "ovens and materials necessary to build bakeries", and schools where "women can receive technical training" (*ibid*, 161). Calling the EZLN uprising postmodern serves only to move the attention away from these specific, highly pragmatic demands.

The EZLN is also not calling for a return to a romanticized past of local traditions and culture. In fact, they are quite critical of certain indigenous traditions, especially on the subject of gender. The EZLN has organized sex-education classes for women to teach them about health, hygiene and women's diseases that are usually misinterpreted by men. Major Ana Maria explains how the Revolutionary Laws on Women seek to create a situation where women can freely choose their husbands. She describes the existing conditions for women in candid, unromantic terms:

> In Indigenous *campesino* life...A young man comes who wants to get married, wants to ask permission to marry someone. He comes, but he asks the father, he doesn't ask the opinion of the young woman. And then what happens is that the father accepts, many of them accept without asking the opinion of the young woman, whether she likes him or doesn't like him. And so they sell her....in exchange for the young woman marrying the young man he has to pay some money...Women do not like this. Many times they do not even know the man,

> what he's like. They cannot live with him because there is not time spent as partners, nothing like that. They ask for you, the father gives you, and when the time comes to get married, you get married. Many women go crying, because they don't want to. That is why this came out in the law, that they give us, that we should have the right to choose, that they cannot sell us like the land. That they cannot obligate us to get married, to have many children. This is very, very difficult for women. We think that women suffer more than men. Of course, they suffer the same exploitation, and the children as well, the same exploitation, the same misery, the same injustice. But in addition to that, women are also dominated. (Zapatistas! 1995: ch.8 p.227).

The Zapatistas want to preserve their culture, have dialogical encounters with aspects of modernity such as feminism and the welfare state, as well as move into a future where there is a more equitable integration into Mexico's modernity project. When Marcos speaks of the significance of the San Andrés Accords, he describes it as a chance for the indigenous world to "*try to incorporate itself with the modern world*", without having to renouncing their indigenous traditions (Chiapas95, April 1/97, emphasis mine).

Another issue obscured by the post-modern label is the uprising's roots in subsistence issues. When told that intellectuals in the West were calling the EZLN the first 'postmodern rebels', Marcos replied with a sneer, "Ya, we're the first postmodern rebels fighting the old enemies of exploitation, poverty, and hunger".[21]

The EZLN soldiers told reporters that they were going to die from diseases related to malnutrition, so why not fight to the death now? An early EZLN communiqué spoke of this decision:

> ...we think no, no more, enough of this dying useless deaths, it would be better to fight for change. If we die now, we will not die with shame, but with the dignity of our ancestors (Marcos, 1995b:58).

Although the majority of participants in the EZLN are indigenous, the EZLN demands are not only focussed on indigenous self-determination, but make the material needs of the rural poor (Ladino and indigenous) a high priority (Collier & Quaratiello, 1994:7).

Barry writes that as policy-makers, politicians, academics, and activists argue over identity issues (ie: what role *campesinos* should play in the modernization process), *campesinos* fight to stay alive (1995:13). Schuurman argues that postmodern interpretations of social movements often belie that groups form social movements not because of some ideal vision of an "new society", but as a survival strategy (1993).

Calling the movement postmodern has the dangerous effect of refocusing academic and media attention away from subsistence needs, and onto a first world intellectual movement.

Obscuring issues of poverty championed by the EZLN goes hand in hand with obscuring the important link between core affluence and peripheral poverty. Whether theorists approve or not, the lives of U.S. and Canadian academics are connected to the situation of agriculture in Southern Mexico through at least one important thread: NAFTA. One might also wonder about the timing of the postmodern phenomenon. As Beverley and Ovideo write:

> There was...a clear coincidence between the appearance and spread of postmodernism in Western Europe and the United States and the political hegemony of the New Right in the 1980s, a coincidence that gives some credence to the idea that postmodernism is a new form of cultural imperialism, the "American International,' as Andreas Huyssen once put it (1995:2).

Although these core-periphery links are not always clear or deliberate, there is an important power differential that is often brushed under the carpet. The luxury and the privilege of the academic's life is left out of the picture when the picture has post-modern (read: like us) stamped across it.

This discussion is not intended to say that postmodernism is useless, and that it cannot help us understand movements like the uprising in Chiapas. It is intended to draw out the implications of casually throwing this label on this movement without adequate empirical work. Calling the EZLN uprising postmodern is "risky", to use Ann Ferguson's term (as in Sawicki, 1991:102). Sawicki writes that:

> Risky practices are those about which there is conflicting evidence concerning their practical and political implications. There are good reasons to adopt them and good reasons to doubt them.

In the case of the "postmodern" EZLN rebels, there is reason for scepticism.

Concluding Part I

Introducing Part II

Modern theory has focussed on important emancipatory goals of liberty and justice, but we have seen that it also carries a heavy baggage. Modern emancipatory programs have been marked by their blind faith in reason, totalizing projects based on essentialist propositions, and covert rationalization of colonialism. Habermas - brilliant thinker, heir to the Frankfurt tradition, and perhaps trying to be a "Marx for our times" (Giddens, 1985:124), cannot single-handedly provide a new theory of emancipation. Although he is formally committed to the unity of theory and praxis, and offers tremendous theoretical sophistication, it should be conceded that the practical implications of his work on emancipation are not easily forthcoming.

Post-modern theory, even in its most oppositional form, is politically ambivalent, and tends to obfuscate the existence of material and structural exploitation in social life. Without a coherent commitment to humanism, structure, economic analysis, or any form of ontological realism, the post-modern trend creates many doubts towards possibilities of emancipation, and tends to dilute the impetus to look for such possibilities. If we are not sure that oppression exists, or we think that we are all oppressed no matter what we do, then why spend time trying to end human suffering? Foucault offers brilliant insights into the nature of power and oppression, and encourages theorists to examine repression in previously unexplored areas, but he does not encourage theorists towards a program for change and emancipation.

I have argued that the postmodern tendency to reject modern concepts in a totalizing fashion must be rejected in favour of an approach that does not simply throw out concepts such as emancipation, but instead attempts to reconstruct them. The limits of both the modern and postmodern traditions suggests good reason to bypass the modernity-postmodernity debate if we want to better understand emancipation. This useful, but stymied debate disguises important similarities between modern and postmodern critical theory.

First, the critical end of modern and postmodern theory share similar approaches

in their critiques of traditional philosophy and modernity, their attacks on traditional disciplinary boundaries and use of "supradisciplinary discourses" (Best & Kellner, 1991:215). In addition, both postmodern theory and critical theory have tried to "combine social theory, philosophy, cultural critique, and political concerns in their theories", and both have been "engaged in heated polemics against each other", as well as both being "synthesized with feminist theory" (*ibid*). Both traditions have also tended to dismiss the other too easily. Best & Kellner write that "critical theorists have tended to reject postmodern theory and culture in its entirety...while postmodernists, with some exceptions, have polemicized against critical theory, especially Habermas" (1991:246)

Second, and most important for our discussion of emancipation, both modern and postmodern theory fail to make links to the concrete "political implications" of emancipation (Leonard, 1990). Leonard points out this "curious tension" between critical theory's commitment to goals of greater freedom, and unwillingness to move away from theoretical abstraction:

> On the one hand, advocates of critical theory insist that social and political theory must be politically engaged and emancipatory in content. On the other hand, the discourse of critical theory has simply failed to make clear its own political implications and how it is to be related to concrete political practices (1990:xv).

Although the meta-critiques (and meta-defences) of modernity have brought great insight, they have not brought social theory much closer to understanding practical struggles for emancipation, and have put practical emancipatory goals on the backburner (Leonard, 1990:6-7). In a comparison of Habermas and Lyotard, Best & Kellner write that one similarity they share is that they both "take a linguistic turn and progressively move toward philosophy and away from social theory" (1991:253). The metacritiques have given us increased awareness that human subjectivity is fluid, that social knowledge is subjective, and that knowledge and being are contingent and historical. Although metacritiques aid us in the deconstructive moment, they falter at the reconstructive moment when challenged with the "task of articulating the foundation on which social and political emancipation might be realized" (Leonard, 1990:7).

A third similarity between modern theory and its postmodern critics has been that both fail to move beyond seeing reason as the cornerstone of an emancipatory project.

Modernists accept that reason is a sufficient tool to deliver Enlightenment ideals, while postmodernists criticize the benefits of reason and the feasibility of a program of emancipation based on reason. But must we really choose between emancipation based on rationality (modernity), and a rejection of both emancipation and rationality (postmodernity)? Can there be a conception of emancipation which is not primarily based on rationality? This is a question which I will explore in Part II of this thesis.

A fourth similarity between modernity and postmodernity which suggests the need to transcend this debate is that the debate itself is very much a Western debate, as I have attempted to show in the previous chapters. Nederveen Pieterse writes:

> A striking feature of the debate between modernism and postmodernism is that it is being conducted with the backs turned to the Third World. Third World issues are literally absent from the discussion. It is an all-Western debate, an Occidental quiz, with Western answers to Western question (1989/90:51).

A question that participants in the modernity-postmodernity debate must ask themselves is this: do our theories have what Gergen calls "generative potential"? (as in Burr, 1995:136). In other words, does this theoretical debate throw into question the traditional and the accepted, or are they leading us down the same well-beaten path? I would suggest that although the insights have been great, continually framing everything in terms of this debate shuts off powerful lines of inquiry, in particular those related to the field of concrete emancipation and emancipatory values in the developing world. We simply cannot make a choice between modernity and postmodernity. How can we ultimately decide to choose modernity because it focuses on questions of truth and liberty, or to ultimately choose postmodernism because it allows for multidimensionality and constructivist epistemologies? Clearly both are needed. Best & Kellner write:

> rather than throwing out concepts of grand narrative, representation, truth, subjectivity, and so on- as do extreme postmodernists - we should reconstruct these notions, taking account of the postmodern critique of modern theory, while recognizing the need for these concepts in order to do social theory, critique and politics at all (1991:281).

I argue that emancipation is a modern concept in dire need of reconstruction. We need a modernist hope for emancipation, infused with post-modern sensitivities towards pluralism and difference. It is this task that will be attended to in Part II.

1. Who has employed this nomenclature? Roger Burbach wrote a 1994 article in the New Left Review entitled, "Roots of the Postmodern Rebellion in Chiapas" (1994). Journalist Ana Carrigan, writing in the Fletcher Forum of World Affairs, wrote a similarly titled article: "Chiapas: the First Post-Modern Revolution" (1995). Lucy Conger, writing in Current History also labelled the EZLN rebellion post-modern (1994). Conger cites historian Lorenzo Meyer as writing, "the EZLN [rebellion] is the first postmodern rebellion of Latin America" (1994:117). Barry writes that those optimistic about the future of the peasantry call the uprising the "first postmodern rebellion" fighting "against the unsustainable New World Order" (1995:156). An article in the leftist journal, New Statesman and Society, also referred to the uprising as postmodern (1994). Bardacke notes that Marcos is frequently called "postmodern" both in the United States and in Mexico (1995:265). June Nash also referred to the Zapatistas as "this first postmodern movement in the Third World" (1995:36).

2. *Ejidos* could be created by three mechanisms. 1) *Restitución* - the restitution of plots to groups of *campesinos* whose land had been taken by large landowners; 2) *Dotación* - outright award of land within a 7 km radius from the community; usually taken from a landowner who held land over the 100 hectares irrigated limit (this method accounted for 80% of land reform); 3) *Amplificación* - this occurred when #1 and #2 were not possible; communities were put on a waiting list and, if lucky, were awarded land in a marginal region, usually a forested frontier (Thiesenhusen, 1995:37-37).

3. Cárdenas is also considered the founding father of the PRI, the longest-lasting political dynasty in Latin America, famous for its effective construction of a corporatist system where peasant and labour movements were successfully incorporated and political competition virtually eliminated.

4. In the 1940s as much as 90% of investment in agriculture went to the north and northwest where huge holdings of irrigated land were held by the 'revolutionary family' (Foley, 1995:61).

5. One estimate showed that although *ejidos* cover almost one-half of cultivable land, they consistently received less than 20% of agricultural credit available (Walsh, as in Barkin, 1990:32)

6. One study found that less than half of *ejidos* use any modern technology; 58% still rely on oxen for ploughing, and only 17% of this land is irrigated, even though it is mostly located in dry regions (Cornelius, 1992:6).

7. Because most plots were smaller than the legal minimum, most *ejidatarios* never received an individual usufruct title to a specific piece of land, a factor which prohibited access to credit and acted as a disincentive to invest in the land (Stavenhagen, 1986:267).

8. Stavenhagen estimates that 85% of *ejido* plots could be classified as "infrasubsistence" in 1980 (1986:263).

9. It is estimated that between 1984 and 1992, the number of people living in absolute poverty increased from 6.7 million to 8.8 million (Moguel, 1994;38; McKinley & Alarcón, 1995:1570). The government's own estimates put malnutrition at 40-65% of the rural population, and estimate that one-half the population suffers from some sort of mental or physical deficiency resulting from inadequate nutrition (Barry, 1995:112).

10. Mexico's balance of Trade in Food and Agricultural Products (US$), plummeted from -1,330,020 in 1980, to -2,085,177 in 1990, to -3,097,906 in 1992. (FAO, as in Barry, 1995:95)

11. In 1990 agriculture accounted for less than 10% of GDP, even though one-third of the population lived and worked in the countryside (Cornelius, 1992:6).

12. A few examples of this productivity gap: the costs of producing chickens is 27% higher in Mexico than in the U.S.; Mexico's output of acre for beans is one-third of the U.S. figure; Mexico has 2 tractors for every 100 farmworkers, whereas the U.S. has 1.5 tractors for one farmworker (Theisenhusen, 1995:47).

13. The price of credit in the agriculture sector went from 12.5% in 1982 to 96.0% in 1988 (Harvey, 1990:6). BANRURAL, the state bank which had previously provided most *ejido* credit, experienced major cut-backs after 1988, and subsequently financed only 2.5% of *ejido* production (Cornelius, 1992:6).

14. This amendment had the potential to affect 28,058 *ejidos* and agrarian communities, 3.1 million peasant families with some 15 million dependents, 70% of Mexican farmers, and 49% of Mexico's total land area (Barry, 1995:119; Thiesenhusen, 1995:40).

15. The constitutional amendment can be summarized in the following five points: (Cornelius, 1992:3-4). *First*, the government's constitutional commitment to redistribute land, and the peasant's constitutional right to petition for land, was ended. *Second*, *Ejidatarios* gained the right to legally sell, rent, lease, and mortgage their land. Outright sale required a decision approved by two-thirds of the *ejido* general assembly. A collective decision to dissolve the *ejido*, and distribute the property among its members was also made possible. *Third*, *ejidatarios* who did not work their parcels personally lost the threat of having their land taken away. *Fourth*, *ejidatarios* were allowed to enter into joint ventures with outsiders, including foreign individuals and corporations, and it also became possible to form associations amongst themselves to take advantage of economies of scale. Foreign direct investment in the *ejido* was made legal. *Fifth* and finally, to avoid concentration, the government maintained limits on legal landholdings. These limits had restricted landholding to no more than 100 hectares of irrigated land for individual farmers, and 2,500 hectares for corporate farms. In addition, it was previously illegal for an individual *ejidatario* to buy more than 5% of the land in the *ejido* (Thiesenhusen, 1995:47).

16. What is questionable about this strategy is not the coherence of an abstract model of liberalism, but how the immiseration and capital scarcity in the *campo* lead to gross distortions of the model when it is actually applied (Foley, 1995:72). Many *campesino* organizations are not in principle opposed to the privatization of the *ejido*, but instead are concerned about the inevitable bankruptcy of the *ejido* when forced to compete with capital-intensive, technologically advanced, heavily subsidized U.S. farmers.

17. A major cross-national study on land reform found that the amount of land available to distribute was not a natural figure determined by the amount of cultivatable land. Instead, it was found to be a political figure, determined by the ceilings placed on private landed property, which in turn were determined by the balance of power in the particular rural economy (El-Ghonemy: 1990:283).

18. The likelihood of the economy absorbing these cast-off *campesinos* is not publicly considered. One estimate indicates that the economy would have to grow at 7% per year to absorb *campesinos* in the domestic economy; the average growth rate between 1980 and 1991 was only 1.2% (Thiesenhusen, 1995:48).

19. For example, Burbach uses a time-frame of only twenty-five years to make his judgement that Chiapas is postmodern. He argues that this so-called postmodern rebellion's roots are a "product of a quarter-century of capitalist modernization and resistance" (1994:123). Marginalization from the modernity project, however, began when village land was lost and indigenous people became labour on sugar mills in the 1890s (Barry, 1995:145).

Writings on the 'postmodern' Chiapas uprising also demonstrate a profound lack of knowledge of the history of other armed rebellions in Mexico. There is often an unstated assumption that the EZLN are the first armed rebels since the Revolution. This is an assumption which "obscures the history of localized violence", which has pervaded the Mexican countryside since the revolution (Barry, 1995:153). In the

1920s the repression under President Carranza Calles lead to the Cristero Rebellion of mestizo *campesinos* in central Mexico (1995:153). In the 1930s Cardenas brought many peasant groups under the wing of the PRI, but he repressed radical groups he could not peacefully incorporate into the corporatist state (Barry, 1995:154). Since the revolution land invasions have been frequent since bureaucracies have been slow, and rancher and landowner have illegally expanded, often leading to armed conflict between *campesinos* and military forces owned by large landowners (*ibid*).

20. Although Marcos writes the EZLN communiqués with exceptionally talented, witty prose, replete with literary references, it is ridiculous (not to mention totalizing) to then conclude that the whole Zapatista movement is uniquely funny and intimately connected with Latin American magical realism.

This is not to deny Marcos' gift of humour which is interspersed with a constant awareness of immanent death. In one passage he writes to the media before the dialogue with the Peace Envoy, Marcos displays his bitter humour:

> The CCRI-CG of the EZLN is in the process of deciding whether or not it will send me to the dialogue: meanwhile, I am quite frantic, trying to decide what clothes to wear (if I do end up going). I look critically through the giant wardrobe I carry in my pack and I wonder anxiously whether winter clothes are still in style or if I should wear something a little more flirty for spring. Finally I decide on a brown shirt (the only one), a pair of place pants (the only ones), a festive red bandanna (the only one), a pair of dirty boots (the only ones), and the ski-mask, a discreet black (the only one). (1995b:141-142).

21. I am indebted to Chibu Lagman for this quotation. Lagman asked Marcos this question on his January 1997 trip to Chiapas. I recorded the quotation on July 12, 1997.

PART II TRANSCENDING THE POSTMODERNITY/MODERNITY DEBATES

> It seems as if we are living through a rage against modernity. But perhaps, after the dialectic of fashionable forms of relativism and domesticated nihilism work themselves out, we may return to the spirit of Dewey.
> Richard Bernstein (as in McLaren, 1994:196).

Having looked into the abyss of postmodern skepticism, some theorists are now asking "how can we get meaning and commitment back into our lives once we have lost grounds for collective practice?" (McLaren, 1986:392). With the totalizing metanarratives on shaky ground, how do we find what Giroux calls a "language of possibilities" which surpasses critique and negative resistance, and pays attention to transformative practice (*ibid*, 394)?. How do we respond to Cornel West's charge that the left needs to "enhance the faltering and neglected utopian dimension of leftist theory and praxis" (1985:31)? How do we respond to what Whitebook calls the central philosophical dilemma of our time: "how to think and operate without an appeal to the absolute, on the one hand, without falling into Nietzschean nihilism, on the other" (1985:166)?

The modernity/post debate has brought great insight into the need for reconstruction of modernity principles, but it offers less in the way of answer to the question, 'what next?'. Leonard warns that:

> when the deconstructive moment gives way to the reconstructive task - the task of articulating the foundations on which social and political emancipation might be realized - the metacritique of modernity falters (1990:7).

In short, how do theorists move beyond a totalizing modern conception of emancipation, and a post-modern anti-emancipation of fragmentation, to a new, more sophisticated conception of emancipation which is still connected with empirical struggles? This question is especially important if we believe that a strategy which abandons emancipation without putting anything in its place is politically suspect, and possible only because of the existential privilege of the Western academic.

Having outlined the theoretical gridlock regarding post/modern positions of

emancipation, I would like to explore the possibilities and the tensions involved in developing and broadening the concept of emancipation beyond this narrow debate. More specifically, I would like to advocate the idea of developing emancipation as a key concept which requires us to stay connected to practical struggles, and which acts as a pluralistic, dynamic reference point.

What would a new program for emancipation entail? In this discussion I will use the work of Paulo Freire as a guide to helping us develop a conception of emancipation which transcends the narrow confines of this debate. Freire offers not just emancipatory vision, but a highly sophisticated, grounded version.

Paulo Freire cannot be a Marx for our times. He offers no grand récits, or simple blue-prints for emancipation. He does not put forth a formula which can be simply exported across national borders. There is no magic bullet for emancipation. The value of Freire's work is as a badly needed touchstone for Western social theory. Peter McLaren writes that Freire's work is like a "reminder that people still suffer pain, oppression, and abandonment. As such Freirean utopianism seeks to put flesh, bones, and human will back into social theory" (1986:401). Although some theorists will continue to dismiss the hopeful as naive, Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed has the power to compel renewed attention to the dusty ideas of hope, oppression, human suffering and the possibilities of emancipation.

Although Freire has responded and evolved with the growth of post-structuralism/modernism, his work transcends the largely Western modernity *-vs* -'post' debate. In fact, it is problematic to place Freire decisively in either the modernist or post-modernist tradition of Western thought. Although he shares many concerns with critics of modernity, these concerns were part of a post-colonial critique of modernity, rather than a derivative of a Western theoretical movement. Freire has always had fluid boundaries. He avoided economic determinism, yet insisted on the importance of class. He sustained a complex epistemology that was constructivist, but did no eschew causality and structuralist explanations. He has not dichotomized the cultural and the material, but has operated within the oft-neglected space between these two categories. Unlike Habermas, Freire has paid very close

attention to extra-rational elements, and considers cognitive, affective, and active aspects of total personalities (as in Kumar, 1990:153). Torres writes:

> [Freire's] emphasis on a loving revolution shows that Freire is at the same time a traditional, a modernist, and a postmodernist intellectual, and he cannot be easily classified as a romantic or a pragmatic intellectual or put into a straitjacket taxonomy of organic versus institutional intellectuals (1994b:22).

Yet another value of a Freirean reference point is its grounding to social movements. Although Freire is a theorist who deals with structural concerns like capitalist exploitation, his work is grounded in the field of literacy education. Freire's work is an example of what Leonard calls "critical theories in political practice" (1990). These are theories which are "derived from particular and highly specific contexts", and seek to achieve real gains in these contexts" (1990:xiv). Leonard sees this specificity not as a weakness but as a strength necessary to avoid abstract utopianism.[1]

Freire is renowned as a pedagogical theorist, and his work has influenced much of the innovative pedagogy and literacy programs employed not only in Latin America, but throughout the world (Torres, 1994a;429; McLaren, 1986:395). Although his work has usually been applied to informal non-governmental programs, the idea of "public popular schooling" has recently come to the fore, as seen during Freire's term as Secretary of Education in Sao Paulo under the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT, or Worker's Party) municipal government, as well as during the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua (O'Cadiz & Torres, 1994:214).

Freire's connection with practical struggles has meant that his reputation is not confined to being a theorist, but he is noted for being a bright light of emancipation struggles, both within and outside the classroom. Cornel West writes that Freire's literacy program represents "a world-historical event for counterhegemonic theorists and activists in search of new ways of linking social theory to narratives of human freedom" (as in Brady, 1994:151). Feminist educational theorist Kathleen Weiler writes of Freire's central work, Pedagogy of the Oppressed:

> as an eloquent and impassioned statement of the need for and possibility of change through reading the world and the word, there is no comparable contemporary text (1991:452).

Freire does not provide a replacement grand narrative of emancipation which corresponds strictly to some ultimate empirical reality. What he does provide is an invaluable reference point. Freire's work facilitates transcendence of narrow theoretical debates, which encourages a fresh look on emancipatory themes often obscured in a climate of extreme ethical relativism. As Kincheloe writes, "in a cosmos full of decentred subjects, hypertexts, crumbling foundationalism, and revolts against totality, Freire will not let us forget the children, the damned, the victims of the culture of silence." (1994:217). In a way, we can think of Freire as a theoretical counterpoint to the Zapatista uprising.

In Chapter Four I will look at the central Freirean concept of dialogue, and argue that developing a new conception of emancipation would be greatly aided by this concept. Freire's dialogue suggests that a new conception of emancipation cannot reside exclusively on a theoretical plane, but must instead engage in dialogue with social movements. I defend the idea of emancipation as an invaluable reference point, which does not abandon itself to the imperfection of empirical 'reality', but strives to develop a conception of the good life. Emancipation can serve as a utopian reference point which engages in dialogue with empirical reality. This idea of emancipation is based on the idea that an exclusive focus on describing the world as it is, or an approach which develops naive utopias, will not help us. What is needed is an approach where the "is", is constantly in dialogue with the "ought".

In Chapter Five I argue that a reconstructed focus on emancipation must look at values. I argue that rationality is important, but is an insufficient basis for emancipation. I suggest that values which are provisional and contingent can serve as an important emancipatory reference point. I look at Freire's explicit normative stance, and argue for a similar explicitly normative approach which takes values seriously. I further argue that if emancipatory theory engages in dialogue with social movements, the importance of values as a source of solidarity will become apparent.

In Chapter Six I argue that emancipation must be thought of as a multidimensional phenomena. I look at Freire's belief in the multi-dimensionality of emancipation as well as Bahktin's critique of monologism, and suggest that a renewed

conception of emancipation must be similarly multi-dimensional. Further, I argue that we must develop multiple points of reference to understand such struggles as the one in Chiapas - one theoretical perspective is insufficient to understand how oppression/emancipation occur on multiple levels. I conclude Chapter Six, and Part II by looking at the dangers of using emancipation as a reference point, but suggest the costs of ignoring it are greater.

1. The four critical theories which Leonard examines are dependency theory, Freire's pedagogical theory, Liberation theory, and Feminist theory. He does not claim that these theories have the answers to all of our problems, but they do provide convincing examples of the need to develop theory which stays close to the context of struggles for emancipation.

CHAPTER FOUR EMANCIPATION: A DIALOGICAL APPROACH

> We came from an urban culture and the urban culture, above all, teaches you to speak... You don't learn to listen, only to speak and to impose your point of view.
>
> Subcomandante Marcos (Chiapas95, April 2, 1997)

In this chapter I will explore, and advocate an alternate way to conceptualize emancipation: as a process of dialogue. The topic of dialogue and dialectics is a complex one, and I will limit this discussion to Freirean uses of dialogue.

In the first section of this chapter I outline the Freirean idea of dialogue between theory and practice. Second, I examine the costs of ignoring such a dialogue. In the third section I discuss the idea of holding a dialogue between 'what is', and 'what ought to be'. In the fourth and fifth sections I explore the idea of holding dialogue between subjective and objective methods, as well as between structure and agency. To conclude this chapter I summarize the benefits of looking at emancipation as a process of dialogue.

i. Dialogue Between Theory And Practice

In Chapter One, we saw that although Habermas strived to connect theory and praxis, ultimately his theory of emancipation was highly abstract, and not particularly connected to empirical struggles. Habermasian emancipation is grounded in quasi-transcendental ideals of communicative rationality, rather than being rooted in empirical social struggles to increase freedom and end human suffering.

The idea of holding a dialogue between emancipatory reference points and emancipatory struggles is not a new one. But it is an idea which has not been central to the modernity/postmodernity debate over emancipation - a debate which has been so highly focussed on the quandaries of meta-theory and rationality.

As mentioned, a thorough discussion of dialectics greatly exceeds the spatial restrictions of this chapter, and I will focus on the more specific subject of Freirean

dialogue. Paulo Freire is one of the few that stays grounded with practical, political emancipatory struggles.[1] He cannot give us all the answers, but he is one of the most sophisticated representatives of a dialogical conception of emancipation.

The political vision which embodies Freire's work is not laid out in a series of simple "how-to" statements. Freire's vision of emancipation is highly subtle, sophisticated, and dynamic. Giroux writes, "I want to emphasize what makes Freire's work important is that it doesn't stand still" (1992a:24). Freire does not give a blue-print for emancipation, and his vision does not contain a teleologically defined end-point. Freire states, "I cannot propose to the oppressed of the world what I believe would be best for them" (Freire & Macedo, 1995:390). He disdains "[t]exts that primarily give recipes" which encourage the "domestication of the mind" (as in McLaren, 1988:233).

How can Freire have a directive vision, that does not specify a blue-print or an ultimate end-point? How does Freire pay tribute to the utopian imagination while not creating utopias shaped by teleological master-narratives?

The key to Freire's open-ended vision of emancipation lies in his great faith in *dialogue*. A dialogical pedagogy is never finished, but rather, "will be made and remade" (Freire, 1970:30).

This subtlety has left Freire open to misinterpretation and misuse (McLaren, 1994b:xviii). Perhaps the most alarming misapplication is the reading of Freire as a fixed and static methodology without an understanding of the central, built-in requisite of dialogue. The concept of dialogue is one of the most critical concepts in Freire's work.

For Freire, emancipation is not a static methodology, but a *process*. This process involves a dialectic between action and reflection which together make up praxis. Only praxis can allow the oppressed to overcome their dominated consciousness (Freire, 1970:47).

For Freire, dialogue is not simply a method. Dialogue is the key to overcoming oppression (Torres, 1994b:431; O'Cadiz & Torres, 1994:214). Dialogue cannot be performed in a detached and mechanical matter, but requires immersion in social praxis and a commitment to self-reflection - a process which resists codification into a series of instructions.

The concept of the action/reflection dialogue is based on the idea of speaking "true words".[2] Freire draws from a conception of language rooted in Marxism, existentialism, and hermeneutics, and foreign to much of Anglo Saxon philosophy (Peters & Lankshear, 1994:178). A true word (or praxis) has two parts: action and reflection, both of which are required for transformation of the world (Peters & Lankshear, 1994:178; Freire, 1970:60). Freire writes: "there is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus to speak a true word is to transform the world" (as in Peters & Lankshear, 1994;178).

True words cannot be spoken by a vanguard, or in isolation, but must be spoken in dialogue (Peters & Lankshear, 1994:178; McLaren, 1986:397). Freire insists that the goal is not to "win the people over", but to engage in dialogue to learn about their objective situations and their consciousness (1970:76). For Freire, dialogue is so critical, that any revolution which delays dialogue for a later date, will never be legitimate (1970:108-109). You cannot dream of liberation and have a strategy of domestication which substitutes dialogue for "monologue, slogans, and communiqués" (Freire, as in Escobar, 1994:33; Freire, 1970:47).

For Freire, there can be no liberation without dialogue. The isolated theorist is incomplete. The existential subject possesses unique practical knowledge, but is also incomplete. What is needed is a dialogue between theoretical ideals/understanding and "specific concrete existential perspective", together forming a relationship which is "mutually informing", and "mutually transforming" (Leonard, 1990:162). What is important is the process of exchange, not the vain expectation to achieve a perfect theory or complete understanding. Even leaders with a "level of revolutionary knowledge different from the level of empirical knowledge held by the people" may never impose their knowledge, but can only initiate dialogue (Freire, 1970:115).

Action without reflection is inauthentic activism, while reflection without action is inauthentic verbalism (Freire, 1970:68). Freire insists that "the only way...is to experience the tension between theory and praxis without denying one or the other. Thus I am never interested just in theory, just in praxis, but in the relationship between them" (Olson, 1992:6-7).[3]

ii. The Dangers of Ignoring the Dialogue of Theory and Practice

The gap between theory and praxis in critical theory has had serious consequences, as suggested in Part I of this thesis. As extreme post-modern theorists abandon themselves to nihilism, social movements all over the world continue their practical struggles to expand their rights, opportunities, and access to power. Much theory seems blatantly oblivious to the continued importance of emancipatory concepts to social movements, and remains detached from practical struggles. The goal of the 'left' since Marx to unite theory and praxis seems scarcely fulfilled.[4]

One of critical theories' central insights has been that social disciplines are insufficient if they try to merely record the world the way it is; they must also be active in changing the unequal distribution of power in the world they observe (Leonard, 1990:xiii). It is thus highly ironic, then, that critical theory itself can be observed sustaining a chasm between the political intentions of critical theory and the concrete "political implications of these theories" (Leonard, 1990).

Anderson's famous 1976 critique of Western Marxism described how left-wing theorists became more focussed on the cultural component of oppression, neglecting important matters of economic oppression and practical politics. Rebelling against the thoughtless activism that culminated with Stalin's reign of terror, left theorists began to rethink the role of theory and praxis. This process of reconsidering traditional Soviet Marxism was undoubtably necessary. Unfortunately, at the same time Western Marxism became isolated from day-to-day struggles, ignorant of the points where subordinate classes actually resisted, and guilty of abstract theoreticism which offered little help in understanding the nature of immediate economic and political demands (Gardiner, 1992:88).[5]

The Frankfurt school gave many unique insights, but did not give a theory of transformation (Agger, 1979:155). The concept of domination argued that alienation was self-imposed under conditions of false consciousness, and this closed off possibilities of resistance, implying that human beings did not have the capacity to determine what was good for them (*ibid*). The Frankfurt School seemed more concerned with distinguishing

themselves in a critical intellectual position than inciting mass class-based action (Agger, 1979:162). Agger writes that resistance had "no basis in class-based political activism for Horkheimer or Adorno; the only remaining form of resistance is a kind of relentless cerebral radicalism" (1979:169-70).

Jacoby argues that "without a living contact with radical politics, Marxist studies turn arid"; the price Western Marxism has paid for its receptive home in universities is loss of a public forum (1984:197,203). Without this forum, theory has become directed solely at colleagues, and there is little incentive to check the growth of abstract, technical language (*ibid*, 203).

This veering away from practical matters seems to contradict the original teachings of Marx, who wrote in the eighth *Thesis on Feuerbach* that:

> All social life is essentially *practical*. All mysteries which mislead theory into mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and the comprehension of this practice (as in Leonard, 1990:253).

Leonard insightfully argues that theory/practice chasm had an opportunity to be rectified with the insights garnered by critical theory's metacritiques of modernity (1990). These critiques delivered a central insight that all theory is necessarily historically and contextually specific, and brought increasing awareness that knowledge is contingent, partial, and historical (1990:6-7). But instead of critical theory becoming more attached to specific, practical, struggles for emancipation, it has remained focussed on metatheoretical critiques - thus ignoring its central insight! The "metacritique of modernity" has taken continued precedence over practical, emancipatory goals. This metacritique has been useful, but all-consuming, and has lead critical theory to ignore its central insight that specific, contextually specific struggles must be examined. As a result, critical theory continues to look like "academic, intellectual introspection", rather than "politically engaged, emancipatory critique" (1990:6).

To overcome this gap, Leonard seeks to draw lessons from what he calls "critical theory in political practice" (1990). Leonard argues that a critical theory interested in emancipation must be able to identify sources of domination in social practices, have an idea of an alternative way of life free from domination, and must have a specific group to which it is referring (1990:4).

Although many theoretically-oriented academics would quickly (and defensively) dismiss Leonard's criticism as anti-intellectual sophistry, Freire demonstrates by example the rewards of maintaining a rich dialectic with radical politics, and is a true example of Leonard's "critical theory in political practice". Freire's work largely avoids problems of abstraction that plague other critical theorists such as Habermas.[6]

The unappealing alternatives to the Freirean dialogue of theory/practice are theory without historical context, abstract totalities, and utopias without connection to empirical situations. Antonio also insists that "the normative aspects of the theory must have roots in the empirical side", and that this "requires a firm grasp of concrete possibilities and concrete constraints" (1984:47). Piccone similarly argues that what critical theory needs is to have emancipatory aims with a grounded dialectic, more specifically, a phenomenological dialectic (1984:27).

Freire provides an inspiring example by his ability to walk the tightrope of a phenomenological dialectic - producing complex theory, yet staying immersed in concrete political struggles.[7] This is not just the case with his own praxis, but in his inspiration to many theorists to strive towards this difficult balance, an example being Henry Giroux, who provides a specific context for dialogue in education (1992b).

All of this suggests two things. First, that the EZLN uprising (as well as other emancipatory social movements), cannot be understood without adequate theoretical tools, or reference points to their emancipatory goals. Second, it suggests that emancipatory theoretical tools cannot be developed in isolation of the actual experience of emancipatory struggles.

iii. The Dialogue Between "Is" and "Ought"

Besides the dialogue between action and reflection, Freire employs a second dialogue between the 'is' and the 'ought'. This idea owes a great deal to the work of Ernst Bloch - a central figure in the contemporary reexamination of utopia. Bloch examines the idea of a utopian imagination based on a dialectic between the subjective

possibilities within human consciousness ("subjective potency"), and the real, objective possibilities latent in nature and history ("objective potency") (1986). For Bloch, to have hope means to be actively involved in "what is becoming", rather than passively accepting "what is" (1986:3). Utopia is seen neither as an impossible ideal nor something inevitable. It is instead viewed as a series of historical possibilities grounded in concrete experiences and dialectically interwoven between subjective and objective forces (1986).

This dialectic is similar to the one used by Paul Ricoeur (as in Gardiner, 1992:13). Ricoeur argues that there is a dialectical tension between ideology and utopia. To critique ideology, you need a utopian vantage point from which to view social relations. This utopian vantage point is important, because it represents the arena where the cultural imagination is stored, and without this imaginative repertoire, critiques of the status quo lack force. Ricoeur writes:

> This development of new, alternative perspectives defines utopia's most basic function. May we not say that imagination itself - through its utopian function - has a *constitutive* role in helping us rethink the nature of social life? Is not utopia - this leap outside - the way in which we radically *rethink* what is family, what is consumption, what is authority, what is religion, and so on? Does not the fantasy of an alternative society and its exteriorization of 'nowhere' work as one of the most formidable contestations of what is? (as in Gardiner. 1992:130, emphasis of author.)

This idea is also utilized by Cornel West, who criticizes the "faltering and neglected utopian dimension of leftist theory and praxis", and writes:

> To be a person of the left is not only to envision and fight for a radically free and democratic society; it is to see this society-in-the-making as manifest in the abilities and capacities of flesh-and-blood people in their struggles under conflictual and contradictory socio-economic conditions not of their own choosing" (1985:31).

Like Bloch, Ricoeur, and West, Freire does not develop a naive 'pie-in-the-sky' vision, but sustains a constant dialogue between utopian goals, and the structures and possibilities at hand. Freire recognizes the problems with "naive optimism", and insists that any utopian vision has to be related to available means (as in Escobar, 1994:30-33). Because of this dialectic, the Freirean vision of emancipation avoids becoming an abstract construct which can never be realized. This dialectic also allows Freire to avoid being crushed by the reality of oppression, because he sees it as a limited situation which can be

transformed, not as a "closed world from which there is no exit" (Freire, 1970:31).

Freire is utopian in that he refuses to give in to oppressive power structures. Yet the Freirean utopia is not an unrealizable goal, but a product of concrete struggle and suffering. Freire's literacy programs provide a tangible example of this dialectical struggle. Concrete reality is investigated in the classroom using "generative themes", which involve inquiry into topics deemed of importance and existential relevance to students (Freire, 1970:84). Through a pedagogy of the oppressed, generative themes are decoded, and their place within power structures is exposed (*ibid*, 87,89). Although this process was originally oriented towards literacy training, as we shall see below, the process of unpacking the meaning of generative themes can also occur within broader processes of social movements - as the Zapatista case aptly demonstrates.

Freire does not believe that absolute freedom or emancipation can exist. What is important is the *process* of struggling towards emancipation, as Subcomandante Marcos also suggests[8]. In an interview Freire says, "we are like we are now because of freedom", and "without freedom, it's impossible to go on" (Olson, 1992:10). Continuing actively in the process for future freedom requires not just imagination, but tactics, knowledge of the current society, and awareness of the need for inner change within human minds and hearts (*ibid*).

Because of the centrality of dialogue, Freire's work transcends the binary of ideographic -vs- nomothetic. The local and the specific are always important, since they work in a necessary dialogue with general theory. Abstract laws are of no interest to Freire if they do not have some meaning in empirical specificity. There is no universal, master narrative but a "provisional, situated pedagogy" (McLaren, 1994:211). Freire's work could therefore be seen as "contingently universal", to use Judith Butler's terminology (as in McLaren, 1994:211). While universal goals are stressed, it is recognized that goals are provisional, contextual, and fought for in a material world, and therefore cannot be situated in an absolute, transcendental sense.[9]

iv. Dialogue Between Subjective And Objective Methods

As was seen in Chapter 2, one of the dangers of postmodern critiques of emancipation was that in their haste to distance themselves from modernist metanarratives, especially Marxism, they abandoned valuable holistic tools of analysis. In general, postmodern analysis eschews structural and economic analysis in favour of more cultural, subjective approaches.

The question that arises is how is a new conception of emancipation able to understand both the subjective and objective aspects of human oppression? The Freirean dialogical approach offers some guidance in this direction, allowing an embrace of both objective and subjective tools of analysis. Freire insists that dialogue is not just a method, but an essential characteristic of the epistemological relationship, indispensable to knowing and learning, as explored in Part I. In the epistemological dialectic there can be no possible choice between subjective or objective knowledge, but rather both ends of the dichotomy are embraced. To deny subjective knowledge is to create a "world without people", while a purely subjective approach to knowledge creates "people without a world" where nothing exists beyond consciousness (Torres, 1994a:438; Freire, 1970:32).

Freire's theoretical method offers no choice between empiricist or rationalist approaches to knowledge, but rather explores the dialogue between inductive experience and deductive cognition. As in empiricist approaches, and like the existential phenomenology associated with Heidegger, interpretation of lived experience is crucial in Freire's thought. Like much feminist epistemology, the process of knowledge creation involves not just rational thoughts and experiences, but also emotions which can serve as a source of knowledge and a key to discovering deeper truths (Weiler, 1991:463).

But the lived experiences of the oppressed are not a perfect source of knowledge, and require a dialectical complement. Totally universalizable knowledge may not be possible, but Freire believes that there is more than just experiential knowledge (Freire & Macedo, 1995:385). Unlike ethnomethodology which conflates practical and theoretical consciousness, Freire does not consider experience to be an exclusive epistemological source, and believes that it should be problematized rather than essentialized as perfect

knowledge. Deductive reasoning in the process of knowledge construction is therefore important. Experience should be filtered through "rational and emotional discourse", so that the contradictions underlying "experiences, identities, and struggles" are unearthed (Torres, 1994a:443). Through dialogue, the theory latent within experience is drawn out and used in the production of new knowledge (O'Cadiz & Torres, 1994:220).

It is interesting to briefly examine the problems we experience if we view the subjective experiential knowledge of the EZLN rebels as a pure source of knowledge. Consider the issue of environmental protection in this fragile ecological region. As noted in Chapter Three, eastern Chiapas experienced a sudden surge in population in the 1960s when peasants from the overpopulated central highlands were sent to colonize the lowland tropical forest. In the 1970s President Echeverría more vigorously promoted immigration from other land-scarce areas of Mexico into the fragile eastern region of Chiapas. The indigenous settlers in the Lacandon jungle cut down trees to survive on tropical soil that is productive for only five years. The population grows at a rate of more than 7% annually (a growth rate that doubles the population every ten years), which is about the same rate as deforestation in the region (Barry, 1995:218). In 1960s the jungle still had 90% of its forest cover, but today, only 30% of the Lacandón jungle remains intact (*ibid*). Collier writes:

> [p]easants' slash and burn farming deforested the region, degraded its fragile soils, and rapidly converted the tropical land into territory good only for coffee growing and grazing, requiring settlers to move on beyond the receding frontier of settlement (1994b:372).

In 1989 López Portillo worked with the U.N. to create the UNESCO sponsored Montes Azules Biosphere and Ecological reserve. The indigenous people rightly saw the bio-reserve as a threat to their existence. At least forty communities and *ejidos* were affected, their dreams of expanding their land into the forest squashed (Ross, 1995:262). Major Mario of the EZLN told La Jornada, "Ecologists? Who needs them? What we want here is land, work, and shelter." (as in Ross, 1995:265). When asked about the conflict between the environment and the burgeoning indigenous population in the region Marcos responded, "we don't agree with this preoccupation with the trees over the death of our people. We say, we want trees, we want mountains. But we also want a dignified

life for our people" (as in Barry, 1995:217).

The creation of the biosphere certainly threatened the precarious existence of the indigenous people living in the region. Any EZLN antagonism towards environmental preserves makes sense if we consider the empirical knowledge garnered by the indigenous people in this region. This knowledge becomes problematic, however, when put through a broader deductive filter of ecological knowledge. Using the deductive reasoning of ecology, the destruction of this valuable rainforest can also be seen as a threat to human existence. The application of pesticide and fertilizers to this fragile ecological region, as requested by the EZLN, can also be seen as problematic when viewed through this ecological reasoning.

We cannot simply decide that the experiential knowledge of the indigenous people is valid, and the Western models of ecology are specious. It would be misleading to romanticise the experiential knowledge of Major Mario about ecology, and ignore the important work done by ecologists on global warming. This is a highly relevant issue since this type of environmental tension may become even more common in coming years. As Ross writes:

> the EZLN, an army nurtured in the Cañadas [canyons of the Lacandon jungle] between 1984 and 1994, may be the first force for revolutionary change in Latin America that is rooted in the conflict between preservation of the planet's diminishing biomass and the gut desire of the poorest of the poor, for what passes as progress under the banner of development (1995:263).

The tension between empirical knowledge and deductive logic of ecological models should not be dismissed as a bothersome complication, but embraced as critical to the dialogue of knowledge described by Freire. Put simply, both forms of knowledge are valid and necessary for a plan of emancipatory action.

Although experience should not be romantacized, Freire sees it as a critical starting point in the process of knowledge creation. *Conscientization* is a key methodological concept developed by Friere, and refers to a collective process of coming to a consciousness of oppression and its social, political, and economic contradictions (Freire, 1970:17;Torres, 1994a:439). The process begins with "*prise de conscience*", a French term which Freire uses to refer to a normal, human way of taking consciousness;

this implies an innate human capacity to analyse and read the world which is similar to Gramscian "common sense" (Torres, 1994a:430; Weiler, 1991:463). This is the starting point of dialogue: the "present, existential, concrete situation, reflecting the aspirations of the people" (Freire, 1970:76).

Conscientization goes beyond common sense and subjective experience, however, to a deeper reading of reality. Because experience is not a complete, or unproblematic source of knowledge, the process of conscientization requires critical tools which allow for a more rigorous scrutiny of subjective experiences. Conscientization is not just a narrow education program, but a broad political program linking cultural politics and class struggle in a Gramscian tradition.[10] During conscientization a shift occurs from naive consciousness to critical consciousness. A naive consciousness is characterized by passivity, resignation, and a static world view (Peters & Lankshear, 1994:174,181). Through a pedagogy of the oppressed, critical consciousness develops where the oppressed view themselves not as victims, but subjects of a historical process where possibilities for emancipatory transformation and collective action exist (Peters & Lankshear, 1994:181).

In many senses, the EZLN uprising can be seen as involving a process of conscientization, and the decoding of generative themes. The decision to form the EZLN was clearly based on a *prise de conscience* of the immediate, experience of exploitation. It was based on a need for self-defence against the violence of landowner paramilitary squads, and the ravages of hunger and disease. It involved a process of increased consciousness of oppression and hierarchical power structures, and subsequent organization to end that oppression.

But the consciousness of the EZLN participants also appeared to change within the course of struggle. For example, women's participation in the EZLN, and the formation of the Revolutionary Laws on women, changed the consciousness of both men and women towards the dynamic of gender. Marcos reports that:

> The change in the behaviour of women has been very strong, considering, of course, the great differences that exist between women in the jungle and in the highlands. In the process of struggle, women first learn Spanish. They leave their houses. Traditionally, when a women leaves her house in the communities, it is

> because she is going with a man; if she goes with a group of men she is thought of as a common person. But this changes. We say that first they learn Spanish; then to add and subtract. One day they come with arms and they know how to handle them, and they teach you. Then there is a star, then two. Further on, you realize that she participates in a troop of nothing but men, and then you see that they obey her. That motivates other women, who ask, 'But who washed your clothes? Who cooks for you?" And they respond: 'Sometimes me, sometimes the compañero'. The EZLN is composed of 33% women (Zapatistas! 1995: ch. 8. p.215).

Sceptics might say that these words, spoken by a man, can be only partly legitimate as testimony to the transformation of women. The same sentiment is expressed by Major Ana María[11] in an interview, where she describes the changing consciousness about the many roles of women beyond the traditional role of care-givers:

> They [the rest of the EZLN] saw that I was a woman, and they saw that women can also do things. That women can organize themselves, and that they can do things other than what they do in their houses and their homes. Women have the capability of doing other kinds of work as well. And then women started to enter into the Army. Women started to get together and organize themselves, and they started to join the ranks of the Army. And then other women did not join, but organized themselves into women's groups, women alone. They organized themselves. They formed ranches of pigs. They did collective projects such as baking and sewing, and that is how they started to organize themselves as women's groups....And another of the demands in the [Revolutionary law on Women] is that women do have the capacity, if they are taught to do other kinds of work, not just grind the corn, make the tortillas and the food, take care of the children, sweep the house, go get firewood..This is the work of Indigenous women in the home. But it is not taken into account that if women are given studies, education, they can do other kinds of work. We realized this when we started to enter this struggle. That if we are going to do many of the things that men are doing, we can study, we can be leaders. I am the leader of a unit. And that we can be representative of something big. For example [Comandante] Ramona[12], a *compañera* who represents several women and who is a leader of a group of women. But before, this did not exist. Because people always thought that women couldn't do anything. (Zapatistas! 1995: ch.8 p.227.)

An important goal of the EZLN is to encourage a broader process of conscientization, and raise the consciousness of the situation of indigenous people in Chiapas and Mexico. In an interview Major Ana María says that the Zapatistas "are interested in getting information about our struggle published at a national and international level. We want the whole world to understand what we are" (Zapatistas! 1995: ch. 213. p.227.). On the FZLN home page, they include a special section entitled

"What you can do to help", which encourages international education, activism, and awareness of the Zapatista struggle (FZLN, 1997).

Freire's approach allows us to see the dynamism of the process of knowledge creation and emancipatory action. We see the EZLN not as a fixed set of ideas, but as an active process of conscientization, and knowledge creation. We see the EZLN not as an isolated subjective movement, but as an emancipatory force engaging in dialogue with broader forces like a powerful state and transnational capitalist system. Freire's approach encourages us to look at the EZLN using a deeply hermeneutical process of moving back and forth from the abstract to the concrete, from parts to the whole, from the existence of everyday life to the totality of domination systems (Peters & Lankshear, 1994:190).

Although Freire's approach is hermeneutical, he is able to see both the subjective and the objective components of knowledge. Like Gadamer, Freire sees the dialogical, hermeneutic process not as an objective method of interpretation, as in traditional hermeneutical thought, but as fundamental to the ontological dimension of human understanding. Dialogue is held to be embedded in social life, and therefore an existential necessity (Freire & Macedo, 1995:379).

Unlike Gadamerian hermeneutics, Freire's explicit emancipatory position requires a stronger belief in the objective existence of structures of oppression. Freire calls for an end to oppression, not merely the fusion of interpretive horizons. Habermas' well-known critique of Gadamer is that his hermeneutic framework cannot account for systematically distorted communication, which leads Habermas to call for a more structuralist, materialist orientation to hermeneutics (Outhwaite, 1985:36-37). This is precisely what Freire provides. Freire does not accept that interpretation, albeit important, is all that exists, and retains a hermeneutic orientation with a consciousness of structures, materialism, and causality. Freire's develops a critical hermeneutics, calling for the transcendence of oppression - as opposed to interpretation as the ultimate end-point.

Freire's retention of a sense of objective structure is based on his belief that it is politically incapacitating, naive, and elitist to deny any objective reality (as in Olson, 1992:7; Freire & Macedo, 1995:386). As mentioned in Part I, Freire's position closely resembles critical realism. Although Freire insists that there is some objective reality, it

is seen as a dynamic phenomena which eludes pat theoretical representation.[13] A Freirean reality is not a given, or a static, but rather a "problem to be worked on" (Schaull, 1970:14).

Like the work of other critical realists, Freire's work refuses to choose between subjectivism and empiricism. There is no purely objective knowledge, but knowledge is not entirely subjective either (Freire & Macedo, 1995:387,388; Findlay, 1994:118). Freire practices what he terms "epistemological approximation to the object of knowledge" (Freire & Macedo, 1995:388). A dialectic operates between the world [objective reality] and the consciousness [subjective reality]; although they are mutually constituted, there is a certain distance between them (Freire & Macedo, 1995:388; Torres, 1994a:437). Consciousness is not always able to perceive the complexity of the objective world in its entirety, but it is able to approximate it, using basic human tools of imagination. This approximation of ontological reality through theoretical concepts will best occur using the tools of dialogue (as in Torres, 1994b:24).

Although Freire postulates a concrete reality, he does not assume that theoretical concepts will exactly correspond to actual phenomena. But to deny *any* relationship between epistemological concepts and an ontological reality would be both foolish, and elitist. Macedo remarks that "those who materially experience oppression have little difficulty identifying their oppressors", and argues that the "adoption of a relativistic posture concerning the oppressed and the oppressor" enables the intellectualization and abstraction of real problems (Freire & Macedo, 1995:387).

v. Dialogue between Structure and Agency

Another important question for a reconstituted emancipation theory would be how would it transcend the sticky structure/agency debate that has been so central in the social sciences? (Craib, 1992). For subjects to strive towards emancipation, some form of agency is necessary. But if too much agency is assumed, without a healthy respect for the power and prevalence of structures, the theory succumbs to naive voluntarism. A

reconstituted emancipation project would have to get around the traditionally weak Marxist conception of the subject, capable of taking agency seriously, yet not obscuring the power and persistence of powerful structures like transnational trade.

A central Freirean theme and goal is the restoration of agency to the oppressed. Freire says explicitly that he wanted the Pedagogy of the Oppressed to draw attention to the role of Subjects, in a pluralistic sense, as active participants in the creation of history (Torres & Freire, 1994c:103). Action is crucial to Freire's vision of emancipation: "the crucial idea is that humans create their humanity - they become human - in the very process of intervening in reality in order to change it" (Peters & Lankshear, 1994:177-178).

Clearly, Freire is not associated with the 'death of the subject', nor does he sit with the economic determinist camps of some strands of Western Marxism.[14] Although dehumanization has occurred throughout history, Freire does not believe it is historically determined (1970:26). As much post-colonial literature reminds us, a prescription for 'death of the subject' is "ideologically convenient and politically suspect" coming from Western intellectuals situated within institutions of power and privilege (Giroux, 1992a:23). Freire is a good reminder of the continued relevance of a developed conception of agency, particularly in the South where emancipatory projects can have an extremely pressing, life or death, relevance - as was the case for the impoverished *campesinos* who took up the struggle with the EZLN.

In accordance with such post-colonial writing, as well as the constructivist movement in social theory, Freire wants to bring human subjects, with all their objective and subjective baggage, back to centre stage (McLaren, 1994:201). Freire's emancipatory vision is not a sterile, abstract process, but a living, breathing program for decolonization of the Subject's lifeworld - following in the tradition of Mannheim and Dewey (Torres, 1994a:445).

Reflection and knowledge of oppression are insufficient by themselves (Freire, 1970:31). Freire uses the logic of Hegelian dialectics, but he does not accept that a logical, mental process is sufficient for overcoming contradictions (Torres, 1994a:444). Transformation requires participation in social, material, and political struggles. The

oppressed must become actively involved in the struggle for freedom and the oppressor must enter into the situation of the oppressed and fight at their side (Freire, 1970:31). The oppressed need more than awareness of contradiction - they require a theory of action (*ibid*, 1970:164). As we might recall from earlier, the pivotal Freirean concept of dialogue presupposes action (Freire, 1970:47, 116). As Peters & Lankshear write, for Freire, "to know implies to act in conjunction with reflection" (1994:176).

As is now obvious, the Freirean goal is not to restore agency to a select few who will lead the revolution, but to all the oppressed (1970:36). Freire believes that if the dialogue between educators and students is not respected, and leaders attempt to impose their vision, they are devitalized and stripped of legitimacy. Although Freire believes some leadership is required, he argues against a division of labour between 'thinkers' and 'doers' of the revolution, and instead advocates a dialectic between students and critical intellectuals (Agger, 1979:99; Freire, 1970:107). Freire writes, "it is absolutely essential that the oppressed participate in the revolutionary process with an increasingly critical awareness of their role as subjects of the transformation' (1970:108). Trying to have a revolution *for the people* is like trying to have a revolution *without people* (*ibid*). Freire's position towards dialogue between leaders and the oppressed requires revolutionary educators to have faith in human subjects. As Freire notes, if the people are not trusted or believed in, then what is the point of having a revolution? (1970:110).

This idea of a dialogue between leadership and participants in emancipatory movements was brought out strongly by the case of the EZLN. Marcos describes how when he first went to the Lacandon jungle, he and his comrades knew how to speak, but did not know how to listen (Chiapas95, April 2/97). He summarizes his experiences as follows:

> ...the encounter with the Indian people, they converted [me] from teacher to student and that they taught [me] how to listen and to try to understand what is behind words and not only the sounds (*ibid*).

Besides the dialogue being held with the EZLN, the EZLN also insist on the importance of holding a dialogue with civil society, as opposed to a monologue of military action. They acknowledge the paradoxical nature of this dialogue between armed and peaceful forces, or what Marcos calls, the absurdity of a civilian movement in

dialogue with an armed one" (1995b:243). They do not purport to tell civil society what to do. Rather, they hope to respond to, and obey the forces of civil society, and honour their 'debt' to civil society. In Marcos' words:

> We believe that in this situation we owe an answer to civil society, not to the government or to Camacho. What we want is to sit and talk with civil society (Zapatistas! 1995: ch.5 p.141).

The EZLN also reported that their decision to stop the war and go to the negotiating table was not a military decision, but a decision made in response to the demands of civil society. Marcos maintained that the negotiations were not part of the original plan, which anticipated a prolonged military battle. He insists that:

> the negotiations are not a product of our military success...[they] are a result of something that's occurring in society; they're telling us, 'you cannot do that, you have to find another way'...I went to the Committee and told them that I'd heard the news about the cease-fire. Something has to be going on. This is not about us. ...we started to catch on that something was happening that we didn't know about. And then we discovered what it was. We have to acknowledge, with honour, that the civil society provoked that cease-fire (Zapatistas! 1995: ch.5 p.141).

Just as civil society stopped the war, the EZLN believes that civil society will largely determine the course of the future of Mexican democracy. The EZLN do not purport to have all answers and solutions. In Marcos' words, "The expectation we have is that the war will remain averted through the pressure exerted by the civil society of the whole country to complete the accords."(Zapatistas! 1995: ch.9 p.247).

The dialogue between EZLN leadership and EZLN participants is not altogether straightforward. There has been a great focus on Subcomandante Marcos, both internationally and within Mexico, which suggests elements of a cult of leadership. With all of the focus on Marcos, there is a tendency to ignore the complex identity of the Zapatista rebels themselves. What kind of conception of the Subject can accommodate such complexity? EZLN subjects are not just soldiers. They are Indians, they are gendered, dynamic, and have histories. They change through the process of struggle. We need a theory capable of recognizing the dynamism, complexity and overlapping identities of active subjects.

Again, Freire's approach can help us. His framework is capable of adopting a

sophisticated conception of the self. Freire's subject is unfinished, intentional, conscious, and therefore capable of change (Peters & Lankshear, 1994:177; Freire, 1970:60). The emphasis on existential experience as a valid source of knowledge allows an opening for the entry of multiple layers of the self, as well as the multiple forms of oppression that the subject faces. In contrast to his earlier, more simplistic positions, Freire later developed an idea of self which is multiple, historically situated, and decentred.

In a dialogue with Macedo, Freire made explicit how his conception of the Self is more complex than a singular subject, placed within a binary of oppressor versus oppressed, and described the dialectical interpenetration of these categories (1995:395). Freire believes that the oppressed can have a dual nature, as both oppressors and oppressed. In acknowledging the possibility of a duality of the oppressed, where "horizontal violence" can occur, Freire gives space to the idea of a multiplicity of subject positions within the category of "oppressed". Although he does not specifically name the forms this violence can take (ie. interethnic conflict, gendered violence), there is space to develop these ideas.

The EZLN's struggle against the oppression of women demonstrates the necessity of understanding multi-layered subject positions. Women in the EZLN have a conflicted position, fighting alongside men, but fighting oppressive behaviour from the same men. Some members of the EZLN, including Marcos, say that the first revolution occurred in March of 1993, when the EZLN formulated the women's "revolutionary laws" (Marcos, 1995b:97).[15] When asked why women would join a revolutionary group, Ramona, a key member of the CCRI, described how women's oppression is particularly severe, and extends from the 'public' realm of the state and economy into the 'private' realm of the home and family:

> women are the most exploited and strongly oppressed, still. Why? Because women, for so many years, for 500 years, have not had the right to speak, to participate in an assembly. They do not have the right to have an education, to speak to the public, or to hold any position in their town. No. Women are totally oppressed and exploited. We get up at three in the morning to prepare the corn, and from there we have no rest until everyone else is sleeping. If there is not enough food, we give our tortilla to the children, to the husband (Zapatistas! 1995: ch.8. p.213).

But how does a Freirean subject, regardless of its level of complexity and overlapping identities, relate to the world of structures? Again the concept of dialogue is critical. In a typical Freirean fashion, the theory of action starts from a point of dialectical unity between structure and agency (Freire, 1970:20). Freire writes that the "world and human beings do not exist apart from each other, they exist in constant interaction" (1970:32). As McLaren writes, "human subjects do not float aimless in a sea of signifiers, rather they are firmly rooted in historical struggles." (1986:396).

Social agents are constrained by structures, but social structures are socially constituted, which makes reform possible (Torres, 1994a:443).[16] Freire sees humans as active and capable of transforming structures. Freire writes: "if humankind produces social reality...then transforming that reality is a historical task, a task for humanity" (1970:33). Structures provide both limitations and possibilities. Agency is limited by structure and textured by historicity, but it is not occluded (Freire, 1970:66). Freire sees history not as determined, but as a framework of possibilities and boundaries in which struggles for emancipation occur (Freire & Macedo, 1995:397).[17]

The dialogue between structure and agency provides an invaluable reference point when considering the struggles of the EZLN. Considering both structure and agency are clearly critical. Not examining the oppressive structures of neoliberal economics, and a powerful PRI state apparatus, might produce an overly voluntaristic stance towards the EZLN, and the naive assumption that their efforts will be sufficient to eliminate oppression in Chiapas. On the other hand, to discredit the importance of agency and to bow down to the power of structural constraints, would be to deny the existence of the ELZN altogether - a force which developed and acted against all odds.

Looking at structure and agency independently is necessary, but not sufficient. It is the dialectic between structure and agency which is important in understanding how the agency of the EZLN actually produced changes in structural factors. Even though a total reconstruction of political and economic structures cannot be guaranteed, the effect of their agency on structures is reason for hope.

The EZLN uprising prompted other actions, like the awakening of a local democratic spirit, and the coming together of civil society - events which undoubtably

produced irrevocable changes in Mexican political structures. The EZLN uprising also prompted a global series of organizing efforts and conferences against neoliberalism. A limited phenomena perhaps, but a counter-movement against hegemonic neoliberal structures nonetheless. This leads us to look at the final section of this chapter: the theoretical sophistication provided when emancipation is seen as a dialogical process rather than a fixed set of principles.

vi. Dialogue's Sophistication

We have looked at several dialogues: between theory and practice, 'what is' and 'what ought' to be, subjective and objective methods, structure and agency. Nederveen Pieterse argues that when we move away from one-dimensional models we have to recognize the existence of several dialectics. He aptly notes that this is "a little complicated perhaps, but preferable to a one-dimensional representation" (1989/90:353-4).

A dialogical approach to emancipation provides immense theoretical sophistication. Although we might retain modern humanism's hopes and dreams of ending human suffering, a dialogical treatment cautions against making reductionist statements about the nature of emancipation, instead viewing it as a constant process involving pro and anti-emancipatory forces.

We have seen that the dialogical vision of Freirean emancipation has provided an example of such sophistication, combining 'modern' faith, hope, and humanism, with 'postmodern' sensitivity towards teleological master-narratives.[18] Freire's emancipatory vision is open-ended, and can only hold the continuation of 'counter discourse' as an ultimate project (McLaren, 1994:208-9). In this way, "Freire works from the metanarrative of liberation and human freedom without allowing such a narrative to become the imposed totality of categorical utopia" (*ibid*, 210).

Emancipatory potential is seen as residing among us and within us, just as oppression also inhabits and will continue to inhabit our social world. Emancipation is

thus a process which often takes a "zigzag course" (Nederveen Pieterse, 1989/90:380). Because emancipation is a dialogical process, movement towards greater emancipation is not precluded, but it is also never guaranteed. The discourses and struggles of emancipation can be co-opted. Nederveen Pieterse notes that emancipation can be stymied by the institutionalization of emancipatory rhetoric, which is used to "humanize the empire" (1989/90:380). He writes: "time and time again we see today's emperor wearing the clothes of yesterday's emancipation" (1989/90:380). Such 'clothes' include use of the rhetoric of democracy and human rights. Just as social movements try to bring these principles into the public fore, powerful forces will use and manipulate these concepts to covertly block the radical extension of these principles. As will be seen in Part III, this is certainly the case with the case of democratic ideals.

Leaving these issues aside for a moment, I will now turn to the second component which I argue is critical to a reconstructed concept of emancipation: values.

1. I do not mean to imply that the dialectic between theory and praxis is unique to Paulo Freire. It is possible to argue that Liberation theology has become so important precisely because of the use of this dialectic. Liberation theologist Dussel writes of this theological interface with concrete experience:

> Liberation theology originates and learns in an organized way from the praxis of the Latin American peoples, from the Christian base communities, from the poor and the oppressed ...[it] analyzes traditional themes [but] on a concrete level...[it] does not reject abstraction [but it] "situates such abstraction in a concrete historical reality" (1992:74).

2. The EZLN also speak of the need to speak "true words". In the Fourth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle:

> Many words walk in the world. Many worlds are made.....There are words and world which are lies and injustices. There are words and world which are truths and truthful. We make true words. We have been made from true words. (EZLN, 1997)

3. Freire's dislike of academic verbalism is reflected in his life's work. For example, while in exile, he related only marginally with universities, did not stay settled in one university for a long period of time, and was involved extensively in hands-on literacy projects throughout Latin America and Africa (Torres, 1994b:15).

4. Not only has Marxism been criticized for losing a connection to practical struggles, but Seidman argues that sociological theory has also lost its practical relevance, because of its inordinate fascination with foundational and metatheoretical quandaries. He writes:

> Its [sociological theory's] disputes are increasingly self-referential and epistemological. Theory discussions have little bearing on major social conflicts and political struggles or on important public debates over current social affairs. Sociological theory has diminished impact on crucial public texts of social commentary, criticism, and analysis (1991:133).

5. Latin American intellectuals have also been charged with the same crime. Enrique Krauze, associate editor (with Octavio Paz) of the Mexican monthly magazine *Vuelta*, made this charge in a panel discussion. In his comment below, it is interesting to note that Krauze notes, almost a decade before the Zapatista uprising, that the 'left' has a particular dearth of knowledge when it comes to the existential situation of rural peoples:

> I would say that most leftist intellectuals in Latin America, like the 19th century intellectuals before them, are also elitists, though I don't usually like to use that word. Continually the leftists use models and invoke concepts which have nothing to do with the lives of most people in their countries. In many of the Latin American countries a large percentage of the population is rural, but very few intellectuals show any respect for rural culture in terms that would be acceptable to rural people. Very few think of the rural culture as anything but backward...in Mexico, where there are 95000 rural communities, I don't see many leftist intellectuals paying much attention to them (1986:161-162).

6. Of course demanding that all theoretical work have direct immediate political applications may stifle theoretical creativity, and does not acknowledge that a time-lag may exist between theoretical innovation and practical application. I concur with Held when he writes: "one of the significant achievements of critical theory, in my view, is to have shown that there are many ways of contributing to the project of human emancipation and the terms of reference to the political are wider than is often thought" (1980:362-363). Still, for theorists such as Habermas, the practical implications of his work are not easily forthcoming, even allowing for such a time-lag.

7. Freire reports, "I write about what I do...my books are as if they were theoretical reports of my practice" (Torres & Freire, 1994c:102). He also writes that Pedagogy of the Oppressed was not written from isolated study, but "is rooted in concrete situations and describes the reaction of labourers and of middle-class persons whom I have observed directly or indirectly during the course of my educative work" (1970:18).

8. As noted earlier, in an interview Marcos was asked what kind of message he would like to give a general audience in North America. His response indicates that what he perceives as most important is not to conquer the state, to 'win', or to emerge victorious on a specific issue, but the process of struggling. In his words:

> ...our struggle is a struggle for dignity, for human dignity, and that is also the duty of any human being wherever they are...*What is important is to struggle to be better* (Chiapas95, April 2, 1997, emphasis mine).

9. This does not mean that Freire has always maintained a perfect balance in his own work between universal principles and historical specificity. Weiler criticizes his early work for setting goals of liberation in overly universalistic terms, thereby erasing conflicts within oppressed groups (1991:451). Freire's early work has also been criticized for relying too heavily on the use of rigid, universalistic binaries, in particular the binary between oppressor and oppressed (Giroux, 1992a:18). In Pedagogy of the Oppressed Freire did not unpack the various contradictions and subject positions within the category of oppressed and oppressors, but implicitly employed class oppression as the model for all other types of oppression, the existence of which is barely acknowledged. In his later work Freire admitted that when he wrote his first works, he was "extremely more preoccupied with the oppressed as a social class' (Freire & Macedo, 1995:397). This later work has shown a greater awareness of multiple subject positions, as is evident when Freire stated, "we need to understand how culture is cut across by race, gender, class, ethnicity, and languages' (Freire & Macedo, 1995:400). Freire cited his work with literacy campaigns in Africa after writing Pedagogy of the Oppressed as a major influence in his increased awareness of the complex, overlapping issues of race, class, colonialism, and oppression (Freire & Macedo, 1995:399-400). Because Freire engaged in a dialogue within his own work, he was able to avoid being stuck in transcendent ethics or political teleology, and instead continued to develop what Giroux applauds as a "provisional ethical and political discourse subject to the play of history, culture, and power" (1992a:20).

10. More recent work has broadened the cultural politics of conscientization beyond class struggle, to incorporate issues of gender, religion, rural/urban, race and ethnicity into the analysis (O'Cadiz & Torres, 1994:214).

11. Major Ana María is a member of the CCRI, and serves in the infantry. She led the Zapatista insurgents who took San Cristóbal in the January 1st uprising (Stephens, 1995:91).

12. Comandante Ramona, along with Major Ana María, is one of the two female members of the CCRI. Ramona, who concentrates on political work in communities, has become a hero to women all across Mexico. Although she did not attend the National Democratic Convention [CND] because of illness, the crowd would spontaneously burst into chanting, "Ramona, Ramona, Ramona". (Stephens, 1995:91).

13. It is therefore surprising that Freire has been charged with being a crude realist. In the introduction to an interview with Freire, Olson claims that Freire, in "typical Marxist form", "appeals unabashedly to an "objective" reality...[and] has little patience for poststructuralist proclamations" (1992:1-3). This, of course, makes Freire "somewhat out of step...in his tenacious appeal to objective reality and his unshakable faith that we can all come to comprehend and transform it" (*ibid*).

    A careful examination of Freire's position reveals a much more complex stance. In the same interview with Olson, Freire states that if you respect and try and understand a reality, you can "diminish the distance" (1991:8). What is important here is that Freire does not claim that you can *eliminate* the distance, or that a complete objective understanding is possible.

14. We must remember that the extent to which Marx himself was determinist is open to debate. Freire quotes Marx & Engels:

> The Materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and upbringing, and that, therefore, changed men are products of their circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that *it is men that change circumstances* and that the educator himself needs education" (as in Freire, 1970:35, emphasis mine).

15. The revolutionary laws were created through a process of consultation, lead by a Zapatista named Susana, a Tzotzil Indian. She visited dozens of communities to gather women's input. When Susana came back and read the formulated laws to the CCRI-CG assembly, the male members of the audience were upset and surprised. Although the *compañeras* simultaneously applauded, in Marcos' words, "the young men looked at one another; they were nervous and upset" (Marcos, 1995b:97). One male Tzeltal delegate said, "the good thing is that my woman doesn't understand Spanish", to which Susana sharply responded that the laws were going to be translated into all dialects (*ibid*).

16. This position is similar to Giddens' conception of structuration, which implies a dual nature of structures: structures are produced by human action, and are also the medium of that same human action (Morrow, 1994:159).

17. In a fascinating exchange between Torres and Freire, Freire's focus on thinking dialectically about human emancipatory action is drawn out. Torres asks Freire about the possibilities and limitations of promoting education and transformation in San Paulo, one of the largest, poorest school districts in the world. Freire responds,

> ...Now, I am going to tell you something you will understand as a man who thinks dialectically and doesn't merely talk of dialectics...Today I live the enormous joy of perceiving with every passing day that the strength of education resides precisely in its limitations. The efficiency of education resides in the impossibility of doing everything. The limits of education would bring a naive man or woman to desperation. A dialectical man or woman discovers in the limits of education the raison d'être for his or her efficiency. It is in this way that I feel today I am an efficient Secretary of Education because I am limited...(1994c:106).

18. Freire is clearly not the only example of a dialogical approach to hope and emancipation. The sophistication of the dialogical principle can also be graphically demonstrated in the work of Michael Bakhtin on Dostoevsky. He argues that Dostoevsky's characters are locked in an unending dialogue, which defy closure, and resist surrender to a monological and oppressive 'final word' (Gardiner, 1992).

CHAPTER FIVE USING VALUES AS A BASIS FOR EMANCIPATORY SOLIDARITY

> Long live the unity of those who struggle for justice!
> EZLN letter of solidarity, addressed to the *Consejo Supremo de Pueblos Indios* (Supreme Council of Indian People)
> (Zapatistas! 1995: ch.6 p.173)

In the previous chapter I advocated an approach to emancipation which engages a dialogue between the 'is' of the empirical realm, and the 'ought' of the utopian imagination. This leads us to ask what is this 'ought'? What is the emancipatory ideal, and on what basis do we ground the values underlying this ideal?

As we saw in Chapter 2, Foucault eluded the problem of normative justification, leaving himself open to the charge that he was unable to rank normative preferences. Habermas, by contrast, developed the ideal speech situation with its roots in a quasi-transcendental ideal of communicative rationality. His procedural ethic of communicative rationality is certainly compelling, but is it sufficient to understand the ethical agenda of all emancipatory programs?

In this thesis, spatial constraints prohibit a full examination of the subtle issues surrounding Habermasian communicative ethics and the criticisms made by sympathetic theorists such as Seyla Benhabib. I will focus this discussion by examining the limits of formal reason in explaining emancipatory action, and explicating the importance of substantive values in emancipatory social movements. This approach is not fundamentally opposed to the ethical approach developed by Habermas, but it does suggest limitations to a concentration on procedural ethics, and proposes that theorists pay greater attention to the substantive ethical issues articulated by emancipatory movements. As Moon writes,

> [Habermas] does not advance specific norms or principles, nor does he project a vision of a just society. Nonetheless, his project raises the obvious question of *what sorts of norms* could be vindicated...(1995:143, emphasis mine)

In the first section of this chapter I examine the dangers of using a theoretical framework based solely on instrumental rationality to understand social action, using the

example of rational choice theory as a case in point.

In the second section I look at the ubiquitous use of values in emancipatory theories and social movements, looking in particular at the Zapatista uprising. In the third section I examine the issue of how to ground values, and argue that they are best seen as provisional, contingent, and constructed through historical study and dialogue with social movements. I advocate an approach which establishes and prioritizes provisional values through historical analysis and dialogue.

In the final section of this chapter I argue that values provide an important way to form links of solidarity within and between emancipatory struggles, and social theorists should pay much more attention to them. I examine the political advantages of having an explicit normative position, and explore the links of solidarity established in the Zapatista uprising.

i. Understanding Emancipatory Social Action Through Rationality: The Case Of Rational Choice

> Here we live worse than dogs. We had to choose: to live like animals or die like dignified men. Dignity, Miguel, is the only thing that must never be lost....ever.
>
> -Subcomandante Marcos, in a letter to a 13 year old boy in Baja California. (1995b:169).

To understand the limitations of using rationality as a basis for a renewed conception of emancipation, it is useful to examine how successful rational choice theory is in shedding light on emancipatory social movements, especially Southern movements such as the one in Chiapas.

The decision to focus on rational choice was not due to convenience, but was instead motivated by its tremendous influence. In contrast to the limited practical applications of innovations in critical theory, the rational choice paradigm has been highly influential in policy-making circles. Dryzek writes that "rational choice has been the most visible and successful interdisciplinary research program in the last decade or

two of Western social science, which makes it all the more important for critical theory to try to make sense of it" (1995:111).

Rational choice theory uses a conception of instrumental rationality to understand social movements. It is characterized by an extreme individualism, an attempts to unearth the rational, individual motivations behind social action. A central ontological claim is that people act based on a calculus of instrumental rationality, at least most of the time. Rationality is assumed to be the behaviour which maximizes satisfaction of objective, individual preferences, and minimizes costs for a particular action. The *a priori* model of rational action - based on utilitarian assumptions of interest maximization - is considered a necessary abstraction, and assumed to hold universally. The chief concern is individuals' interests, which can be objectively calculated by the theorist and are assumed to be maximized by the actor.

The rational choice model of human nature is indubitably static. Humans are described as acquisitive, success-oriented, and narrowly self-interested in maximizing immediate returns (Waters, 1994:59). The wants, interests, and attitudes of individuals are held to be relatively fixed (Waters, 1994:58; Hindess, 1988:4; Ferree, 1992:35), and the theorist is advised to take individuals as they are found (Calhoun, 1991:67). Individuals are viewed as social atoms, isolated and independent from others, and requiring incentives to enter into collective arrangements. The state of nature is a world of independent, unrelated adults (Ferree, 1992:35).

The rational choice theorist is not naive enough to imply that all action is rational. The claim is that rationality is common enough to form the basis of theory (Craib, 1992:75). Underlying this claim is the extension of instrumental rationality to include the "entire gamut of human action", rather than seeing it as only one of four kinds of action that Weber described (Waters, 1994:57). All action essentially has the same meaning, which is to maximize instrumental utility.

A critique of rational choice does not mandate a full-fledged execution of the theory. As Weber and critical theorists have well understood, the modern and industrial world have witnessed the increased application of instrumental reason in social life. Rational choice can identify where this occurs, and even what the consequences are.

Craib argues that rational choice works best as a specific explanation, in a manner similar to a Weberian ideal type; it acts as a 'sort of grid against which we might begin to discern complexity" through the identification of formally rational choices (1992:79-80). Dryzek even proposes that critical theorists learn and appropriate rational choice theory, given its ability to explain what happens when "instrumental rationality dominates social and political interaction", and inadvertently demonstrates what the consequences are when instrumental rationality "runs wild" (1995:112,114). Game theory, for example, can alert us to the outcome of strategically rational behaviour in certain situations such as the prisoner's dilemma (1995:113).

Even when we treat rational choice theory as a tool used to analyse a specific type of behaviour, it sets up a binary between normal and abnormal, implicitly degrading the non-rational realm as "abnormal'. It places a normative preference on a certain type of behaviour: interest maximization. It implicitly places these individualized material interests over general values such as justice, welfare, aesthetics, pursuit of community or personal development (Waters, 1994:56).

The idea of the pseudo-universal rational human actor either erases other ways of seeing the world, or labels them as abnormal (Ferree, 1992:41). It prioritizes a search for rationality, and "allows social science to analyse large areas of social life in these terms" (Hindess, 1988:114). This is seen in Olson's argument that collective benefits by themselves are insufficient to motivate individual rational actors to join collectivities, since the incentive to free ride is too great. As Ferree observes, this argument implicitly denigrates many collective actors with minimal material incentives as irrational, and does not explain participation in the face of minimal observable incentives (1992:30).

Although the paradigm of rational action is useful in identifying what is considered formally rational, it cannot necessarily explain the multiple motivations underlying rational behaviour. Instead, motivations are seen as singular, and the model of the individual is exceptionally simple. In contention, many critics argue that humans are multidimensional creatures who experience inner tension between different ends, such as tension between 'rational' hedonic satisfaction and 'rational' longer run self interests (Ferree, 1992:32). Rational choice theory assumes that rational reasoning is

"transparently rational", which diverts investigation away from the various logics underlying its blanket categorization of 'rational action" (Hindess, as in Craib, 1992:76). Critics of rational choice caution against an oversimplified view of the self and self interest; as Charles Taylor has noted, "people may sometimes desire to change their desires" (as in Calhoun, 1991:68).

If a narrow definition of rationality is maintained, and the theory is treated as an ideal type of rational action used for comparative purposes, then all the model can often tell us is that a specific action is not rational, and incapable of being understood. It is unable to explicate the complexity of action which is not formally rational, which like rational action, can be induced by a multitude of motivations. As Dryzek comments:

> There are many reasons why individuals should *not* act in purely strategic fashion, foremost among which are the dismal consequences of such action for both society and the individuals who so behave, as described in great detail by public-choice analysis itself (1995:113).

For example, rational choice offers little understanding of the 'irrational' actions of crisis situations, or cases where self-interest does not appear to be the *modus operandi*. Behaviour which is not strategically rational can still have meaning. Many situations are arguably governed more by Weber's *value* rationality than *instrumental* rationality - a situation which Ferree refers to as "meta-rational", and Hirschman terms "meta-preferences" (Ferree, 1992:33), and which has similarities to Habermas's conception of "communicative rationality". In this situation, the decision to act is based on an evaluation of ends, not just means. This action may be oriented towards affirmation of that value, or affirmation of the actor's identity - not just maximization of consumption and interests. Attempting to express one's values is what Hirschman calls "striving", and he, among others, argues that this is the essence of what gives our lives meaning and purpose (as in Ferree, 1992:33).

Rational choice theory's exclusive focus on interest leads it to neglect the importance of identity in social action. Calhoun contends that most collective action is not designed to achieve rationally instrumental ends, but instead seeks to build an identity, and make a "nonstandard identity" acceptable and livable (1991:51). Charles Taylor's position is that a commitment to 'higher' moral goods (called "hypergoods" or

"constitutive goods") is an important source for human identity (as in Calhoun, 1991b:234). Taylor argues that an identity is impossible without some sort of orientation in moral space: "our identity is what allows us to define what is important to us and what is not" (*ibid*, 236).

Calhoun argues that in Western culture, the role of identity is misunderstood and ignored because the instrumental notion of self is hyperbolized and the concept of honour is concomitantly under-emphasized (1991:54). Honour is linked to following collective role models based on "value" rationality ("meta-rationality"), and is not simply motivated by a narrow pursuit of individual interest. For example, Calhoun analyses the 1989 incident in Tiananmen square, where students risked and lost their lives in acts of extreme heroism. This was not a situation where a clear calculation of interests was possible, and instead involved acts which by many rational standards would be considered foolish or irrational. Students risked their lives, despite the availability of alternatives, and without any evidence their actions would lead to political change (1991:53). Calhoun argues that identity is critical in understanding these high risk actions. This identity could not be understood purely by a purely structural approach (why would some students stand in front of the tanks and not others?) but by seeing identity as a dynamic phenomenon whereby consciousness was transformed through participation in protest.

Throughout the six weeks of activism, many previously uninvolved students developed a more general identification with the Chinese people, and were radicalized through their participation in protest. Intense participation brought forth images of honour based on ideals of courage and bravery - not instrumental ends/means calculation. Many students' identity was transformed in the process of participation, and *honour* became the motivating force which made dying an act of self-saving, not self-sacrifice. In a paradox especially troublesome for the western '1st world' mind, death became the only way of continuing with honour.

The Zapatista crisis situation has many parallels with the Chinese situation, and raises many troubling questions for rational choice theorists. The Zapatistas, like the Chinese protestors, are not motivated by pure economic interests or strictly rational calculations.

The Zapatistas use the concept of *dignity* which has many close parallels with the Chinese conception of *honour*. Dignity explains why death is a necessary option for many EZLN members. This idea of actively choosing death draws more from local religious, spiritual, and political traditions than it does from a strict calculus of rationality. Marcos explains that it is dignity which is the arbiter between death and life - not rational calculus of interest. He writes:

> If we have to choose between paths, we will always choose the path of dignity. If we can find the way to a dignified peace, we will follow the road that leads to it. If a dignified war is our only choice, we will grab our weapons and fight it. If we can find a life of dignity we will continue to live. If, on the other hand, dignity means death, then without hesitation we will go to meet it (1995b:58).

The Zapatista communiqués frequently use the expression "everything for everyone, nothing for ourselves". This phrase reflects the conscious choice of death (*nothing*) made by the rebel soldiers. They have made this choice because they feel it is the only way it is possible for them to continue with dignity. They choose death in the hopes that it may bring other Mexicans hope, dignity, and life - *everything*.

Marcos frequently speaks of the will to fight knowing that not victory, but death is around the corner. It is difficult to see this as rational, and it is difficult for the Western mind to understand. Why fight and risk death if you know in advance that you will probably not win? But the Zapatistas continue to risk death, and they do so because of the importance of dignity.

Dignity is so important that it prevents the Zapatistas from taking seriously promises of material wealth offered by a government which has traditionally coopted rebellious elements within civil society. In a letter to the press about attempts by the Mexican government to buy them off, Marcos writes: "they want to buy us with a mountain of promises, they want us to sell the only thing we have left: our dignity" (1995b:108).

Dignity is important not because of individual calculations of interest, but because of the importance of identity. Trends of migration and resettlement in the region lead to a widespread intermingling of diverse indigenous traditions and languages, which helped to form a general sense of identity based on common experiences of suffering, landlessness,

and exploitation (Stephens, 1995:90; Nash, 1995:24; Collier, 1994b:373). As Collier writes:

> As Tzeltal, Tzotzil, and other Maya Indians from central Chiapas mingled with peasants from central and northern Mexico in rapidly shifting frontier settlements, colonists shucked ethnic origin for more generic peasant identities. They embraced new modalities for galvanizing community...and new forms of peasant organizing (1994b:373).

This general identity also involved an identification with past models of heroism and bravery. The decision to turn to armed struggle was strengthened by important local traditions of resistance - just as the Chinese protestors drew on traditions of honour in their national martyrs when they offered their lives in sacrifice for the struggle. The name of Emiliano Zapata is frequently invoked as the father of the rebellion (Marcos, 1995b:108, 138). An EZLN communiqué speaks of the importance of indigenous traditions of sacrifice, resistance, and dignity explicitly:

> When our ancestors were surrounded on the outskirts of Grijalva and the Spanish troops demanded their political and spiritual submission, rather than betray themselves they threw themselves into the river. We, heirs to the struggle of our Chiapan grandparents, have no choice but to honour this lesson in dignity...there is no poverty greater than an enslaved spirit. The true choice for us is a dignified peace or a dignified war (1995b:103-104).

Clearly many Zapatista actions cannot be classified as instrumental action. Weber, among others, argued that most human acts do not fall within the narrow realm of instrumental action (as in Waters, 1994:89). To capture these actions, rational choice theory often extends the definition of rationality indefinitely, thereby reducing explanatory power and leaving the theory vulnerable to charges of tautology. By definition, a rational action is one where individuals act to maximize their benefits and minimize their costs. But no autonomous indicator of that interest exists, and there is no way to falsify this claim (Waters, 1994:89). As Ferree notes, "whatever it is that people choose, they are said to do so because they prefer this alternative", and rational choice appears to involve "relabelling, rather than explaining behaviour" (Ferree, 1992:31). Craib similarly comments that this model is often "not an explanation of rational choices, but a rationalisation of what happens" (1992:76).

Hindess contends that rational choice's theoretical parsimony is bought at far too

high a cost, closing off important questions concerning various rationalities, and leading to banal or ridiculous conclusions (1988:3). To use Water's rather extreme example... *Question*: Why did Hitler kill Jews? *Answer:* Because it was in his interest (1994:89). Or using the Zapatista case...*Question*: Why did the Zapatistas risk death? *Answer*: Because it is in their interest. An excessive expansion of rational action thus creates a situation where social life becomes infinitely indeterminate. In addition, the model's parsimonious nature often allows the theoretician to proceed on a level of complete contextual and historical ignorance (Hindess, 1988:115). Without such historical and contextual knowledge, it would be nearly impossible to understand why the uprising occurred where and when it did.

Other problems with rational choice lie not in its explanatory power, but in its presuppositions about human nature. These are held to be universal traits, so that in effect, "rational choice theory fails to recognize its own premises as being socially determined and group specific" (Ferree, 1992:41). The model of the rational choice individual is rooted in a particular social, historical, and cultural context which its proponents are reluctant to admit or describe. Understanding this context helps to explain why rational choice offers so little explanation for the Zapatista uprising.

Firstly, the assumption that instrumental reason is the primary component motivating human action is highly problematic. Ferree's feminist, social constructionist critique argues that the idea of the isolated individual is rooted in a particular experience of white, male, bourgeois Western men (1992:47). The isolated individual has a gender bias, since it assumes the preeminence of autonomous male actors, rather than the dependent women-child relationship.

The rational choice model also has a class and historical bias, since the advent of isolated individuals seems to be a phenomenon of the modernized Western middle-class world, with less relevance to pre-industrial society or even poor and/or ethnic communities in the industrialized world (1992:36-37). Rational choice leaves us with the dubious notion that all individuals undergo a mysterious socialization process to become rational actors, and are then abandoned as isolated individuals, without identity or links to a community[1] (Calhoun, 1991:61).

This is clearly not true in the Zapatista territories, where community is critical, given the perilous nature of survival. Seeing a world full of isolated individuals does little to help us understand the success of the EZLN. A critical part of the success of the Zapatistas has been their ability to join together and work as a community. Major Ana Maria describes the importance of community within the EZLN:

> ...many people came to look for us alone. And we would accept them, help them. because that is what we were there for. They would join with all of their family, and within the families were women, children, old people, everyone. We integrated them all into the Army (Zapatistas! 1995: ch. 8. p.227).

The strength of the Zapatista communities also made it possible to pull off the miracle of the National Democratic Convention (CND) at Aguascalientes. Working together with minimal technology and supplies, the Zapatistas built an impressive conference site which housed a 6.000 seat amphitheatre, five 'inns', cookhouses, toilets, a library, and electric power (Ross, 1995:369). Another example of Zapatista community organizing is the recent project to build a junior/senior high school in Oventic. When questioned about the ability of the community to build their own school, journalist and lawyer Amado Aveda replied, "Of course they can do it!...The entire civilian base and leadership of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation has decided to make it happen! There is going to be an autonomous, indigenous Jr. High School at Oventic!" (Chiapas-95, April 28/97)

The rational choice notion of prioritizing reason (*rational action*) over emotion *(irrational action*) is also born of a certain historical and political context. Ferree argues that this idea arose with the development of capitalist societies, where greed and self interest were no longer seen as passions, but instead became a standard for rational, dispassionate action. In the process emotion was denigrated as an interference in dispassionate decision making. To claim that reason is universally the dominant rationale behind action is not only Eurocentric, but highly problematic from a feminist perspective. As Allison Jaggar argues, emotion is often an important value for oppressed people; it affirms values and an identity demeaned by a hegemonic culture, and provides an important basis for alternative judgements and perspectives (as in Ferree, 1992:42).

The use of emotion was evident at the National Democratic Convention, where

the Zapatistas orchestrated an impassioned ceremony where the supporters and soldiers (with white bands tied around their rifles) filed silently into the ampitheatre (Ross, 1995:373; Robinson, 1994:14). EZLN writings are replete with emotion, and references to the importance of 'heart'. On the first day of the dialogue for peace Marcos reported that the Zapatista *compañeros* believed now was the time to "speak in words that come from their hearts, rather than with gunfire" (Zapatistas! 1995: ch. 8. p.215). The following words, written to the "Council of 500 years of Indigenous Resistance", exemplify the Zapatistas' use of poetry and emotion in their writings:

> ...pain united us and made us talk, and we recognized that in our words there was truth. We knew that it was not just pain and suffering inhabiting our tongue. We knew that there was still hope in our breast. We talked with each other. We looked within ourselves and we looked at our history. We saw our elder parents suffer and struggle. We saw our grandparents struggle. We saw our parents with fury in their hands. We saw that everything had not been taken away from us, that we had something more valiant, which made us live, which made our path go over plants and animals, which made the rock be under our feet, and we saw, brothers and sisters, that it was DIGNITY that was all that we had, and we saw that it was a great shame to have forgotten this, and we saw that DIGNITY was good for men to be once again men [sic], and dignity returned to inhabit our heart, and we were new still, and the dead, our dead, saw that we were new still, and they called us again to dignity, to struggle (Zapatistas! 1995: ch. 4. p.126).

The use of rationality is not absent from Zapatista writings, but emotions and values are ubiquitous, used as necessary bonding agents for those involved in a life or death struggle. Poet, scholar, and activist Audre Lorde captures the idea that rationality is necessary, but is not a sufficient tool which can substitute for normative commitments:

> Rationality is not unnecessary. It serves the chaos of knowledge. It serves feeling. It serves to get from this place to that place. But if you don't honour those places, then the road is meaningless. Too often, that's what happens with the worship of rationality and that circular, academic analytic thinking. But ultimately, I don't see feel/think as a dichotomy. I see them as a choice of ways and combinations (as in Weiler, 1991:465).

Charles Taylor argues that even utilitarian rationalists, which present their arguments in terms of neutral science, are motivated by larger moral concerns ("hypergoods") such as happiness and universal beneficence (as in Calhoun, 1991b:236). Calhoun summarizes Taylor's argument that the project of scientific rationality itself holds an implicit, unstated moral agenda:

> The scientific outlook does not in itself indicate why it is incumbent on us to adopt the scientific (rational) outlook. There must be more to the story. When we ask why we should adopt the scientific outlook, or work toward a more perfectly engineered society, the answers turn on (often hidden) moral arguments (1991b:235).

In sum, many emancipatory actions, such as the actions of Chinese protestors in Tianenmen or the Zapatistas in Chiapas, cannot be understood using the calculus of rationality provided by rational choice theory. This is not to say that formal rationality should (or can) be discarded or dismissed, but that it should not be held as the universal foundation for emancipatory movements, and that its own historical and contextual roots should be carefully unpacked. The inability of rational choice theory to explain many emotional, 'irrational', components of participation in the Zapatista uprising suggests that formal reason is a necessary, but not a sufficient foundation for a renewed conception of emancipation. The importance of values to social movements, and the idea of substantiating values through social dialogue will be taken up in the next section, where I examine how values are used as a basis for emancipatory solidarity both within and between social movements.

ii. The Value Of Values

> There is no poverty greater than an enslaved spirit.
> EZLN communiqué (Marcos, 1995b:103)

As the previous section of this chapter demonstrated, many actions in emancipatory movements cannot be understood using a framework of instrumental rationality. In the remainder of this chapter I argue that values can be an important and sophisticated analytical tool, as well as a critical source of emancipatory solidarity. I first look at examples which demonstrate the persistence of values in both emancipatory theory and practice.

Speaking explicitly of values in sociology and political science is not a commonly accepted activity. Most of the sciences and social sciences do not view normative

theorizing as "a legitimate scholarly pursuit" (Morrow, 1994:51). Normative and empirical discourses have been sharply bifurcated, with normative and moral discourse holding a position of relative obscurity (Calhoun, 1991b:232). Calhoun writes that "as a discipline [sociologists] have become "unmusical in matters of moral discourse" (*ibid*). Although one might occasionally hear the word "values" uttered, theories of rationality are still favoured children in many academic circles, even in a supposedly post-positivist era. Rational choice theory and its game theory derivatives still enjoy a great deal of legitimacy in the study of social movements, particularly in mainstream North American political *science* (Cohen, 1985; Pappalardo, 1991).

Explicit normative theorizing can be found in postmodern circles, but it is subject to intense scrutiny, suspicion, and sometimes outright dismissal. Best & Kellner make this argument in strong terms:

> the postmodern repudiation of humanism, without reconstructing its core values, strips the subject of moral responsibility..[t]he 'death of man' also spells the death of a moral language whereby the rights and freedoms of exploited, degraded, and repressed people can be upheld and defended...postmodernism is a regression behind the progressive advances of the Enlightenment (1991:291).

Certainly the most extreme example of a postmodernist who claims to be beyond values is Baudrillard (Antonio, 1991:156). In his 1980s work on transpolitics, he claims that 'we' have moved beyond having opinions on the direction of society. 'We' have instead:

> suddenly become transpoliticals, that is to say being politically indifferent and undifferentiated, politically androgynous and hermaphroditic, having digested and rejected the most contradictory ideologies and knowing only how to wear the mask (as in Best & Kellner, 1991:142).

Baudrillard is obviously characteristic of an 'extreme' post-modernist. Other postmodern positions are part of a movement which attempt to reintegrate values and moral positions into theory. Undoubtably, many postmodern writings have such a position embedded within their work.[2]

But the task at hand is not to determine what kind of value position is espoused by postmodern theorists. The objective here is two-fold. First, I suggest that values have played an implicit, yet important part of emancipatory theoretical traditions, and that this

role is most obvious in theories which stay practically grounded in emancipatory struggles. Next I will argue that values are a critical part of the discourse and motivation of emancipatory social movements, and as such, should be a major focus for theorists of emancipation.

An important theme of modernity has been the need for a governance of moral neutrality, and a separation between spirituality and state (Denis, 1997:128). Although this theme was/is usually cast in a typically universalistic modern tone, it is actually part of the unique history of religious conflict and war that came with the Protestant reformation (*ibid*). As Denis writes:

> Outside such a historical context of religious pluralism and war, the principle of separation of Church and state loses much of its sheen: far from being a principle with obvious universal validity, it is very much a historically specific artefact - an artefact that stems not from European philosophical virtue, but rather from the horrors of European history. Other contexts - coast Salish or Moorish Spain's religious toleration under Islamic predominance until 1492, to name but two - have produced other forms and languages of liberty (*ibid*).

Of course the modern ideal of moral neutrality in governance was never fulfilled (given the impossibility of stepping objectively outside one's ethical outlook), but rather worked to suppress open discussion of moral and spiritual issues. Moral, or ethical passion has also been an important 'leftist' tradition, but one which has not always been openly championed. Marx and Engels were careful to distinguish between utopian socialism, and their variant of historical materialism which was deemed, by contrast, *scientific*. As Nederveen Pieterse writes:

> there has been a traditional disdain among Marxists for the utopian element and the religious dimension of emancipatory aspirations; they are regarded as suspect because of their idealism, their possible obscurantism, and as naive by comparison to the 'scientific' approach" (1989/90:63).

Recent manifestations of scientific tendencies of Marxism include Soviet Marxism and Althusserian Marxism.

Marxism's tendency to focus on the rational and the scientific worked to distance its theorists from everyday life, popular and religious resistance, and popular movements in culture and folk art (West, 1985). West writes:

> in Europe - where the Enlightenment ethos remained (and still remains)

> hegemonic among intellectuals and the literate middle class - secular sensibilities were nearly prerequisite to progressive outlooks, and religious beliefs were usually a sign of political reaction" (1985:28).

Millenarian movements, for example, were often dismissed as 'irrational' aberrations distinct from the true workers' struggles (Nederveen Pieterse, 1989/90:63).

There have been other theoretical movements, both within and outside Marxism, which focus on emancipation, but do not hold keys of rationalism or science as the paramount solution or principle domain of struggle.[3] West observes that although several Western Marxist traditions highlight the importance of the cultural spheres of contestation, few, if any, have seriously analysed the realm of religion and values (1985:29). There are, of course, certain cases where emancipatory theorists take seriously the importance of values and religion. I suggest that these are often cases where the theorists have also taken seriously the theme of the previous chapter: to develop emancipatory theory through a dialogue with practical emancipatory movements.

One unique, and eminently successful example of the melding of explicit values positions with emancipation has been liberation theology, which combines spiritual themes of Christianity with Marxist ideas of social justice[4]. The power of this potent mixture was evident when the El Salvadorean regime ordered the murder of Archbishop Oscar Romero in 1980 (Buenor Hadjor, 1985:8). The success of this movement was due less to the invention of new ideas by isolated 'theorists', and more to the close proximity between religious theorists and oppressed peoples, which made liberation theology able to successfully articulate, reflect, and motivate the spirit of resistance of Latin America's poor. As Dussel put it:

> Liberation theology originates and learns in an organized way from the praxis of the Latin American peoples..from the poor and the oppressed...it does not reject abstraction..but it situates such abstractions in a concrete historical reality" (1992:74).

Fernando Cardenal, a Jesuit priest involved in the Nicaraguan revolution, describes how living with the poor changed his ideas towards the values of the oppressed, and the necessity of emancipatory movements:

> Living with the poor, in that slum, taught me, in a practical, daily, very difficult way, the crass reality of how millions of Latin Americans actually live. And the

> ties of friendship, affection, and love that I was able to form with the people who lived in that slum, the *discovery I made of their magnificent human values*, right in the midst of the violation and deprivation of their rights, made their situation something I finally couldn't stand any more. (Cabestreros, 1985:18, emphasis mine).

Paulo Freire is yet another important example of a Latin American theorist who remained immersed in popular struggles, and consistently took an unabashed value position on oppression and suffering. Unlike the ethical ambiguity of Foucault or the theoretically focused ideal speech situation of Habermas, Freire provides an explicitly normative position rooted in his dialogue with practical experience.[5]

What (provisional) ideals does Freire suggest in his work? Perhaps the most basic, unequivocal value position that Freire expounds - which cannot be seen in entirely relativistic or rationalistic terms - is that human suffering is wrong (McLaren, 1986:399). Freire does not see rationality as a strong enough glue to hold together a movement for emancipation. A Freirean emancipation program explicitly endorses extra-rational[6] values such as consistency between word and action, courage to love, and faith (Freire, 1970:157). Unlike leftist traditions which condemn spiritual traditions of the popular sectors, Freire insists that the emancipatory theorist must have great faith in the people, and in their ability to participate "in the creation of a world in which it will be easier to love" (*ibid*, 22). Freire writes, "If I do not love the world - if I do not love life - if I do not love people - I cannot enter into dialogue" (1970:71).

When facing extreme human suffering first-hand, it is perhaps more difficult to insist on normative neutrality. The exigencies of first-hand experience with oppression encouraged Freire to develop an explicit value position which allowed him to make his preferred direction for education unabashedly directive. In Freire's words: "I do not accept the present philosophical posture in which truth is relative, and lies and truth are merely narratives" - educators have an "ethical duty" to encourage students to dialogue, and to "critically engage with their world" in order to work against human suffering (Freire and Macedo, 1995:391). His explicit normative backing also included a belief in the following values: *humility* towards one's contribution, *faith* in people, *trust*, *hope*, and finally, *love* (Freire, 1970:71, my emphasis).

Dialogical, practical emancipatory theoretical traditions such as the traditions of Freirean pedagogy, are not based around rationality, but they should not necessarily be considered irrational. Nederveen Pieterse distinguishes a distinctive history of emancipatory thought which focuses not on rationality, but on social justice and the development of emancipatory critical consciousness (1989/90:65).[7] But because of the prestige of the ideas of rationality, the moral passion which is central to many emancipatory traditions goes unexamined and marginalised in 'left' wing theories (1989/90:66). Nederveen Pieterse contends that when we look beneath the surface, values are central to both the theory and practice of emancipation:

> ...when all is said and done, what defines the 'left' but an appeal to certain values, a commitment to social justice, a moral passion?...Compassion, love, hope. Is this to say that not reason, not modernization is the mother of emancipation, but compassion, love, hope?...What is the heart of the matter then is not religion per se, not Christianity nor any other particular religion. Rather we are concerned with *values* that are at the source of religion...These values find expression in art as well, and not least in folk art, so that along the revolutionary paths we are met with theatre and film, poetry and song...Here art is not the decoration of the worlds of imagination of elites, but counterpoint and medicine, water hole and rallying point (1989/90:66).

Perhaps this is what was meant by Marcuse, who in his last conversation with Habermas before his death said, "Look, I know wherein our basic value judgements are rooted - in compassion, in our sense for the suffering of others" (Nederveen Pieterse, 1989/90:66).

Putting aside the issue of how little attention 'left' intellectuals have paid to moral issues and value positions, empirical evidence indicates that ethical or spiritual passion, and not rationality is often one of the primary motivating factors which cause people to take up emancipatory action.

Huizer surveys the role of spirituality in liberation movements throughout the world, and argues that many, if not most movements have a strong spiritual overtone and inspiration based on religion and values (1985:56). Nederveen Pieterse similarly argues that the majority of contemporary emancipatory movements - the civil rights movements, ecology movement, women's movement - are not constituted in terms of rationalist ideology but in terms of values (1989/90:67). In addition, religion and religious uprisings have not disappeared as per the predictions of capitalist modernization, rationalization,

and secularization (West, 1985:29). West writes that "religious impulse is one of the few resources for a moral and political commitment beyond the self in the capitalist culture of consumption" (1985:29).[8]

This does not mean that such social movements are deliberately irrational. It means that these movements are less likely to appeal to and organize around rationality, and more likely to appeal to values such as democracy, equality, and human dignity (which of course, does not preclude a rational discussion of these values). Since the modern state and transnational organizations usually constitute their discourse in terms of rationality (e.g. *This structural adjustment policy may lead to mass impoverishment, but it is the only legitimate and rational way for the nation to develop*), appeals to rationality may not be particularly liberating or motivating to materially oppressed people.

Social movements throughout the past centuries have attempted to extend the "moral frontier", and expand the human horizon to include new, more inclusive norms and standards. Charles Taylor argues that there has been a continuous phenomenon of large-scale citizen's movements (ie. anti-slavery activism) mobilized around moral issues, and founded on a basic notion that there is a need to reduce suffering (as in Calhoun, 1991b:256). Nederveen Pieterse writes:

> ...emancipation movements are not merely defensive or reactive, as they are usually portrayed, but also socially creative. They extend the moral frontiers of social existence. They define not only a human minimum but also a human horizon. By establishing new norms, demanding the extended application of existing norms, or setting new standards in the way norms are applied, they add to the repertory of the collectivity and renew our social world (1989/90:279).

What are some examples of a value-centred emancipatory discourse in social movements? Consider Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech. It was not irrational, but it was not centred around a vision of rationality, but a religious vision of love and hope. Che Guevera, a devout revolutionary, was quoted as saying:

> ...Let me say, with the risk of appearing ridiculous, that the true revolutionary is guided by strong feelings of love. It is impossible to think of an authentic revolutionary without this quality...(as in Nederveen Pieterse, 1989/90:66).

Ghandi, a man whose faith motivated the actions of millions in India's independence movement, believed that only a man with spiritual energy could activate others, and he

cited as examples the ancient Indian *rishis*, Jesus, Mohammed, the Buddha and other great spiritual leaders (Parekh, 1989:174). Ghandi argued that these figures moved people to make heroic sacrifices not because of their great intellect. They did not speak the "hollow" or "empty" words of a "learned professor", but instead spoke words which were "charged with the power of the spirit" (*ibid*).

Other examples Huizer cites in his survey article of spirituality and emancipation include: the role of the *dukuns* (shamans) in peasant rebellions in Indonesia, spirit mediums in the rebellions in Mozambique and Zimbabwe[9], spiritual resistance by Native American peoples in Canada and the U.S., the use of the Bible and the Popol Vuh (sacred Mayan book) in armed resistance in Guatemala, and messianic movements in Brazil (1985:56-58).

Another key example of emancipatory struggle motivated by extra-rational values is that of the Zapatistas. Although Marcos is quite clear that victory is not expected by the Zapatistas, they continue their struggle (1995b:109). Why? Not because of some implicit rational calculus, or a belief in the value of rationally-determined consensus, but because of the importance of dignity and hope. In a letter to a 13 year old boy Marcos writes a simple, eloquent declaration: "Our profession: hope" (1995b:167). The Zapatistas write of hope, even when it is not rational to have hope, and even when they realize that defeat is likely. The Zapatistas have hope that eventually the time will be ripe for change. In the meantime, in the continued presence of extreme social injustice, hope is sufficient to keep the struggle going. Marcos writes:

> If the rebellions of the southeast lose, as they lose in the north, the centre, and east, it is not because they lack numbers and support, it is because wind is the fruit of the earth, and it has its own season, and matures not in books filled with regrets but rather in the breasts of those who have nothing more than their dignity and their will to rebel. And this wind from below, the wind of rebellion and dignity, is not just a response to the wind imposed from above, it is not just a brave answer, but rather it carries within itself something new. This wind promises not only the destruction of an unjust and arbitrary system; it is, above all, a hope that dignity and rebellion can be converted into dignity and freedom (1995b:47).

This hope is not founded in formal rationality, since the odds are obviously stacked against them given their inferior numbers and fighting implements compared to the Mexican army. Although Marcos denies that the rebellion was orchestrated by

liberation theologists, the movement's participants and the discourse itself are rife with quasi-religious and spiritual references. Their hope is rooted in a religion-like prophecy - a faith that things will change and justice will inevitably triumph. For example, at the end of his guide to Chiapas, Marcos writes of a Chiapan prophecy, in bold type, with a strong biblical flavour. Here is how it appears:

The Prophecy

When the storm subsides, when the rain and the fire leave the earth in peace again, the world will no longer be the world, but something better.
(Marcos, 1995b:51).

The hope that Marcos and the EZLN speak is rooted not in the intellect, but in the heart. Marcos writes of this wind of rebellion and dignity,

> This wind, born below the trees, will come down from the mountains; it whispers of a new world, so new that it is but an intuition in the collective heart (1995b:47).

What are we to make of the cases where social movements pay serious attention to values such as love? What are we to learn from the EZLN writings on hope and heart? Are we to dismiss these cases as examples of emotional rhetorical strategies which disguise an implicitly rational project for emancipation?

West argues that spiritual and religious movements present a serious challenge to the left. They are a call to take seriously the culture of the oppressed, as well as a reminder that the work of "de-Europeanising Marxist praxis, laying bare and discarding of the deep-seeded enlightenment prejudices" is not yet over (1985:30). He writes:

> ..after over a century of heralding the cause of the liberation of the oppressed peoples, Marxists have little understanding and appreciation of the culture of the people...Yet without such a view there can be no adequate conception of the capacity of oppressed people - the capacity to change the world and sustain the change in an emancipatory manner...It is, in part, the European Enlightenment legacy - the inability to believe in the capacities of oppressed people to create cultural products of value and oppositional groups of value - which stands between contemporary Marxism and oppressed people. And it is the arrogance of this legacy, the snobbery of this tradition, which precludes Marxists from taking seriously religion - a crucial element of the culture of the oppressed (1985:30).

The Zapatista writings on hope give a similar call: to step outside European-

Enlightenment models of *rationality = emancipation*, and take more seriously the substantive values underlying movements towards emancipation.

I present these examples not to prove that all struggles for emancipation are value-based, or to imply that a focus on values precludes rational discussion of the appropriateness of these values. Rather I am arguing that a great portion of emancipatory social movements may be motivated by values, and more specifically, that the discourse of the Zapatistas is heavily reliant on motivations outside the realm of formal rationality such as hope and dignity. Doesn't it make sense, then, that theorists attempting to reconstitute emancipation programs should pay a great deal more attention to values, instead of maintaining the current obsession with the quandaries surrounding rationality?

iii. Grounding Values: Essentialism, Historical Analysis And Dialogue

Now that we have briefly examined the ubiquity of values in emancipatory social movements, we might now ask how it would be possible, in a post-positivist climate, to justify a focus on values. Can we defend a focus on values using scientific or rational means? How do we rationally defend the 'goodness' of love? Should we try to scientifically prove the inherent 'badness' of human suffering caused by sexual abuse, hunger, or homelessness?

One strategy involves taking an essentialist stand towards certain values. Gardiner defines essentialism as:

> a theoretical position that relies on some notion of an inherent human essence or nature; that is, a fixed or invariant set of needs, propensities, and so forth...The corollary postulate of essentialism is that the realization of these universal and inherent human propensities can be blocked or repressed by a single, identifiable cause (1997:103).

This is similar to a foundationalist approach, which takes foundations as given, as points which exist above history and culture (Fish, 1989:30) The most serious danger with an essentialist position, as Gardiner's definition suggests, is that it implies that there can be a monolithic solution which will bring about human emancipation.

Two other alternatives, which I suggest are preferable, are to provisionally and tentatively ground values in: 1) historical and contextual analysis of emancipatory social movements, and 2) dialogue within and between emancipatory movements.

Grounding values in the particularities of context requires that the theorist view herself as a part of a historical process.[10] It is also a way to avoid the mono-causal implications of essentialist positions, since emancipatory values are not seen as singular or fixed. Instead, values are seen as fluid constructs which change with the flows of history, and through dialogue with other communities and groups striving for a better life.

This could be described as an anti-foundationalist position. This is not to argue that foundations for emancipation are not possible, but that the foundations that do exist have been constructed, and these foundations are unavoidably embedded in culture and context (Fish, 1989:29).[11] Above all, an anti-foundationalist position is profoundly historical (Fish, 1989:321). The anti-foundationalist strategy is to:

> demonstrate that the norms and standards and rules that foundationalist theory would oppose to history, convention, and local practice are in every instance a function or extension of history, convention, and local practice (*ibid*).

When emancipation is viewed from an anti-foundationalist position, it is seen as part of a historical process, rather than as a fixed law of human nature. Wertheim argues that emancipation should be seen as a fundamental process of human history, albeit an inconsistent, reversible, and open-ended process (1992:26). Best & Kellner also take this approach when they argue that 'universal' values like human rights, freedom, equality, and democracy are important weapons in struggle for emancipation, but these values must be grounded in history rather than a Habermasian approach of abstract philosophy. They write:

> these (historically constructed) universal rights and freedoms are themselves provisional, constructed, contextual, and the product of social struggle in a specific historical context. Although human rights and democratic values are to be defended and extended, they should not be mystified...we would provide a historicist rather than an philosophical foundation for these values, interpreting them as the product of struggle and as the progressive constructs of a specific social-historical situation rather than as essential features of human beings or quasi-transcendental postulates of a specific sort, deriving from language or

communication (1991:242).

Seeing values and beliefs from an anti-foundationalist perspective is useful in clarifying a position on the role of instrumental reason. It allows us to see reason as one of many values that are historically meaningful to a European philosophical tradition. This is to see rationality as one foundation, but not the only foundation, and not a foundation which can automatically transcend space, time, and history.

The belief in the utility of formal reason, like the belief in democracy, or the injustice of child labour, is historically and culturally embedded, and therefore cannot be discarded like an outdated fashion accessory[12]. Nor would it be useful to entirely discard such a belief. Alexander argues that when reason is institutionalized, "civil society guarantees universal rights to particular groups according to the rule of an impersonal law" (1991:149; also Cohen, 1982). Although this impersonal law may be problematic (Denis, 1997), it may also provide a basis for activists to fight against political torture, hunger, and protect other values identified by a larger community and sanctified into laws.

If values are seen in an anti-foundationalist fashion, critiques of oppression must be grounded in knowledge of local, situational, contextual value positions. Although appeals to some sort of truth need not be abandoned, values must be understood as having multiple manifestations, and studied as part of a local, historical, and contextual phenomenon. Seidman argues that upon rejecting the modern "transcendental move", the social critic focuses more on the "local justifications of those social forms of life which he or she advocates" (1991:142). This is a position also taken by Hungarian social philosophers, Heller and Fehér, who argue the choice to live a moral life cannot be based on abstract, or transcendental principles, but can only manifest itself through the existential choices of everyday life (as in Gardiner, 1997:108).

Emphasis on the pragmatic and the local aspect of values also helps to avert empty abstraction. Seidman argues that:

> Social criticism must go beyond pointing to the deficiencies of current social realities from some general moral standpoint. It would be compelled to argue out its standpoint through an analysis that is socially informed and pragmatic. The social critic has a responsibility, it seems to me, not only to say what is wrong

> with current realities in some broad, abstract way but also to make his or her critique as specific as possible so as to make it socially relevant (1991:142).

Seidman also notes that this pragmatic approach to values has the advantage of widening the discussion to include non-experts. It helps to encourage a vital public realm where the average citizen can contribute to debates on moral issues of direct relevance, instead of having intellectuals serve as experts on the metatheoretical issues surrounding values (*ibid*).

A local, contextual, historical approach to values does not mean that values cannot have appeal to larger, even global communities, even if the exact meaning of the value may have different variations in different contexts. Seidman contends that when we abandon a foundationalist project, we are left with social narrative - the great stories of development and crisis[13] (1991:138). Although the modern tendency has been to tell these stories as meta-narratives - without referring to their temporal and spatial settings - these stories can be told in ways which resist the tendency to extend modern Western experience to the entire globe, and which pay close attention to historical and contextual detail.

These social-historical narratives provide important sources of emancipatory thought (although a postmodernist like Seidman would probably not use this reconstituted modern terminology[14]). These narratives, as Seidman puts it, can offer "alternative images of the past, present, and future", "present critical alternatives to current dominant images", and "provide symbolic cultural resources on which groups can draw in order to redefine themselves, their social situation, and their possible future" (1991:139).

The story of the democratic revolutions is one example of an important "general story" that provides an important emancipatory value. We can defend democracy as an important value throughout the world not because of some essential human democratic essence, but because communities of people, throughout history and throughout the world, have struggled to expand the ability of their persons and their communities to be self-determining. The value of democracy has a different meaning in different locations and at different times in history. These specific values of democracy must be respected, at the same time more general standards of democracy are debated and advocated. Such

debates would not see democracy as fixed, but as a fluid construct which has changed as various communities have struggled to expand the ideal to make it more meaningful for their particular community. The idea that democratic values are fluid contestations will be elaborated in greater detail in Part III of this thesis.

The problem with a focus which relies purely on specific local accounts of values is that it cannot account for broader developments, or values which occur across time and space. I have suggested that emancipatory values can be affirmed through historical and contextual analysis of movements for emancipation, such as the grand stories of democratic struggle. In addition, I argue that the broader application of these values can be tentatively established through dialogue between emancipatory movements. Through dialogue, values such as "democracy" can become invaluable reference points which can be used as a basis for criticism and activism beyond the locality.

This idea is not the invention of one particular theorist, but owes its roots to several, including Bakhtin, Benhabib, Freire, Wertheim, and Habermas. Benhabib refers to this idea as a "dialogic model of ethics", which is based on a "continuous process of conversation in which understanding and misunderstanding, agreement as well as disagreement are intertwined and always at work", suggesting not a final utopian state of ideal values, but the "infinite revisability and indeterminacy of meaning" (1995:199).[15]

A value such as democracy cannot be held to be the 'truth' as per some positivist scientific criteria. It can, however, be verified in praxis in the communities engaging in practical struggles for emancipation. We can remember from Chapter Four that a dialogical approach to emancipatory theory insists on a constant dialogue with practical concerns. This allows the practical concerns of specific communities to serve as the grounding of ideological critiques, and provide verification and legitimacy to emancipatory values such as democracy.

Approaching emanicipatory theory in this way provides no epistemological guarantees. Still, I would argue that it is ultimately preferable to an approach which grounds norms in an exclusively rationalist or positivist project which fetishizes science, or insists on dogmatic standards of verification. It also forces us to admit that our ideological horizon is not fixed, and is itself open to scrutiny, self-evaluation and

criticism. The need to see our values as provisional seems highly important, especially when we consider that rights considered emancipatory a century ago (ie. giving privileged white women the vote to counteract the effect of expanding the franchises to 'undesirable' classes) are now viewed as offencive.

Arguing that emancipatory values such as equality and democracy can be provisionally rooted in historical context and dialogue is bound to raise concerns. The foreseeable objection to this argument is that when values are taken from context, we encounter the problem of relativism. How are we to make objections to exploitative values situated within communities of oppression? To use a more specific example, how are we to object to the values of *ladino* landowners in Chiapas who view the indigenous people as sub-human, and their demands for land as invalid? Can their values be defended as part of their local, historical value-context?

I have two responses to this objection. First, arguing that we derive values from historical context is not tantamount to saying 'anything goes'. Why? Because historically, not all values have been fought for equally. Although certain minorities have always struggled to preserve their power, privilege, and dominance, most modern mass movements have been humanist projects which have struggled to expand the terrain of equality, and to end human suffering.

To take an extreme case, consider a hypothetical community where slavery is considered acceptable. Let us say that this community falls within the Canadian border. Although one could argue that slavery falls within the norms of this specific community, one could also argue that movements throughout the past two centuries have collectively, albeit provisionally, come to have faith in the idea that individual citizens and collectivities deserve to be self-determining and physically autonomous. Communities within Canada have come to a consensus (which of course, is not a perfect, or final consensus), and have sanctified this consensus within community norms and standards, and more formally within the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This consensus is not a static piece of history, but part of a current dialogue between social groups in Canada over what should constitute the rights and freedoms of individuals and communities.[16] This dialogue, and the historical strength and movements of actual social movements

seeking greater human self-determination could be used as a provisional grounding point from which to criticize slavery within this specific community.

I also think that it is important to recognize the somewhat enigmatic nature of the debate between ethical relativism and essentialism. To use values as a grounding point to criticize certain oppressive actions, even if these values are tentative, provisional and historically constructed, can lead to the charge of essentializing particular qualities beyond a specific locality. If one was to take relativism to its so-called logical conclusion (which in itself, is an approach embedded in a particular social and historical context), each individual would have their own values which are all equally valid. To expect this point of theoretical tension to neatly and logically unfold might be unrealistic. It is also important to note that the idea that values must be justified through rational argumentation has roots in Western philosophy, and would not necessarily be accepted in all cultures or communities.

In this section I have insisted that value positions can be defended in a sophisticated fashion - without resorting to an essentialist, foundationalist strategy. Further, I contend that values can be asserted and defended through historical analysis and social dialogue. This implies that emancipation is not a singular project, but a multi-dimensional phenomenon, intricately related to a plurality of dialogues, movements, and histories. This multiplicity is the subject of the next, and final chapter on reconstituting emancipatory thought. Before proceeding with the topic of plurality, in the next section I will examine how values can serve as a source of solidarity. I will move beyond an abstract discussion of establishing values through dialogue, and use more concrete examples to demonstrate how values can be seen as a critical source of solidarity between and within emancipatory social movements.

iv. Values As A Source Of Emancipatory Solidarity

I have argued that values are grounded in specific localities and context, but that dialogue may provide a way to build common value positions across specific localities.

Although it is important to recognize that values do not have an ultimate transcendental referent, and their interpretation will vary between and within communities, a broad, provisional consensus on certain values can be reached, and this consensus may have important political consequences. Having links of solidarity based on values is an important tool for those interested in political struggle, and who continue to hold faith in the idea of intellectual praxis.

I strongly concur with Leonard's argument that it is not sufficient for the theorist to be aware of the multitude of various struggles for emancipation. The theorist must also stand in solidarity with the oppressed. To not stand in solidarity, the theorist risks "seeing [her/his] aims and conclusions transformed into idle posturing and hopeless despair". For example, although I recognize that the idea of democracy will be constituted in specific, varying ways in different contexts, I might also support a more general normative belief in democratic organization that allows me a vantage point from which to criticize the suppression of democratic rights in various contexts beyond my locality, as well as engage in acts of solidarity with communities striving towards democracy.

The need for solidarity is often not recognized by postmodern theorists focussed on locality as a remedy to modern universalism. For example, self-proclaimed advocate of 'postmodern' sociology, Steven Seidman, defends general social narratives, but advocates a "pragmatic, socially informed moral analysis" where the focus is on defending social arrangements in light of "local traditions, values, and practices" (1991:143).

This is a useful, and necessary strategy, but I would argue that Seidman underestimates the need to simultaneously transcend the local and the contextual to find solidarity on value positions between communities. Many emancipatory social movements have difficulty appealing to their local community as a realm of moral appeal, and instead make appeals to other, outside, like-minded communities. The national and international community of non-governmental organizations, for example, can serve as an important realm of moral appeal. Democratic activists in China, for example, have frequently appealed to the international community for trade sanctions against a highly oppressive, undemocratic regime.

The Zapatistas have also made myriad appeals for actions of solidarity to "civil society" within Mexico and around the world. The Zapatistas responded to, and addressed letters of solidarity to many groups within Mexico, including the University Student Council of UNAM, Civic Front of Mapastepec Chiapas, the Supreme Council of Indian Peoples, the National Plan de Ayala Coordinating Committee, the Regional Liberation Association for Human, Economic, Social and Political Rights, the Council of 500 years of Indigenous Resistance, the State Council of Indigenous and Campesino Organizations, as well as "all Non-Governmental Organizations in Mexico".

The EZLN also made pleas for, and responded to support from international groups. In an early communiqué they wrote:

> We are making a special call to the North American people and government. We call on the people to initiate actions in solidarity with our compatriots; we call on the government to suspend all economic and military aid to the Mexican federal government (Marcos, 1995b:59).

These cries for solidarity did not go unheeded. Attention from national and international groups was critical in keeping the Zapatista army and its *campesino* supporters alive at a time when elite members of their own immediate 'community' were bent on their destruction.

International movements of solidarity with the Zapatistas continue. Most Zapatista sites are assisted by international human rights observation teams. In response to a letter from the EZLN asking for the support of indigenous people in the U.S., a delegation of indigenous leaders went to Chiapas in May, 1997. The U.S. based "School Construction Brigade" visited Zapatista territory, and in the fall of 1997 will bring a group of teachers and students to Chiapas to build a secondary school at Oventic Aguascalientes. A special "Women's Delegation to Chiapas" is also currently being planned which will organize meetings between women's groups in Mexico and the U.S. and Canada. A group of women have started an interactive discussion space on the Internet to discuss issues of importance to women in Chiapas - just one of many international web pages devoted to the Zapatista struggle. A list of international solidarity measures could go on for many pages.

The Zapatista uprising has also motivated tremendous solidarity around a program

of resistance to neoliberalism. After the first meeting in Chiapas, a second Intercontinental "Gathering for Humanity Against Neoliberalism" was held in Prague, and a third meeting was held in Spain in July of 1997.

In response to the April 1997 shooting of four unarmed Zapatista sympathizers by the Mexican army, Zapatista Comandante Moises expressed the importance of having broader ties of solidarity when he addressed Chicano-American student observers:

> ...It would be good if you told the world what is happening....we appreciate your presence and solidarity. You come from far to see us and we get stronger from your solidarity. When you demonstrate in front of the Mexican Consulates we hear about it, and when you bring caravans of food, clothes and medicines we appreciate it and all of this helps us to keep strong (Chiapas95-lite, April 11).

The EZLN have at numerous times in their writing suggested they are able to at least partially understand, appreciate, and show solidarity with struggles for oppression throughout the world. The Zapatistas recognize that isolated actions are inherently limited. Solidarity between different groups, working together around key values such as justice and democracy, is seen as the only way to end oppression. In a letter of solidarity written to the National Plan de Ayala Coordinating Committee, the EZLN leadership express the need for unity around the general theme of justice and equality:

> The Indigenous people, the poor campesinos, and agricultural labourers, united, will completely change the agrarian system of exploitation and scorn that exists in our country. From the unity of our strength will surge a new Mexican countryside, more just and equitable...(Zapatistas! 1995: ch. 6 p.174).

In a letter of solidarity written to the Council of 500 Years of Indigenous Resistance, the urgency of the need for unity and solidarity with their struggle is expressed:

> In our name, in your name, in the name of all of the Indians of Mexico, in the name of all Indigenous and non-Indigenous Mexicans, in the name of all good people of good paths, we receive your words, brothers and sisters, brothers and sisters yesterday in exploitation and misery, brothers and sisters today and tomorrow int he dignified and true struggle...Do not abandon us. Do not let us die alone. Do not leave our struggles in the vacuum of the powerful. (Zapatistas! 1995: ch. 4 p.124).

In a letter to the State Council of Indigenous and Campesino Organizations, the need for solidarity is seen as an emotional and moral necessity, not just a strategic phenomenon. Having solidarity with this indigenous organization is also seen as an important source of

moral legitimacy. They write:

> Our heart thought, in error, that our brothers and sisters in misery and struggle had sold their dignity to the dark and dividing forces of the evil government. Our death walked alone, without other Indians hearing its clamour for justice, freedom and democracy. Our word sings out again: WE ARE NOT ALONE, our blood and our race unites us over the bayonets and tanks of war....We, the most humble of your brothers and sisters, greatly feel the honour of receiving your words of unity and support. We grow large with the honour that you give us with your support for our demands (Zapatistas! 1995: ch. 4 p.126).

Although the Zapatistas explicitly ask for solidarity, a more theoretical approach advocating solidarity between different struggle for emancipation might be rejected by postmodern theorists who view discourses as being incommensurable. Gardiner suggests that many postmodern theorists become stuck at the level of plurality and indeterminacy, "indeed they typically celebrate it, as implied by the Nietzschean goal of a 'transvaluation of all values' and a continuous re-invention of the self according to personal aesthetic standards" (Gardiner, 1997:108). He writes:

> For many postmodernists, different cultures, viewpoints, and life-styles are radically incommensurable, and that any attempt to reconcile differences and arrive at a form of consensus represents the tyrannical valorization of some 'language-games' at the expense of others. (1997:105)

Lyotard argues in The Differend that "incommensurability, in the sense of the heterogeneity of phrase regimens and of the impossibility of subjecting them to a single law" is a necessary feature of all discourse (as in Gardiner, 1997:105). Such a politically fragmented position may not be characteristic of all postmodern theory. The point is that an insistence on the incommensurability of cultural perspectives, and the impossibility of links of solidarity, is a paralysing position for those interested in forming links of solidarity in order to change oppressive structures of economic and political power.

Believing in the importance of links of solidarity across borders and communities does not mean that we have to abandon a belief in the value of heterogeneity. Instead we must strive for both plurality and solidarity. This is not just an abstract theoretical proposition. It is an idea that is prominent in the Zapatista discourse.

At the same time they show solidarity, the EZLN and Marcos are explicit that their struggle is just one of many, and that they "neither want, nor are we able, to occupy

the place that some hope we will occupy, the place from which all opinions will come, all the answers, all the routes, all the truths" (as in Bardacke, 1995:264).

The Zapatista leadership is quite clear that they respect the diversity of struggles, and do not insist that everybody must follow their path of armed struggle. At the same time, they argue that there must be solidarity around three key values: democracy, justice, and freedom (Marcos, 1995b:90-91). These three values are the closing words of virtually all of the EZLN communiqués. One closing phrase reads:

> ...the paths are different but the desire is one: Freedom! Democracy! Justice! (Marcos, 1995b:93).

Using a strong commitment to these three values as a sort of ethical bedrock, the EZLN has formed alliances with other groups in struggle - groups which may have radically different tactics and participants. A Zapatista letter written in response to the solidarity expressed by the student council at UNAM, a relatively privileged group compared to the Zapatistas, demonstrates the possibility of achieving both solidarity and diversity in emancipatory action. They write:

> With great pleasure, we receive the greetings and support of men and women like you, who struggle on different turf and with different methods for the same liberties, democracy and justice that we all desire (Marcos, 1995b:113).

The words of Subcomandante Marcos demonstrate that within the Zapatista movement there is an appreciation for the necessity of simple, basic goals, combined with knowledge of the necessity that each situation will be unique and specific. In one communiqué he writes:

> ...our ideals are very simple, and at the same time very grand: we want, for all the men and women of this country and the entire world, three things that are essential to being human - democracy, liberty, and justice...(1995:6)

Although Marcos concedes that these three things do not mean the same for an indigenous person in south east Mexico as they do for "an American, a Canadian, or a European", there is a similar principle involved which emphasizes "the same right to have a good government, the right to think and act with a freedom that does not involve the slavery of others, the right to give and receive what is just"(1995:6).

Respecting solidarity and plurality is no mean feat, as Leonard recognizes, but "to

be anything less runs the risk of repeating the same mistakes" (1990:26). Adorno aptly summarizes this position: "Utopia would be above identity and above contradiction: it would be a togetherness of diversity" (as in Gardiner, 1997:105).

It is useful to recognize that the goal of having diversity and solidarity is necessary, but paradoxical and difficult for a Western mind accustomed to think in binaries. The words of Zen Master, Shunryu Suzuki, suggest the long-standing nature of this difficult tension between solidarity and plurality, and reminds us that there have been sophisticated responses to this problem outside the Western philosophical tradition:

> Our body and mind are not two and not one. If you think your body and mind are two, that is wrong; if you think that they are one, that is also wrong. We usually think that if something is not one, it is more than one; if it is not singular, it is plural. *But in actual experience, our life is not only plural, but also singular* (1982:25, emphasis mine).

We must commend 'post' theorists such as Laclau & Mouffe for emphasizing the heterogeneity of social movements. We must also, however, reflect on how their focus on plurality may have lead them to ignore that certain common emancipatory goals (such as Citizenship, and Participation) may be found in many different social movements (Schuurman, 1993:29). These common emancipatory goals or values may provide a way to build links of solidarity between different groups, encouraging more privileged groups (such as Western theorists) to take note and make comment when these general principles are being violated. Recognizing that a position of solidarity or consensus is provisional and constructed, keeps it consistent with my anti-foundationalist position.

I believe that we should follow the examples of the Paulo Freire and the EZLN, and take similarly basic, explicit, and admittedly provisional positions towards the idea of emancipation. These positions can be as straight-forward as the definition of emancipation given by Schuurman (cited in Part I), who defines it dynamically as the process "whereby social actors try to liberate themselves from structurally defined hierarchical relations which are discriminatory and as such give unequal access to material (e.g., land, housing, services) and immaterial resources (e.g., ideology, political power)" (1993:31). A firm commitment to equality and anti-hierarchical relations can be a tentative way to link diverse struggles, and to achieve solidarity concomitant with a

respect for plurality.

The goal here is not to isolate the ultimate definition of emancipation which can be used for all time. I contend that a specific commitment to a basic, normatively-explicit idea of emancipation can serve as an invaluable reference point - especially for intellectuals who tend to become embroiled in the highly abstract theoretical debates, and whose privileged position often discourages them from asking difficult questions about the emancipatory potential of the phenomena they study.

Now that we have looked at the idea of values as a source of emancipatory solidarity among social movements, we can move to the next chapter which looks more explicitly at the need to see emancipation in a multiperspectival sense.

1. The notion of the isolated individual is clearly not limited to rational choice theory, but is one of the most powerful modern myths. Denis writes:

> What is particular to modernity, then, is not a respect for individual life, integrity and well-being, which in various ways is surely universal; but rather a hypertrophied regard for the independent self - a self that in any case is never lived, for this independence is not possible: it is merely ideologized (forthcoming, 71).

2. Seidman, for example, is a self-identified 'postmodernist' who argues that social theorists must become advocates, focussing on specific contexts of oppression,"encouraging unencumbered open public moral and social debate", and acting as a "catalyst for the public to think seriously about moral and social concerns (1991:144). Honneth even argues that the terrain of moral theory is increasingly being recognized as the "true medium for the further development of postmodern theories" (1995:289).

3. For example German social philosophy contains a significant strand of moral philosophizing, as seen in the works of Herbert Marcuse and Hannah Arendt (Skinner, 1985:14). Wim Wertheim developed a theory of emancipation as occurring in a movement of "counterpoints", where transgressive ("counterpoint") attitudes are thought to develop through folk-art, music, and religious rituals (Nederveen Pieterse, 1989/90:64). These transgressive popular spaces, and not rational thought, are held to be the stuff of emancipatory upheavals. The importance of morality, values and religion was also recognised by Gramsci (West, 1985:28). Although Gramsci privileged a rational psychology and the importance of the industrial working class, he was one of the first to take seriously the cultural life-worlds of the oppressed, and recognize the importance of 'moral prestige' in the construction of hegemony (West, 1985:28; Nederveen Pieterse, 1989/90:63). Bloch also recognized that the German Left was ignoring critical domains of culture, which it was leaving open for interpretation and manipulation by the fascists (West, 1985:28). More recently Laclau and Mouffe have given an important, sophisticated criticism of traditional Marxism's ignorance of the cultural realm (1985).

4. The mixture of explicit positions on values and spirituality with a leftist attention to social justice is not a new phenomenon in Latin America. For example, Peruvian Jose Carlos Mariategui - frequently described as the greatest Latin American Marxist - also mixed Marxist themes with Andean values and spiritual traditions.

5. Freire's strong normative commitments suggest the influence of liberation theology on Freire's work, and may also have roots in his existential experiences in Brazil where he experienced extreme poverty and human suffering first-hand (Weiler, 1991:452) Freire's experience with poverty was not limited to detached observation of the situation in Brazil. The 1929 economic crisis brought his own middle-class family into poverty, and lead Freire to decide at an early age to fight against the basic problem of hunger which he had personally experienced (Schaull, 1970:12).

6. As noted in Chapter One, I use the term "extra-rational" to avoid implying that values of hope and love are "irrational", or not rational. Although these values can be discussed using rational dialogue, I do not believe that they can be entirely reduced to the outcome of a rational consensus.

7. Nederveen Pieterse distinguishes this tradition from a Nietzschean line of thinking, which is "neither rationalist nor emancipatory", as well as from various "romanticist, visionary, surrealist, Dadaist perspectives", which are not primarily rationalist, and which may hold emancipatory elements, but which are not consistently emancipatory (1989/90:65).

8. This is not to say that all religious uprisings necessarily promote greater equality and less human suffering, as per our basic definition of emancipation. Some religious movements can be highly reactionary and conservative, as West recognizes, and as we can observe in some conservative evangelical movements in Chiapas.

But we must also be cautious of the tendency of secular Occidental observers to summarily judge any, and all religious movements as retrograde threats to democracy, especially 'Oriental' movements (ie. Islamic movements in the Middle East, First Nations spiritual traditions.) As Denis notes, the "combination of the political and the spiritual in Islam is generally seen by Westerners as dangerous for democracy and pluralism" (1997, 124). Religious revivals can be an important cultural sources of resistance against Western imperialism, and forms of governance which wed the political with the spiritual may be authentic forms based on autonomous self-rule. West writes:

> ...religious revivals...constitute anti-Western forms of popular resistance to capitalist domination. This is especially so in those Third World countries (or pockets in the First World, as with indigenous peoples) in which a distinct cultural and religious way of life still has potence and vitality compared to Western modes of religion. For example, in the Middle East and parts of Asia and Africa, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism or traditional religions still have substance and life. Hence these religions serve as cultural sources against not simply Western imperialism but also much of Western civilisation - especially Western self-images, values, and sensibilities. Such resistance, like all forms of resistance, can be restorative and reactionary (as in Iran) or progressive and prophetic (as with many Palestinians). (1985:30).

9. In Zimbabwe "the governing ZANU party officially acknowledged its wartime debt to spirit mediums who supported its guerillas in the bush" (Huizer, 1985:57).

10. In the Prison Notebooks Antonio Gramsci stated this point eloquently:

> The starting-point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is 'knowing thyself' as a product of the historical process to date, which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory...it is imperative at the outset to compile such an inventory. (as in Said, 1978:25)

11. Fish argues that anti-foundationalism is not a thesis denying foundations, but rather a thesis about:

> how foundations emerge, and in contradistinction to the assumptions that foundations do not emerge but simply are, anchoring the universe and thought from a point above history and culture. it says that foundations are local and temporal phenomena, and are always vulnerable to challenges from other localities and other times (1989:29-30).

12. One of the major problems with anti-foundationalist arguments has been their tendency to argue that once the situatedness of discourses of rationality is realized, such discourses can be abandoned and transcended. In Fish's words, "I am facing those who find in the deconstruction of that rationality the possibility of throwing off those beliefs and practices that now define us" (1989:33).

13. Against Seidman, I would argue that abandoning foundationalism leaves other methodological survivors beyond social narrative, and that a focus on social narrative does not necessitate a dismissal of traditional methodological tools, such as causality. Antonio, for example, is supportive of narrative methods which can effectively "criticize the epistemological excesses of Cartesian and positivistically inclined social theory", but he also offers a sophisticated defence of a consequentialist social theory, against Seidman's totalizing move towards social narrative (1991).

Antonio argues that even narratives told on regional and local levels involve some degree of homogenizing totalizations. A story of "a single neighbourhood of Albany" and a story of "Occidental capitalism" both involve a degree of generalization and totalization (1991:157). A consistent perspectivism could not sustain such narratives, and would be forced to interpret all "collectivities as indeterminate ensembles of narratives too complex, heterogeneous, discontinuous, and fleeting to be portrayed as a whole" (*ibid*, 158). Antonio also criticizes Seidman's "storytelling" for being unable to make judgements about different portrayals without implicitly relying on a some notion of truth (*ibid*). For example, Seidman argues that classic theories of modernism are "little more than myths" legitimating Western dominance, but Antonio insightfully observes the contradiction: storytelling cannot make a distinction between "myth" and "reality" (*ibid*).

14. Antonio persuasively argues that Seidman denounces modern tenets such as emancipation, but relies on them heavily within his analysis. Antonio writes:

> Optimistically [Seidman] mentions theorists executing "socially informed moral analysis," producing "elaborated social reason," acting in the capacity of "advocates," and facilitating open "public moral and social debate."...These views presume the continued viability of "rational" discourse, ethically based social criticism, democratic symbols, emancipatory ideals (e.g., truly free public sphere completely open to minority voices), and the sociopolitical substructures of these cultural resources (1991:157).

15. Benhabib's concept of a "dialogical model of ethics" is intimately related to Habermas' concept of discursive, or communicative ethics. One important difference, however, is that communicative ethics focuses more exclusively on the discursive procedures necessary to reach questions of justice. Benhabib, by contrast, suggests that these moral discussions should not just be related to questions of justice, but should also include discussion of what constitutes the 'good life". Benhabib writes that we must "reconsider, revise and perhaps reject the dichotomies between justice versus the good life, interests versus needs, norms versus values upon which the discourse model, upon Habermas's interpretation of it, rests" (as in Moon, 1995:153). I use Benabib's terminology, because I also believe that moral discourse should be oriented not just towards the importance of discursive procedures, but should also focus on substantive issues surrounding values and questions of 'the good life'.

16. The dynamic nature of this consensus is shown in C. Denis' work entitled, We Are Not You. First Nations and Canadian Modernity. In this work Denis identifies and examines conflicts between the principle of indigenous self-determination, and the implicit desire by the whitestream to maintain a hegemonic position in the judicial and ethical realms.

CHAPTER SIX EMANCIPATION: A MULTIPERSPECTIVAL APPROACH

> ...we also saw that it is not only the mouth of fire that attains freedom. We saw that other mouths need to open and scream so that the powerful tremble. We saw that the struggles are many, and many are the colours and languages of those that struggle.
>
> Letter of solidarity written by the EZLN

> ...no one optic can ever fully illuminate the richness and complexity of any single phenomenon, let alone the infinite connections and aspects of all social reality.
>
> Best & Kellner (1991:265)

We have already seen how the modernist tendency has been to generalize from particular contexts to formulate a covering model of emancipation. As Nederveen Pieterse writes:

> ...emancipation is a terrain highly susceptible to the politics of theory. Annexationist theories abound. Each paradigm of emancipation turns emancipations plural into emancipation singular: it enlists the range and variety of emancipatory projects in the notion of a central momentum of progress (1992:19).

Those on the 'left' have not been immune to this totalizing modern tendency, as typified by Fidei Castro's statement that the Party was the "synthesis of everything" (Slater, 1992:304). One of the major problems with Marxist class analysis has been it tendency to assume, *a prior*, that class interests are dominant.

Advocating a dialogical, value-centred approach to emancipation is not intended as an implicit attempt to formulate a new, singular metanarrative of emancipation. In this chapter I present the final portion of my argument on reconstructing emancipatory theory. In short, I argue that emancipation must be rethought using a multiperspectival approach. I am in strong agreement with Nederveen Pieterse when he writes:

> the total theory and universal vision of emancipation may not be succeeded by another total theory, but by an awareness of plurality. There is no need to rush in the search for a new paradigm (1992:28).

This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section I suggest that the multifaceted nature of social reality makes a strong argument for having a multifaceted

approach to emancipatory theory, and argue the case for multiperspectival theory generally. In the second section I examine the examples of Paulo Freire and Michel Bahktin - two theorists who take a multiperspectival approach to emancipatory theory. Finally, I suggest some of the pitfalls of using a multiperspectival approach, the main one being the temptation to succumb to a banal liberalism. I suggest that a focus on dialogue and emancipatory values can at least partially alleviate this problem.

i. The Value of a Multiperspectival Approach

One of the major problems of modern universalism has been its tendency to close off understanding of how emancipation may occur pluralistically (Leonard, 1990:258). Class frameworks have been blind to gender struggles. Gender frameworks have been blind to racial and ethnic oppression. Economic frameworks have been blind to more subjective, cultural dimensions of oppression. The list goes on.

Leonard makes the obvious, but important observation that "[d]omination and oppression take a variety of forms, and because of this, enlightenment and emancipation will also take a variety of forms" (1990:269). Hungarian social philosophers Heller and Fehér, similarly argue that modernity is characterized not by simplicity, but by complexity. Instead of being dominated by one meta-logic, it is seen as comprised of a multitude of logics which affect different people in different ways, and as such, must be understood in their particular context (as in Gardiner, 1997:101).

The Zapatista example clearly shows the complexity of the social terrain of most emancipatory movements. The conflict between members of the EZLN and environmentalists is just one example. *Campesinos* themselves are not unified. Moise, a member of the CCRI, reports in an interview:

> there are now many poor people - but really poor like us - who are supporting the *caciques*, the government, and are saying that the Zapatistas are evil, assassins, killers. They don't understand that we are also fighting for them to have a better life...That bothers us and makes us sad...(Zapatistas! 1995: ch. 3 p.95).

Interestingly, such complexity is not denied by ELZN communiqués, but embraced.

EZLN writings frequently mention the myriad levels on which the struggle for emancipation exists, and there is never the suggestion that these multiple struggles should be subordinated to one larger struggle such as class or race. Gender struggles, for example, are articulated autonomously by women, and do not appear subordinated to class struggles. Of the 34 points that the EZLN presented to the government in beginning of the peace process, the "Indigenous Women's Petition" was the longest and most detailed (Zapatistas! 1995:11).

The Zapatista example makes clear that academics should avoid making a distinction between first-world/complexity, and third-world/simplicity. Or as Slater puts it, "that in the Third World people know how to resist and to fight, whereas in the First, movements have acquired a greater degree of reflexive maturity and complex interweaving that leads to all kinds of paradoxes (1992:310-311). As the Zapatista case shows, there is a tremendous amount of complexity on the peripheral social terrain that needs to be acknowledged.

Not only has modern universalism closed off study of the multiple terrains on which emancipation may occur, but it has also tended to take a flat, monocausal view of the revolutionary subject. Moise notes the complexity of negotiating peace when there is no one, privileged revolutionary subject:

> We don't just want a hand-out, to rise up quickly and then negotiate quickly. We know that so many suffer, and that there are so many kinds of injustice that we know they have laid on us as Indigenous peoples, *campesino* peoples, working peoples... (Zapatistas! 1995: ch. 3 p.95).

As we saw in Chapter Four, gender struggles within the broader Zapatista movement suggest that emancipation may involve varied struggles within subjects. For example a male Zapatista soldier may struggle against oppression based on his class and indigenous background, while at the same time acting as an oppressor in a private familial setting. Stephen's interviews with Zapatista soldiers found that although men recognized the importance of the Revolutionary Laws on women, and felt compelled to obey them, they harboured mixed feelings about taking orders from women, especially younger women (1995:91). The Zapatista case makes clear that although men and women may suffer together from economic and racial injustice, women may endure particular

oppressions sustained by men, such as an inequitable division of household labour, and sexual abuse.[1]

Seidman adeptly summarizes the major objections to the modern conception of the unitary subject:

> ...the experience of oppression and liberation is not flat or unidimensional. Individuals are not simply oppressed or liberated. Just as an individual's identity mix is varied in innumerable ways, his or her experience of self as empowered or disempowered will be similarly varied and multidimensional. We need to shift from an essentialist language of self and agency to conceiving of the self as having multiple and contradictory identities, community affiliations, and social interest. Our social narratives should be attentive to this concept of multiple identities: our stories should replace the flat, unidimensional language of domination and liberation with the multivocal notion of multiple, local heterogenous struggles and a many-sided experience of empowerment and disempowerment (1991:142).

Modern mono-causal theories clearly have problems appreciating the plurality and complexity of the subject and social life more generally. This does not mean that these theories must be automatically abandoned, but rather they should be employed using a multiperspectival approach - as part of a panoply of theoretical tools rather than as a solution key to all problems. This type of multiperspectival approach is needed to appreciate both the plurality of social life, and the complex multiplicity of the human subject.

Kellner expounds a well-developed model of a multiperspectival, multidimensional approach to theory (1995:98). He draws on Nietzsche's concept of "perspectivism", which suggests that since one cannot avoid bringing a perspective to a problem, it is necessary to use a multitude of perspectives to minimize the one-sidedness and the necessary blind-spots of each singular perspective (Kellner, 1995:98; Best & Kellner, 1991:265). Different perspectives act as 'optics', which draw out distinctive features of the research problem. Best & Kellner write that a "multidimensional and multiperspectival theory looks at society from a multiplicity of vantage points, conceptualizing specific phenomena sometimes from the standpoint of the economy, sometimes from the position of the state, or the intersection of economics and politics."(1991:265-66)

Arguing for a multiperspectival approach to a multidimensional social reality makes a lot of intuitive sense, and may seem like a case of stating the obvious. I would argue, however, that the employment of a multiperspectival approach is atypical, rather than the norm. Although postmodern analysis often quotes Nietzsche's stress on employing a multiplicity of perspectives, in practice, social analysis is often one-dimensional or reductive, especially in its focus on the cultural and its neglect of economic and political analysis. Baudrillard looks at the media from a purely technological perspective; early Foucault & Lyotard focus almost exclusively on discourse; Jameson focuses on the cultural logic of capital, and Harvey on the new post-Fordism stage of capitalism (Best & Kellner, 1991:267,269). Of course critics of postmodernism are guilty of a similar single-mindedness, characterized by a visceral, totalizing rejection of postmodern innovations and resistance to using a mixed tool bag approach to social theory.

But how exactly would a multiplicity of perspectives aid the construction of an emancipatory vision? Would using a plurality of theoretical approaches guarantee a complete and total understanding of social reality, or offer a more perfect prescription for emancipation?

I do not intend to suggest that a multiperspectival approach could fulfill the positivist dream of complete and exact understanding of social reality, or provide a guaranteed prescription to end all oppression. Instead, I advocate a multiperspectival approach based on a critical-realist understanding of emancipation. In a post-empiricist climate there are serious problems involved in presuming that theories, even in a plural sense, can correspond strictly to, and encompass empirical reality. The problematic nature of past theories of emancipation discourages us from attempting to replace old versions with new, alternate totalities - even pluralistic totalities.

Recognizing that our myriad theories of emancipation might not correspond to a reality of oppression in a strict, comprehensive sense, should not lead us to reject these theories, or fall into a nihilistic despair. The work of emancipatory theories can still be useful as guides, or "touchstones". These may not be perfect road markers on the various roads to emancipation, but they can still serve to inject a much needed ethical bedrock

into a research soup heavily flavoured with nihilism, scepticism, and Western myopia.

For example, even though traditional Marxist class analysis can no longer be used as a totalizing, all-encompassing theoretical tool, it is still useful, especially when employed with other theories, to help us understand the nature of social oppression. The perennial danger now that class analysis is 'out of style' is still that of throwing out the materialist/class baby with the determinist Marxist bathwater. Although the oppressive situation in Chiapas clearly involves extra-class elements (ie. peasant issues, indigenous exploitation, gender, the environment), a notion of class is still useful in understanding the structural position of the economically marginalized participants in this uprising, and the privileged position of elites working to quash these unruly forces. To avoid any class or economic analysis, and to focus on say, the literary element of magic realism in Marcos' communiqués, would be as dangerously one-sided as the traditional class approaches under such heavy attack.

Although individual emancipatory theories such as class and gender analysis can "never be addressed as innocently" as they once were (Kincheloe, 1994:216), this does not mean that they should be dismissed as archaic remnants of modern emancipations' totalizing programs. Using these tools as part of a critical realistic, multiperspectival approach to emancipation can allow the social theorist to retain a focus on oppression, without purporting to capture solution reality or provide solutions in a totalizing, monlithic sense. As McLaren and Lankshear write,

> ...we need 'props' to help us maintain a sense of overall political focus and purpose, even though we accord these props provisional status only; a metanarrative to which we ascribe provisional authority; an arch of social dreaming... (1994:8).

ii. The Multiple Emancipatory Voices Of Paulo Freire And Michel Bahktin

Even though Paulo Freire primarily focussed his attention on emancipation through education, his work stands as an example demonstrating that emancipation and oppression occur on multiple levels, and thus should be explored and understood on

multiple levels.

Freire's work focussed on literacy programs, but he recognized that 'educational practice...is not in itself the key to transformation - even though it is fundamental' (Torres & Freire, 1994c:104). Although Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed was directed towards raising the consciousness of individuals, Freire made strong connections with national and international levels of oppression, linking his vision of pedagogy with dependency theory. Freire literacy methods focussed on the power of the individual human subject, but recognized the need for human subjects to work together to combat larger, structural aspects of oppression.

Although Freire's work took material oppression seriously, like Gramsci, Freire saw liberation as a process which also involved cultural relationships and the domesticated consciousness. In his words, "freedom does not lie simply in having more to eat" (Freire, 1970:50). Freire believed that emancipation requires a process of knowledge-discovery by the oppressed to counteract the domestication of their consciousness. Emancipation cannot be authentic unless people have control over their conceptualization of the world.[2] He quotes from Eric Fromm, to emphasize the point that freedom must be multidimensional, and include both material necessities as well as the:

> ....freedom to create and to construct, to wonder and to venture. Such freedom requires that the individual be active and responsible, not a slave or a well-fed cog in the machine...(Fromm, as in Freire, 1970:50).

Freire's writings and his life-work demonstrate to social theorists the importance of acknowledging the existence of oppression on multiple levels, and not assuming that one's own focus is an all-inconclusive panacea. The work of Michel Bahktin demonstrates in a more abstract sense the danger of one-dimensional representation (monologism), and the value of polyphonic representations of oppression.

Like Nietzsche, Bahktin argued that no one view point can adequately understand an object, and that a more complete comprehensions requires a multiplicity of vantage points (Gardiner, 1992:94). Bahktin was highly critical of monologism, a condition of European rationalism where a plurality of values, instincts, and convictions are subordinated to a hegemonic, singular, unified perspective (Gardiner, 1992:26). Monologism requires that anything which does not fit with its unified viewpoint be

discarded. Bahktin writes:

> Monologism, at its extreme, denies the existence outside itself of another consciousness with equal rights and equal responsibilities...With a monologic approach...*another person* remains wholly and merely an *object* of consciousness...Monologue is finalized and deaf to the other's response, does not expect it and does not acknowledge it in any decisive force..Monologue pretends to be the *ultimate word*" (emphasis of author, as in Gardiner, 1992:27).

Bahktin argued that the world cannot be captured in a single concept or theory, but can only be partially captured through multiple interacting subjects in dialogue. Bahktin finds examples of this in Dostoevsky's novels, where the goal was not to faithfully reproduce external reality, but to represent the characters' multiple, shifting subjective perceptions of this reality (Gardiner, 1992:25). Bahktin argued that Dostoevsky was the first exponent of the "fully polyphonic novel" (Gardiner, 1992:23). By this he meant that there are "a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices" which are not subordinated to an authorial omniscient voice (as in Gardiner, 1992:24).

For Bahktin, meaning can never be singular or held exclusively by a singular subject, but is instead inevitably multiple. Although multiple perspectives involve "inevitable conflicts over meaning", resulting from a "profusion of interpretive approaches", this "multiplicity of perspectives makes possible a more nuanced and well-rounded understanding...(Gardiner, 1992:131).

But how does this Bahktinian analysis of Dostoevsky's novels relate to the uprising in Chiapas? What does Bahktin's notion of polyphony suggest about our attempts to understand the Zapatista reality? A Bahktinian approach provides a powerful warning that the goal of social science cannot be to produce a photographic image of Zapatista reality. It suggests that reducing the uprising to one framework or label, seeing it as primarily a 'postmodern rebellion', or a 'peasant rebellion' suppresses the multiple voices that joined together to be heard. The goal instead, must be to attempt to, in an admittedly imperfect, incomplete process, to capture the subjective, dynamic, and multiple aspects of Zapatista perspectives, as well as the subjective positions and world views of different theories.

Bahktin's brand of hermeneutics insists on an active dialogue between the

interpreter and the text, the parts and the whole, and argues that meaning is created within this dialogue (Gardiner, 1991:102). This suggests that an analysis of Chiapas must move from the particularities of the uprising to the broader forces of economy and politics. The meaning of the uprising in Chiapas must be established through a dialogue between various theoretical points, between the individual parts of the rebellion and the whole of the movement's ideals. A dialectical, multiple theoretical approach would not reduce the uprising to a single factor of economics or culture, but would look at the interrelationships between economics, politics, culture, and the state.

Although Bahktin's critique of monologism resides on a relatively highly level of abstraction, it holds out a concrete goal we can aspire to: polyphonic approaches to emancipation where multiple voices are not subordinated to an authorial omniscient master narrative. Emancipatory theory itself, like Doestevsky's characters, must be structured in terms of inescapable dialogue, which refuses to revert to a singular, authoritative metanarrative. Different theorists must dialogue with each other, at the same time they hold dialogue with participants of struggles.

iii. The Dangers Of A Multiperspectival Approach: Avoiding Banal Pluralism

An important predicament associated with a multiperspectival approach to emancipatory theory is the tendency to digress into a banal liberalism, or an 'anything goes' methodology. The dangers of a multidimensional approach can be drawn out by examining how Bahktin's approach differs from Gadamer's hermeneutics. Although Bahktin also sees hermeneutics as more than a method, and as an ontological condition, he does not ignore how power can work to distort dialogue and understanding. Bahktin realises, in Albrecht Wellmer's words:

> ...the Enlightenment knew [what] hermeneutics forgets: that the 'dialogue' which (according to Gadamer) we 'are', is *also* a relationship of coercion and, for this reason, *no* dialogue at all (emphasis of author, as in Gardiner, 1992:121).

In short, we cannot argue for a dialogue between multiple voices and ignore power, otherwise we can end up with a banal pluralism. We end up resembling what has

been criticized as the "fetishism of difference in postmodern theory", where "uncritical celebration of single-issue interest group politics...fails to articulate common issues and universal political values", and ultimately "replicates the favoured tropes of liberalism" (Best & Kellner, 1991:288). Best & Kellner write that "it is a mistake simply to valorize micropolitics, otherness, and multiplicities per se as postmodern theorists are wont to do...since some of the multiplicities may be highly reactionary" (1991:299).

Althusser has noted that the opposite of a mechanistic monocausal theory is an extreme pluralism where there is no causation, and everything is equal (as in Best & Kellner, 1991:288). This type of extreme pluralism has damning political implications. It is "mystifying and ineffectual, unable to specify key sites of domination and oppression", and often "fails to indicate major forces or subjects of struggle or exaggerates the powers of specific oppressed individuals or groups" (Best & Kellner, 1991:288). For example: Lyotard and Rorty advocate a great cultural conversation of multiple voices, without acknowledging that some groups have more of a voice than others, by virtue of their gender, race, economic position, etc. (*ibid*).

Best & Kellner argue that the goal is not just to maximize the number of perspectives, but to creatively pick theoretical perspectives in order to offer new insights into a phenomenon, clarifying issues that were previously obscured, while staying focussed on a larger vision of emancipation (1991:270). They write that "[d]eveloping a dialectical and multiperspectival social theory requires not only bringing together and mediating a variety of theoretical perspectives, but a vision of the progressive and regressive features of society, and the respective forces of domination and liberation" (1991:271).

All of this suggests that it is necessary to historicize emancipation and show its pluralistic character, while still having a sense of solidarity between different emancipatory projects. It suggests that we need to have what was emphasized in the previous chapter: a critical sense of respect for both plurality and solidarity. Plurality is necessary because of the need to recognize specific multiple voices, and create a space where the specific multiple voices of the oppressed can be heard (Leonard, 1990:268-269). Solidarity is also necessary, however, so that the theorist avoids seeing only a sea

of multiple differences and is incapable of standing in solidarity with the oppressed. A letter from the General Command of the EZLN poignantly expresses the desire for plurality and solidarity:

> Do not let the poor *campesino* stay silent - let the worker in the city cry out. This warrior song should not forget the voices of the students and the teachers, the working people and every other oppressed person. Do not leave this heavy flag in our hands alone - it should be raised by everyone. Let's all change the land that embrace this flag; brother Mexicans [sic], don't forget this voice from the mountains; already the light that our dead give off is very small. Let's all join our lights together, let's break this shameful night. (Zapatistas! 1995: ch. 9 p.245)

Having respect for both plurality and solidarity is no mean feat. Although this may be difficult, it is not clear that there is any acceptable alternative. Without an overarching criterion of emancipation, however provisional, it would be impossible to identify specific movements of emancipation which seek their emancipation at the cost of others. There must be some tentative criterion allowing us to discern movements which want to gain power to exploit others, from movements that hope to level all social inequalities.

The case of development theory illustrates this point more concretely. Schuurman argues that the new focus on diversity in development theory has often worked to obscure the persistence of inequality, and has lead to a voluntarist, pluralist approach which leaves no room for an overarching emancipation discourse (1993:30). Schuurman contends that this tendency must be checked by sustaining a consistent focus on the emancipatory value of equality. Although the term equality may carry some modern, essentialist baggage, it is useful in forcing attention to important inequalities in access to power and resources which might be ignored by those focussing only on diversity (*ibid*).

This example brings our attention back to the focus of the previous chapters, where I argued for a value-specific conception of emancipation established through dialogue and contextual/historical analysis. If we have respect for our general, value-specific concept of emancipation, which we must acknowledge as both tentative and constructed, we can have a position from which to judge between different perspectives. Without this normative preference for emancipation, we can too easily fall into a position where all perspectives (racist, democratic, homophobic...) are normatively equivalent.

Seeing multiple perspectives without such a normative position leads, in Todorov's words, to "indifference and to the renunciation of all values" (1984:251). Without a specific value position, we continue to 'study the oppressed', but resist standing in solidarity or entering into a true dialogue with them.

How might this work in the case of Chiapas? Clearly there are multiple subjective perceptions of the role of the Zapatistas. One perspective that could be considered is that of the large land-owners. To these groups, the Zapatista demands for liberty, land, democracy, and justice present a threat to their current way of life, and their property 'rights'. If we simply accept this perspective as one of many, without referring to a normative position on emancipation, we fall hostage to a time-honoured tradition of positivist *objectivism*. We are able to see different perspectives, and without being willing to judge some over others, and without any willingness to stand in solidarity with a particular social group.

But if we approach the situation with our tentative value-based definition of emancipation in hand, the situation looks much different. To reiterate, this tentative definition holds that emancipation occurs with the levelling of social inequality. If the theorist unabashedly accepts this definition, then they must also stand in solidarity with the Zapatista perspective, given the convincing evidence that this group struggles to level the tremendous social inequalities in their lives.

This explicit normative position in favour of emancipation might encourage and remind the theorist not just to look at the EZLN as an abstract case-study, but as a living, human movement struggling for emancipation. This awareness might encourage theorists to not only publish abstract articles (or theses!) in scholarly journals, but write letters of political support, give donations, participate in electronic discussion groups, visit Chiapas as part of a Human Rights delegation or one of the school construction teams, or even attend and organize political rallies on behalf of the Zapatista struggle. Although the theorist would recognize the particularities of the case, they might be able to make connections between the Zapatista struggle, and the other types of struggles in against neoliberalism in her own locality. In this situation, the ideal of having an emancipatory theory which is socially engaged, value-explicit, multiperspectival and dialogical would

be carried out.

Concluding Part II The Advantages, the Dangers, and Costs of Emancipation

Before proceeding with the analysis of Chiapas through the democratic optic, it is useful to reiterate the importance of developing a provisional overarching concept of emancipation, as well as the potential pitfalls.

The appeal of a concept of emancipation is that it can be a concept broader than class struggle, and thus can potentially embrace projects of old and new social movements. Mushakoji writes:

> What is required for the present is a broad, pragmatically evolved concept with which the wide variety of people's responses to the multifaceted crises in their lives can be probed and collective efforts to bring about social change identified (1993:xi).

The advantage of a broad concept like emancipation is that it has the potential to be relevant in a broad range of research topics. It also has the potential to bring people together. And although acknowledgement of specificity is critical, solidarity is also critical. Why? Because a total retreat into localism and specificity may not be a most politically effective strategy for people trying to improve their standard of living. Powerful forces of capitalism and corporations are daunting opponents for oppressed peoples lacking protection from their nation state or civil society (Laxer, forthcoming).

The "micropolitics" of new social movements, as well as the aesthetic celebration of difference, pastiche, and marginality, problematically "lacks any overall strategy for hegemony beyond the sometimes feverish activity of the individual groups or an ad hoc alliance politics" (Beverley and Oviedo, 1995:11). As Latin American observers have noted, unity is important in facing powerful adversaries, and at moments of crisis, shared histories and contemporary realities of exploitation and deculturation become as important as differences (Albó, 1995:21). Dieterich writes that "people do not move unless they have a convincing political perspective and the hope that it can be achieved" (1992:51). Despair and nihilism will not move people, but greater consciousness and hope for a new project may. Mexican journalist Elena Poniatowska writes of the uniting forces of "exploitation and poverty", arguing that in terms of the struggles to end the suffering of neoliberalism:

> ...there is no substantial difference between a Bolivian miner and a Mexican one, between Nicaraguan, Salvadoran, Guatemalan, and Honduran peasants, between a sidewalk seller of *quesadillas* from Pachuca and a sidewalk seller of *saltenas* in La Paz...(1992:68).

For Latin Americans suffering under the (neo)colonization processes, a retreat into localism may not provide relief from the oppression brought on by larger structural forces such as the state and transnational economy. Dieterich asks if there is any way to democratize the 1492 system, and he does not answer, wispily, 'retreat into localism'. He states that the only way - given the enormous concentration of power and wealth, is by some form of unity, some form of solidarity between third world masses and consciences first world sectors (1992:51). Only a massive force would be powerful enough to democratize the 1492 system.

If we believe that oppressive forces such as capitalism and inequality work in systematic ways, then a piecemeal local approach will not be sufficient weapon. A systematic approach is needed to understand systematic oppression. Lovibond writes that we need a "*systematic* political approach to questions of wealth, power and labour" to provide an effective challenge to a "social order which distributes its benefits and burdens in a *systematically unequal* way" (1989:22, emphasis mine).

Schuurman argues that there needs to be a way to connect themes such as power, actors, diversity, inequality and solidarity. There is no need for a "grand and glorious development theory", but there is a need to connect isolated plots, and avoid isolated empirical research, or abstract concepts which do not pertain to relevant practice (1993:32).

I would argue that a focus on the concept of emancipation is a way of 'connecting the dots' so to speak. Focussing on emancipation as an overarching, provisional goal helps us keep our head up in muddy wavy waters. Emancipation can act as a common link between different theories of economic, gender, racial oppression, as well as between the different theories and practices aiming to increase equality and decrease human suffering in its myriad manifestations.

One of the potential dangers of using the concept of emancipation is its close links to the Enlightenment tradition with carries with it an assorted baggage of essentialism and

Eurocentrism. But as Chapter Two showed us, even postmodern rejections of modernity have not be entirely successful in distancing themselves from this damning baggage. I would argue that we should not dismiss emancipation because of its links with Enlightenment traditions, but instead work on what developing what Melucci calls a "self-limiting concept of emancipation, mindful of the dark side of the modern myths, like progress, liberation and revolution" (1992:73).

Employing a central concept of emancipation does not provide answers to all questions. It does not tell what kind of emancipatory touchstones should be used, or what kind of movements are important. The theorist has to make thoughtful decisions about which theories to employ in dialogue, and how to structure dialogue so movement participants have an active voice. Some scholars might find such open-ended possibilities unsettling. Nederveen Pieterse writes:

> One question is whether open-endedness is to be taken as a problem or as an opportunity, but still more basic a question is whether there is an alternative at all (Nederveen Pieterse, 1992:28).

An open-ended reflexive emancipation is not a simple solution, but the costs of ignoring emancipation are enormous, and also carry on a Eurocentric tradition of sanctioned ignorance of the imperialist project. For the many living in 'third world' conditions, emancipation is not an abstract theoretical idea, but a hope that their lives will become more humane, less hungry, and more just.

Although human suffering has a subjective, cultural dimension that numbers cannot describe, and that cannot be reduced to economic conditions, there is also an objective dimension that can be at least partially represented, described, and even generalized.[3] The material conditions of the majority in Southern countries in the 1980s, the 'lost decade of development', are quite shocking.

UNICEF estimated that poor people's income fell by between 10-15% between 1983 and 1987 (as in Schuurman, 1993:10). In 1978 the third world received an estimated 5.6% of the world's income, but by 1984, that percentage had fallen to 4.5% (*ibid*). Two hundred years ago the ratio of wealth between rich and poor countries was 1.5:1; by 1989, that ratio had grown to 60:1 (*ibid*). Other alarming signs of a

deteriorating quality of life include the growth of highly polluted urban centres, the exponential growth of environmental destruction, declining real wages, increased income inequality within Southern countries, the feminization of poverty, and the introduction of new problems such as drugs, AIDS, and heightened violence (Slater, 1993;93). Petras & Vieux prefer to label the 1980s not the "lost decade", but the "stolen decade" (1992:26). The 1980s and early 1990s saw a transfer of wealth from Latin America to North America and Europe in the form of profits, interest, and royalty payments in the order of $280 billion dollars - a figure larger than the region's debt burden (*ibid*).

Although there were many different social movements in the South responding to this crisis in many different ways, one possible common thread has been described as an agreement that,

> ...[the] present world is in deep crisis and the Third World is reacting to this crisis through the people's movements and experiments (Mushakoji, 1993;xiv).

All of this suggests that now is not the time to abandon the concept of emancipation. Instead it seems time to examine it more closely, develop it in new ways that incorporate movements against neocolonialism and unearths any covert Orientalist baggage.

In the next chapter I will look at how emancipatory struggles in Chiapas contained struggles to expand (and contract) the realm of democracy.

1. Major Ana Maria describes the particular oppression of *campesina* women in vivid language,

> ...another thing is that in the Women's Law we demand that there be respect for women. We demand respect. Many times, they don't respect us. They think that women are something worthless. So this is also why this law came out...And it demands punishment for men that rape, that grab by force. This has happened many times, and more among Indigenous women, *campesina* women. They see her all fucked up, and all of that, that she'll let them, and they grab her. Here in San Cristobal, for example, many women have been raped. They just grab them. Servants and all of the women that work in the houses of the ladies, they grab them and rape them. Many times these rapes are not publicly known, they are not published, they are not told of, they do not accuse them of all that happens (Zapatistas! 1995: ch. 8 p.227).

2. This point is similar to Habermas' well-known analogy between psychoanalysis and social theory. This analogy postulates a critical link between knowledge and liberation, based on the assumption that the more humans understand about social forces, the more likely they will be able to escape from their constraints (Giddens, 1985:126).

3. On this point as it applies to homelessness, Fiske writes,

> there is a material experience of homelessness that is of different order from the cultural meanings of homelessness...but the boundary between the two cannot be drawn sharply. Material conditions are inescapably saturated with culture and equally, cultural conditions are inescapably experienced as material (as in Freire & Macedo, 1995:387).

Part III DEMOCRACY AS AN EMANCIPATORY TOUCHSTONE

> It is also ironic that in this era of worldwide struggles for democracy postmodern intellectuals are trying to dissolve the key concepts of the democratic revolution. Rather, it is precisely now...that radical democracy should be defended, secured, and expanded.
>
> Best & Kellner (1991:297)

Seidman argues that social critics act with greater responsibility when their arguments are as specific, and socially relevant as possible (1991:142). In this thesis, I have chosen one perspective which I believe can act as specific and socially relevant reference point for broader struggles for emancipation: democracy.

Using an optic of democratic theory cannot explain everything in Chiapas. I see democratic theory not as a new metanarrative of emancipation, capable of explaining all aspects of the Zapatista uprising, but as a sort of emancipatory touchstone. This touchstone can function as a specific normative reference point, albeit one that is provisional, constructed, and capable of multiple interpretations. It is a *critical* emancipatory touchstone, because it does not offer a relativist position towards democratic values, but acts as a normative reference point capable of making judgements on what is conducive and what is dangerous to democracy. It is not a key that reveals all truth, but a guide to garner further insight into a specific aspect of emancipatory struggles in Chiapas - the struggle for democracy.

A critical emancipatory touchstone is a dialogical reference point. On the one hand it enhances understanding of a particular empirical problem, pointing out the pro and anti emancipatory forces. On the other hand, the critical touchstone is not fixed, but is a contingent concept that is revised and refined through encounters with empirical examples. Our conception of democracy is not fixed, but is thought of as being in constant dialogue with actual struggles for emancipation. This dialogue will aid both our empirical understanding, and aid revision of our concepts of democracy.

Democracy has not always been a normative reference point for the left in Latin America. The left has often not seen it as a provisional constructed concept, but have

often abandoned it based on the assumption that it is a fixed, static conceptual tool used for bourgeois rule.

Looking at democracy as a reference point for a broader concept of emancipation, can prevent democracy from being reduced to just a procedure for governance. Not just an empty tool allowing elite rotation in office, democracy becomes part of an emancipatory ethic that seeks to level power and reduce oppression. With the collapse of the Socialist meta-narrative, democracy can function as an important normative reference point because of its potential implications for values of equality and self-determination on levels of culture, economics, and politics. This is not just a reference point that can refer to parliamentary governance, but it can apply to myriad levels of public and private life. In the field of education, Henry Giroux writes that left cultural workers, as well as schools and teachers should use democracy as a valuable political referent. Schools can, and need to be seen not just as neutral space of education, but as places where democratic struggles are fought (1992:154).

In this same spirit, in the next chapter we will look at the Zapatista uprising as a terrain where democratic battles were fought, where pro- and anti-democratic forces lay out their claims. The optic of democratic theory can enhance our understanding of the uprising, at the same time the uprising can help us to reconceptualize traditional theoretical conceptions of democracy.

Democracy is not the only perspective that could have been chosen to study the Zapatista uprising. Other theories that could have functioned as emancipatory touchstones include dependency theory, new social movement theory, feminist theory, and Freirean pedagogical theory. For example, looking at the Chiapas uprising through the lens of feminist theory could help to point out the specific aspects of struggles for gender emancipation embedded in the uprising. A Freirean touchstone could have pointed out the aspects of emancipatory pedagogy and consciousness raising that occurred in the uprising.

I use the critical touchstone of democracy in the spirit of post-structuralist teachings on theories. These teachings suggest that theories are not "timeless entities", but weapons [Heidegger] or tools [Wittgenstein] which are contingent on the perspective

of the theorist (Skinner, 1985:13). As Foucault puts it, there is simply no "changeless grid of concepts and meanings awaiting neutral analysis" (*ibid*).

CHAPTER SEVEN THE CONTESTED SPACE OF DEMOCRACY IN RURAL CHIAPAS

> ...they said nobody in their right mind would answer this call from a rebel group, outlaws, who whether well-known or little known, were the flash that lit up January, but whose obsessive language is now trying to recover old, used-up words: democracy, freedom, justice.
>
> Subcomandante Marcos, 1995b:243.

Although the EZLN rebels did not make major military gains, perhaps their most outstanding achievement has been to refocus national attention on the host of severe social, economic, and political problems which plague the Mexican *campo*.

Malnutrition in rural areas is epidemic, and even government statistics estimate that it affects 90% of rural Mexicans (Sanderson, 1986:9). Despite the lack of adequate food for its own population, expanding tracts of land are used to produce agro-exports for consumption by Mexico's wealthier neighbours, as per the recently signed North American Free Trade Agreement.

Mexico's debt crisis and concomitant austerity programs had a particularly adverse effect on the rural population. The number of rural people living in absolute poverty increased from 6.7 million in 1984 to 8.8 million in 1992 (McKinley & Alarcón, 1995:1570). Between 1982 and 1991 average real wages for agricultural workers fell by 51% (Moguel, 1994:38).

Charges of political corruption and electoral fraud in rural politics continue to ring out. Reports of widespread fraud marked the contested 1988 presidential elections, and even in the 1994 presidential elections ballot secrecy was violated in 38% of rural polling stations (Fox, 1995:17). In the recent July 1997 elections, between 160 and 610 ballot boxes were never installed in the state of Chiapas, and abstention in that state was as high as 70% (Paulson, 1997).

Given the overt nature of *campesino* marginalization, we are left wondering: what does democracy really mean for the Mexican *campo*, and for rural *Chiapanecans* more specifically? Is democracy a sham, a bourgeois hoax? Can a development model based

on the displacement of labour in favour of capital be democratic? Or are 'clean' elections a sufficient condition to guarantee that democratic criteria are being met in the countryside? If democratic procedures in Chiapas are remarkable only because of their manipulation by elites, then why has democracy become a central rallying cry of the EZLN?

Surprisingly, these questions concerning the condition of rural democracy are seldom asked. As academic trends vacillate between the environment, new social movements, and postmodernism, rural issues often remain isolated from the major urban centres of learning, communication, and discourse production. Both sides of the political spectrum assumed the peasantry would disappear in the inevitable march of modernization. The Chiapas uprising was a rude reminder for politician and intellectual alike that the peasantry in Mexico was not disappearing, but that its existence was one of precarious survival, and continued marginalization within the modernity project.

As mentioned earlier, the uprising in Chiapas came as a surprise to most observers, who had not seriously considered the possibility of pro-democratic peasant resistance. Most analysis flatly categorizes Mexico as undemocratic. When democratic theory is applied to rural Mexico specifically, it usually concentrates on issues of electoral fraud, political graft, and other impediments to the development of free and fair elections. Political analysis of rural areas frequently focuses on the corporatist system, and the efficacy of the PRI and the CNC (National Campesino Federation) in coopting and controlling the *campesinado*.

My contention is not that these obstacles to Mexican democracy do not exist. Certainly, the ruling PRI has maintained an incredibly sophisticated system for suppressing and channeling dissent. My objection is that the standard approach to Mexico's politics portrays democracy in a flawed, two-dimensional fashion, focusing exclusively on the components of state control, and using a narrow criterion of democracy based on Western criteria.[1] A photo of Mexico's authoritarian state is taken, the variables are precisely measured against narrow procedural criteria of democracy, the relative ranking is calculated, and the positivist theorist looks no further.[2]

The postcolonial literature's concepts of Self and Other have not been especially

influential in the North American study of democracy, and, I would argue, to its detriment. Too often the historically specific paradigm of Anglo-Saxon democracy is mistaken for an ideal democratic model, to be applied universally as a formula.[3] Too often this misleading criterion is used to portray the Orient's un/democracy in flat, positivistic terms. This approach is not only ethnocentric and ahistorical, it is also practically unrealistic. A package of Western institutions, grafted onto a 'third world' country and implemented from the top-down may have only tenuous roots in civil society.[4]

In this chapter I argue that a more accurate picture is gained by viewing democracy not as a two-dimensional portrait of democratic absences, but as a three-dimensional matrix of pro and anti-democratic forces which struggle to determine the relative presence/absence of democratic features. This approach is based on a vision of democracy not as a fixed, monolithic idea, universally applicable across time and space, but as a moving target - a contested space[5]. I view rural democracy as a contested space where material and discursive struggles are fought out. These struggles can be seen as involving a dialogical process between pro and anti-democratic forces, each seeking political legitimacy, control over the meaning of democracy as well as material gains.

This is not to say that the balance between these forces is an equal one. It is important to avoid the "fetishism of resistance" which Kellner identifies in cultural studies, and which is pervasive in the work on new social movements (Kellner, 1995:37). In rural Mexico, anti-democratic forces within the state and civil society have had an overwhelming historical presence. But as I have indicated above, just to describe these forces would be misleading, since it would occlude pro-democratic forces. Without locating such forces, it is impossible to locate the points at which emancipatory movement may occur, even it is of a piecemeal rather than a revolutionary nature.

I argue that democracy in rural Chiapas is not merely the sum of authoritarian elements in the country side, but is the location of material and discursive contestation over the meanings and possibilities of democracy. In this chapter the EZLN uprising is seen as not just as a challenge to the PRI system, but as a major pro-democratic force in the Mexican *campo*, surviving and persisting in the face of the extraordinary power of

anti-democratic forces in Mexico, and struggling to redefine the face of democracy in Mexico. My task is not to make definitive conclusions, but to suggestively delineate the substance and meaning of the struggles for democracy occurring in the state of Chiapas.

In the first part of this chapter I outline what I view as the hegemonic vision of democracy: minimalism. This narrow vision both excludes those who see democracy as a way of life, and rural struggles more generally.

In the second section of this chapter, I examine how democracy can be thought of not as a fixed liberal metanarrative, but as an emancipatory touchstone. This idea sees democracy as constantly changing and evolving. It views democracy not as a 'how to' guide to ruling a country, but as a utopian ideal or normative reference point. Such a vision conceptualizes democracy not as a rational means to rule, but as a value which is desirable as an end in itself. Viewing democracy as a utopian reference point means that the democratic ideal cannot be finalized by academics in a remote setting, but is constantly evolving, shaped through dialogue with emancipatory struggles like the ones fought by the *Zapatistas*. The first part of this section examines how democracy relates to an ideal of positive liberty. I then explore how democracy has been important to the *Zapatista* movement, and conclude by noting some of the paradoxes of viewing the *Zapatistas* as a pro-democratic force.

i. A Minimalist Vision of Democracy

Although certain exceptions exist[6], most contemporary democratic theorists give only marginal attention to issues of rural life and peasant participation. After briefly examining the nature of this absence, and its accompanying urban bias, I will outline how the dominant democratic paradigm of minimalism has effectively silenced *campesino* issues, and created a rigid dichotomy between democratic struggles and rural struggles.

In some ways it is easy to document the marginalization of rural issues within contemporary democratic literature, because mention of rural issues frequently does not exist[7]. In O'Donnell and Schmitter's seminal work on democratic transitions, they argue

that the "resurrection of civil society" is characterized by a "popular upsurge" composed initially of artists and intellectuals, followed by support from other privileged sectors of independent and salaried professionals, and then supported by the moral voices of human rights organizations, churches, trade-unions, and generic grass-roots movements (1986:49-55). No mention is made of the particular role played by rural areas in developing nations' struggles for democracy.

Another highly influential democratization series edited by Diamond, Linz, and Lipset, gives no distinct analytical space in the model to rural factors, although they deal with political culture, leadership, and international factors as independent variables (1989). Similarly, the article written about Mexico in this same volume gives only a few passing references to the peasantry, and these comments are always made in regard to their passivity within a stable corporatist system.

Not only does democratic literature forget issues of rural development, but the literature on rural development frequently makes no mention of democracy. Development theory of all types has been strongly flavored by an urban bias, assuming that democratic development decisions are made in the cities for the benefit of urban dwellers. Development theory has also been informed by the implicit assumption that the peasantry would eventually disappear. While many neo-Marxist development theorists believed that the peasantry would be absorbed into the working class, modernization theorists assumed that the peasantry would be transformed into small capitalist farmers in the inevitable march towards modernization. Both perspectives posit industrialization as a necessary inevitability, and food production is relegated to the status of a surplus-producing mechanism which can fuel industrialization. These development models thus place food producers outside the core of development decision-making, which takes place in urban centers for the benefit of urban consumers.

This urban bias is reflected in the debates over the Mexican *campo*, which, as Tom Barry notes, are usually not centered around the *campesinado* (1995:136). Questions regarding the future of the *campo* are framed away from local autonomy, and towards the needs of a modernizing urban sector. The question commonly asked is, "*what can the campesinado give to the economic development of Mexico?*", rather than ,

"How can the campesinado determine the course of their future within the larger project of the Mexican state?".

The theoretical silence of the peasantry in the democratic literature is also due to the conventional view on what constitutes political conflict. In most political science literature political struggles are assumed to include open, organized political action, such as peasant rebellion or strikes. "Real resistance" is "organized, principled, and has revolutionary implications" (Scott, 1989:22). As James Scott's important thesis on "everyday forms of peasant resistance" makes clear, the acts of resistance of weaker parties are most often not of this overt, organized nature, and more frequently include activities such as poaching, 'foot-dragging', and gossip (1989). These are acts which are not declared openly, not collectively organized, and yet they are profoundly political, and have important consequences in the aggregate (Scott, 1989:4). Although the *Zapatista* uprising was clearly of a more organized nature, the invisibility of these types of everyday types of protest helps explain why the uprising came as such a surprise to most observers, who were not aware of the resistance potential of the *campesinado*.

Although a great portion of rural struggles were theoretically marginalized within the dominant disciplines, they became even more so in the 1980s. El-Ghonemy documented a shift within policy-making, democratic theory, and international organizations beginning with the debt crisis (1990:43-75). He found that with the onset of severe macroeconomic emergencies, there was a radical shift away from issues of land reform and landlessness[8], towards a preoccupation with issues of structural adjustment and neoliberal reform.

So we have a situation where democratic theory rarely mentions rural issues, and where development theory usually frames rural questions away from rural autonomy, placing urban centers at the theoretical center of analysis. To make matters much worse, the dominant paradigm of democratic theory - minimalism - defines democracy in such a way that rural struggles are rendered invisible.

What is often called a "minimalist" conception of democracy, or the "school of competitive elitism", is a vision of democracy based on the works of Joseph Schumpeter and Robert Dahl. Both referred to democracy as a political procedure, a type of

institutional arrangement which was not an end in itself, and viewed the ballot box as the exclusive channel for citizen participation.

Schumpeter believed that public policy should be designed by a qualified few, and rejected the classical democratic idea of 'rule by the people' as politically naive. Dahl elaborated this into a model of classical pluralism which also viewed citizenship participation in a negative light. He argued that apathy in the general population was a function of societal stability, and that excessive participation was actually destabilizing (Held, 1987:194). Dahl also rejected the idea that control over political decisions had to be distributed equally, and argued instead that the majority was important only to provide a consensus, not to make decisions directly. This model of pluralism was dominant in the 1950s and 1960s in the U.S., when social scientists were predominantly interested in describing the democratic systems they observed in the West. These democratic systems were held up as the ideal, and little attention was given to the chasm between their empirical realities, and their formal ideals and rights.

Although few democratic theorists today would call themselves "Schumpeterians", the minimalist vision of democracy (also known as the "school of competitive elitism") still forms the basis of the dominant democratic paradigm (Waylen, 1994). Even though it is championed as a universal model, its roots lie within a historically specific context of Western experiences with politics and markets.

Parekh argues that minimalist notions of democracy are built into conceptual structures of liberalism that developed in Europe beginning in the 17th Century (1992:165-169). These liberal structures prioritized the self-contained individual, removed from all contingent relations and social responsibilities, and defined liberty in purely negative terms. Democracy's purpose was seen as purely functional: to protect (bourgeois) individuals' rights of life, negative liberty, and property. The state was precluded from any large scale social or economic redistribution projects, since these would infringe on individual rights, particularly property rights, and detract from the state's responsibility to maximize individual liberty from an overarching higher authority. Democracy, then, was seen not as a way of life, a means of participation, or a form of collective existence, but as a procedure for defending bourgeois individuals' rights

against other individuals and from the intrusive force of the state.

Evidence of the persistent hegemony of the minimalist paradigm can be seen in the current theoretical obsession in political science with 'transitology' - the science of transitions to democracy. The seminal work by O'Donnell and Schmitter focuses on elite actions, such as internal divisions and political pact-making, and how they make a transition to democracy possible (1986). Although O'Donnell and Schmitter do not fear popular mobilization, as Schumpeter certainly did, they also do not assign it any great importance. Civil society's resurrection is considered a secondary factor in the transition to democracy, a force which pushes forward a movement initiated by elite actors, but which is ultimately ephemeral (O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1986:331). They do not unequivocally endorse popular mobilization, however, cautioning that it could be dangerous for democratic consolidation and could even provoke a return to authoritarian rule (*ibid*). O'Donnell and Schmitter work within a narrow procedural definition of democracy where the primary goal is to sustain electoral rule, even if it has authoritarian tendencies. Outcomes above and beyond the maintenance of electoral procedures are not a priority in this work, or in the highly influential school of minimalist democratic thought (Waylen, 1994).

There is a substantial literature criticizing the minimalist paradigm, but I will limit myself to detailing a few of its problems directly relevant to the subject of rural democracy. First, such a vision declares itself to be interested in "political" struggles in the narrow sense, and does not concern itself with democratic forms within the economy, culture or private life. A great portion of peasant political conflicts in the *campo* do not operate within the formal political realm, but are organized outside the party system around issues of land and resources. The EZLN has resisted the suggestion that it will transform itself into a party in the future, with Marcos stating, "we are not ready to do politics" (Chiapas95, March 29/97). Abstention in rural elections is high, and was even made official Zapatista policy in the July 1997 elections. When voting does take place, it is often done *en corto* (in short), based on short term economic considerations. This is a rational strategy in conditions of extreme economic deprivation, but it demonstrates that for many peasants, voting is not about a free choice of political leadership, platforms, and

polices (Barry, 1995:170). This contradiction is invisible to the eye of minimalist democracy, which assumes that as long as fair elections are taking place, the system is democratic.

This brings up a second criticism of minimalist conceptions of democracy. The minimalist concentration is on democratic procedures, and places paramount value on the means of democracy: elections. This focus resists conceiving of democracy as a system of popular participation which is an ends in itself. It also leads to the neglect of the role of emancipatory movements in the struggle for democracy (Apter, 1992:141). The limited minimalist focus on elections belies the historic *campesino* struggles for a socioeconomic system where citizens have more than just a vote, they have the knowledge and the means to participate and determine the course of their own future. Such struggles were seen within Emiliano Zapata's demands for local autonomy, and as will be shown below, are also a crucial part of contemporary *Zapatista* struggles.

Yet another criticism of minimalist democratic theory is that in its concentration on procedures, and ignorance of economic issues, it is susceptible to charges of excessive voluntarism (Waylen, 1994; Kohli, 1993:671). Structural factors are reduced to minimal importance, and outcomes are seen as contingent on the political processes and free choices made by major political actors. This focus obscures the importance of undemocratic forms within civil society and the economy which prevent the realization of citizenship rights, particularly in the class and ethnically divided *campo*. Critical struggles in the Chiapan *campo* are fought not just over the institutionalization of formal democratic rights, but over the ability of *campesinos* to fulfil these constitutional rights.

Although the school of competitive elitism is limited in the study of rural democracy, an exclusively bottom-up approach to democratization would also be incomplete. The "maximalist" approach to democratic theory represents the counterpoint to the school of competitive elitism, and concentrates on issues of democratic participation. Many recent studies within this approach focus on the activities of popular sectors through new social movements. Although this a necessary additive to the elite-dominated literature, much of this work suffers from a dislocation from wider structures of economy, institutions and political systems, and avoids examining critical procedural

elements of democracy, like elections and party politics (Waylen, 1994:334). An isolated concentration on grass-roots participation in social movements often leads to an overly optimistic view of democratization. This approach tends to forget that social movement participants often lack effective representation in wider structures, and that this mobilization is often a survival mechanism to severe socioeconomic disparity, but does not necessarily lead to much needed resource redistribution.

Having briefly outlined the weaknesses of elite-based minimalism and grass-roots social movement research, it becomes clear that there is a striking need for an approach which examines the critical dialectic between pro and anti-democratic forces. The methodological quandary in the study of democracy is not one of 'top-down' versus 'bottom-up', but rather the challenge is to delineate the dialectic between mass pressures for democratic inclusion and the anti-democratic structures, institutions, and strategies of elite actors. Viewing democracy as a contested space is part of an attempt to make the workings of this dialectic more explicit. The neoliberal vision of democracy as clean elections above a system of economic authoritarianism has not necessarily been accepted by popular pro-democratic forces in Mexico like the *Zapatistas*.

The next section will examine how democracy can be conceived not as a liberal metanarrative or a fixed list of procedural prescriptions. It can instead by viewed as an emancipatory touchstone - a normative ideal which is shaped by more substantive conceptions of democracy and in dialogue with the concrete struggles of emancipatory social movements like the *Zapatistas*.

ii. Reconceptualizing Democracy as an Emancipatory Touchstone

In this section I first outline how democracy can be thought of as an emancipatory touchstone, based on an explicit normative preference for democracy as a social value supporting self-determination. I then engage a dialogue between this normative democratic ideal, and the pro-democratic force of the EZLN. Finally, I examine the paradox of viewing the EZLN (an *armed* military group) as a pro-democratic force.

a. redefining the ideal of democracy

To see democracy as not just a fixed set of principles, but as a dynamic, emancipatory reference point, we must first acknowledge the discursive nature of this concept. The writings of Laclau and Mouffe emphasize the discursive elements in societal struggles, suggesting that identities and structures are more fluid than modernist literature would suggest (1986). Democracy is seen as a "floating signifier", a concept capable of multiple definitions, including usages which are compatible with a right-wing corporatist agenda (Slater, 1994:20). The possibility of multiple appropriations of democracy, particularly by forces of neoliberalism, make it necessary to actively participate in discourse struggles surrounding democracy, to provide interpretations which are more in keeping with emancipatory values like participation, autonomy, and equality.

Although democracy has been used by the World Bank to defend structural adjustment policies, and the United States government to justify brutal foreign intervention strategies[9], I defend democracy for the possibilities it offers. I argue that critical social theorists can put forth a case contesting the narrow space of minimalist democracy using an explicit normative approach which focuses not on the rationality of democratic procedures, but on the importance of democratic values. These interpretations provide a broader democratic space in which to include rural struggles, and in the process, deconstruct the obdurate dichotomy between rural goals and democratic movements.

Given the limits of the minimalist approach in examining rural issues outlined above, it is no wonder that some leftist critics have dismissed democracy altogether. It is often argued that the goals of liberal political democracy are laudable, but they are "empty", incapable of being fulfilled in the context of capitalist exploitation. As Reuschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens ask:

> ...is the claim of democracy to constitute the rule of the many real, or is this claim a sham that makes the de facto rule of the few more effective and secure behind a screen of formally democratic institutions? (1992:20).

Identifying the limitations of democracy involves a critical recognition that

democratic ideals are often not lived up to in 'real life' democracy. It is a recognition that distinctly "political" elements of a democratic system are not sufficient to understand how power is distributed throughout society. We must also understand how political procedures are constrained and enhanced by the economic distribution of wealth. This means not just looking at electoral fraud, but examining how the power of rural citizens is determined by their access to material resources, including both land and capital.

Unfortunately, the leftist critique has too often lead to a rigid polarization between "true democracy" (rarely seen in these parts), and "pseudo-democracy" (the norm), or it has lead to a rejection of democracy altogether. In Mexico, the increased importance of democratic politics in the past decade was missed by many leftist parties and peasant movements, who were dismissive of any participation in formal democratic procedures, and hence missed out on important representation possibilities (Fox, 1992c:42).

Such an approach is dangerously myopic, and it is important to avoid the frequent tendency to abandon the ideal of democracy when the empirical reality is not lived up to. Returning to the central thesis - that democracy is a contested space which can serve as an emancipatory touchstone - suggests that such an abandonment is premature. Rather than being dissuaded by the dominant paradigm's limitations, I argue that by injecting more inclusive criteria into the contested democratic space, it is possible to both set up useful democratic ideals, and make rural struggles more visible by removing the false dichotomy between rural development and democratic theory.

Although formal democracy might be limited in practice, what is important is the *possibility* for the redistribution of power that democratic forms of government offer. Democratic institutions open up a space through which greater democratization and change can occur. As Adam Prezeworski famously noted, establishing democracy is tantamount to institutionalizing uncertainty. Although this quality is what makes democracy difficult to institute, it also offers the possibility that the 'winners' and 'losers' in socioeconomic struggles can change over time. This offers a peaceful way of processing inter-class conflict and opens up the possibility of transformation without violent upheaval. As Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens write:

We care about formal democracy because it tends to be more than merely

> formal...Giving the many a real voice in the formal collective decision-making of a country is the most promising basis for further progress in the distribution of power and other forms of substantive equality (1991:10).

Although democracy generates multiple quandaries, there is a stunning lack of palatable alternatives to democratic rule. This lack of options makes it imperative to be able to conceptualize democratic ideals which exceed narrow minimalist conceptualizations which are largely derived from Anglo-Saxon experiences with democracy. Equating empirical reality with theoretical possibilities continues a tradition of positivistic research that seriously limits the potential of democratic study. The absence of explicit democratic ideals encourages academic complacency towards descriptive phenomena, and ultimately devalues the ambitions, hopes, and struggles of Mexicans striving to make their political and economic system more egalitarian.

Defining democratic ideals is part of a broader search for emancipatory values. But defining democratic ideals is *not* an abstract lesson in 'how to create utopia'. These values provide a valuable metaphorical measuring stick which can be used to evaluate the success of existing political systems. These values lift us out of a purely positivistic approach, and allow exploration of what is present, what is desirable, and what is possible. As David Held succinctly reminds positivistic social scientists, "what is ambitious today might be feasible tomorrow" (1992:44). Developing democratic ideals encourages explorations of how the distribution of economic and political power affects the degree to which ideals can be fulfilled. Although often unfulfilled, democratic values give a means to articulate a defence of "rights", and a weapon to fight for laws, rights, and freedoms.

These democratic values would not be a part of a fixed checklist, but act more fluidly as democratic goals. Rather than accept them blindly, or reject them as unattainable, we see these values as part of a contested democratic space. In this space occurs multiple struggles to define and achieve these goals, and in the process, deepen, and expand democracy in more radical, substantive directions.

We can get at the issue of democratic values more specifically by making explicit why democracy is desirable in the first place. Bobbio cites three possible justifications for democratic governance: utilitarian, political and ethical (1978:48-50). From a

utilitarian perspective, democracy is preferable over authoritarianism because collective participation in government is seen as the most efficient way to determine and provide for the collective will. A *political* perspective justifies democracy as the most effective remedy for the abuses of power inherent in governing. Given the necessity of some sort of elected officialdom in mass polities, and the subsequent concentration of power in the hands of these officials, a democratic system is seen as the most effective method of awarding popular control over leadership positions and their potential power abuses. Both of these justifications justify democratic governance on the grounds that it is a more rational method of political rule. Democracy is justified as the most efficient means to attain collective consensus on policies, and curb abuses of power.

Arguing for democracy on just these two levels is necessary, but insufficient. Justifying democracy on utilitarian grounds falters when countered by empirical evidence disputing its central claim to provide efficacious governance. Throughout history numerous authoritarian regimes have justified their rule based on the perceived inability of democratic regimes to efficiently provide for the collective good. Although there may be a long run correlation between economic development and democracy, in the short and medium run, democratic forms of government may exacerbate, or even create new economic problems (ie. inflation). In addition, the economic difficulties faced by many developing nations, especially in the wake of the debt crisis, create tremendous uncertainties and structural constraints that limit the success of democratic governments, and may strengthen the appeal of an efficiently run 'benevolent' dictatorship (Bratton & van de Walle, 1992:439). Given these difficulties, it seems inevitable that democratic regimes will make mistakes, oversee economic instability, and become vulnerable to the charge that they are incapable of articulating the collective interest of the nation, and fulfilling their *utilitarian* function of democracy.

Although democracy is certainly an effective *political* mechanism for checking the centralized power of the modern state, an exclusive concentration on this criterion reduces democracy to a procedural mechanism. Democracy becomes a way of checking politicians' power, not a way of life, or a form of collective existence. Parekh argues that when democracy is seen exclusively as a method of constituting and controlling public

authority, it is reduced to a watch-dog for culturally and historically specific liberal values (especially individualism and private-property holding), and is not seen as a force to negotiate redistributive policies which would allow more egalitarian democratic participation (1992:169). Seeing democracy in strictly political, procedural terms therefore defies the expectations of many rural Mexicans, who demand greater political participation and the right to self-determination, not just a chance to vote for their leaders.

Democracy is certainly valuable on both utilitarian and political grounds. Democratic governance *can* be an efficient means of policy construction, and it *can* be an effective check on the political power of leaders. But an additional perspective is needed to defend democracy when it is not particularly efficient, and when its citizens demand more than negative liberties and the right to change leadership.

The third *ethical* justification of democracy which Bobbio cites is based on a Rousseauian concept of positive freedom - "obedience of the laws which each ascribes to oneself" (1978:49). Positive liberty specifies the right for individuals and collectivities to moral and societal development, rather than just calling for freedom from a higher political authority and from other citizens. This third ethical justification for democracy justifies democracy by explicitly identifying, and valuing ideals of individual and collective self-determination. According to this argument, we choose democratic systems not just because they are efficient, or rational, but because we place a value on democracy as a system with the potential to nurture positive liberties.

A democracy justified by a normative or ethical valuation of positive freedom would make explicit the role of democracy as an enabling force, a force which does not only create formal rights but which actively promotes equitable distribution of political *and* economic power to maximize fulfilment of these rights. The democratic system could go beyond the protection of individual property rights, and actively promote the political and economic equality necessary for equitable freedom in the processes of individual and collective development (Held, 1987:4). An equitable distribution of developmental capabilities would clearly not be a compatible with a bifurcated system of passive voters and powerful elected leaders. A democracy justified by positive liberty would authorize the direct, active participation of citizenry working through electoral and

non-electoral channels, giving citizens the right to individually and collectively determine the course of their future, as captured by the phrase, "self-determination".

This value-based conception of democracy is also dialogical, rejecting a static model of democratic rule. It focuses on the process of determining what value criteria will fill the contested democratic space, and how this criteria could be deepened to extend democratic control. Held argues that a key process in the expansion of democratization would be the extension of the "bundle of rights" that are available with citizenship (1987:182). This bundle would not just be an extension of negative liberty, nor a revised version of welfare handouts, but these rights would be a "way to specify certain socioeconomic conditions which allow effective democratic participation" (Held,1987:183). This bundle could not be fixed *a priori* by the democratic theorist, or by the urban politician. Instead, this bundle of rights would be formed and reformed through struggles by citizens to determine what rights are necessary for self-determination.

By emphasizing a vision of democracy based on positive liberty, rather than capitulating to the dominant minimalist paradigm, we create a new democratic space. In this space, *campesinos* are made visible as the dichotomy between rural struggles and democratic struggles dissolves. Suddenly, many *campesino* demands which were formerly classified as merely economic or local, now have a space in a reconceptualized vision of democratic struggles for self-determination.

Demands for collective self-determination, and the political and economic conditions which would allow such development, are particularly relevant in class and ethnically divided societies such as exist in rural Mexico. Calls for autonomous group development have been heard since the earliest days of colonialism, when most colonial revolts were fought to preserve local autonomy and culture (Barry, 1995:136). Similarly, the struggles of *campesinos* in the Mexican Revolution centred around access to local land and water, and aimed to restore these necessary resources which would allow a continuation of indigenous agrarian ways of life *(ibid)*. Calls for a democracy based not just on formal rights, but on the economic conditions needed to fulfil these rights, resonated recently in the demands of the EZLN, as will be shown below.

In rural Mexico, political rights are not just linked to the distribution of political clout and economic capital, but they are also linked to the distribution of land. As Harvey succinctly writes, "the agrarian in Mexico is also the political". Therefore, a democracy based on positive liberty might not only demand equal political representation or fair elections, but might also challenge the state to ensure equal landownership, equal access to productive inputs, and the right of *campesinos* to self-nourishment on their own plots.

Democracy based on the value of positive liberty would not dictate a pre-determined set of rights and criteria necessary to achieve self-determination. These rights would be determined in the process of citizens organizing and struggling towards what they deem necessary for equitable individual and collective self-determination. In keeping with this idea, a central part of the process of rural democratization includes the formation of a conception of rural citizenship. We cannot assume that the democratic rights applicable in urban settings are sufficient to allow self-determination in rural Chiapan communities. In the next section I use the *Zaptista* struggles as a heuristic to suggest what is lacking in the minimalist bundle of rights, and what might be included in an expanded citizenship bundle.[10]

In sum, ethical democratic criteria based on positive liberty makes rural struggles more visible within the realm of democratic theory, and removes the false dichotomy between rural issues and democratic theory. Prioritizing positive liberty opens up a conceptual space where *campesino* struggles to gain control over land and resources can be seen as part of a larger struggle for democracy. When democracy is seen as something which involves more than elections, but also involves the right to self-determination and the ability to fulfil formal rights, the struggles within the Mexican *campo* suddenly enter the democratic picture.

b. viewing the Zapatistas as a pro-democratic force in Mexican politics

It is important to examine the role of the EZLN in the struggle for democracy, but it also seems important to avoid a "fetishization of resistance". It must not be forgotten that *campesino* organizations are often the exception to the rule, and even the most

influential organizations are frequently ignored in the policy-making process.[11] Much of the Latin American academic literature has moved away from uncritical, idealized interpretations of the transformative power of social movements towards more modest assessments (Slater, 1994). Judith Hellman, for example, argues that the logic of clientelism is still a prominent factor in social movement organization in Mexico, and that the correlation between these movements and the democratization process is relatively weak (1994; Slater, 1994:23).

Even with these qualifications, I argue that the *Zapatista* uprising has been a powerful pro-democratic force in Mexico. Apter argues that confrontational acts are critical in challenging accepted ideologies, and expanding outwards the terrain of democratic struggles (1992:140). The EZLN uprising is a critical "confrontational act" which challenged the meaning of Mexican 'democracy', and moved a more substantive vision of democratic autonomy onto the nation's center political stage.

Ross writes that the "true miracle of the *Zapatista* uprising" is the coming together (*coyuntura*) of civil society in the Lacandon jungle (1995b:9). Demonstrations in support of the EZLN and democracy have been held around the country since the time of the uprising. Mexican civil society showed its unity in the "March for Peace in Chiapas", which was attended by some 80,000 to 100,000 people in the Zócalo of Mexico City (Ross, 1995:151). More than 6,000 people from around the country attended the National Democratic Convention (CND) held in August 1994 in Zapatista territory.

Many early intellectual analyses of the uprising concluded that such a democratically-focused movement could not possibly have been lead by Indians, and must have instead been directed by foreigners. These unfounded racist conclusions were refuted by the Zapatistas' democratic words and actions. They are an armed movement, but democracy has been a cornerstone of the vision underlying the uprising. As mentioned earlier, most EZLN communiqués conclude with the salutation, "Democracy! Freedom! and Justice!". Democracy is not just valued as a method for selecting leadership, but is valued as an end in itself. In short, for the Zapatistas, democracy is an important value, and normative reference point.

The Zapatistas' deep respect for democracy is unique compared to vanguardist

Marxist-Leninist guerilla traditions. The EZLN is a highly democratic organization which adamantly eschews vanguardism. One reason that the guerrillas wear ski-masks is to avoid *caudillismo*, presenting one personality as the paramount leader. Although clearly the personality of Marcos has stood out and intrigued the international press, he functions as a spokesperson and military strategist, and is not the head of the EZLN. Marcos writes:

> I have the honor to have as my superiors the best men and women of the various ethnic groups: Tzeltal, Tzotzil, Chol, Tojolabal, Mama and Zoque. I have lived with them for over ten years and I am proud to obey and serve them with my arms and soul...They are my commanders and I will follow them down any path they choose. They are the collective and democratic leadership of the EZLN, and their acceptance of a dialogue is as true as their fighting hearts and their concern about being tricked once again (Marcos, 1995b:84).

The top council of the EZLN, the CCRI-CG (Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee, General Command) is also democratically elected by base communities, and these members can be recalled if they do not comply with the popular will (Zapatistas! 1995: ch. 8 p. 217). The CCRI is a council of Indigenous leaders who are informed by an unknown number of Clandestine committees representing the major ethnic groups, and who are in turn, responsive to the indigenous communities (Cleaver, 1995:11). Although the military is organized in a typical, hierarchical command structure, strategic political and organizational decisions are made at the community level, rather than by military leaders (*ibid*).

The EZLN's claims to be a democratic organization are not hollow words, but ring true in their actions. Isaac, the youngest member of the CCRI explained EZLN democracy this way:

> It was the people themselves who said 'Let's begin already. We do not want to put up with any more because we are already dying of hunger.' The leaders, the CCRI, the Zapatista Army, and the General Command, if the people say so, well then, we're going to start. Respecting and obeying what the people ask. The people in general. That is how the struggle began. (Zapatistas! 1995: ch. 3 p.95).

The decision to hold the uprising itself was made democratically. On the first day of the dialogue Marcos insisted that just as war had been decided democratically, so would peace; the negotiators would not be able to make any decisions without first going back to

consult the communities and holding votes representative of the four major ethnic groups (Zapatistas! 1995: ch. 8 p.215). In the words of Major Moise, a member of the CCRI:

> Camacho [federal negotiator] thinks that we are going to negotiate everything without consulting. But we have to consult the people about everything. They have elected us to carry out the work of the revolution (Zapatistas! 1995: ch. 3 p.95).

In June of 1995, the EZLN became frustrated with the government refusal to negotiate any national demands, so they responded by organizing a massive plebiscite (*Consulta*), letting Mexicans and foreigners vote on the EZLN demands and the future strategies of the rebel group. The *Consulta Nacional e Internacional* was carried out that August, with participation by 1.2 million Mexicans and more than 100,000 people outside Mexico (Chiapas95, April 2/97). The Consulta voted that the EZLN should convert itself into an independent political force, and in response, the Zapatista Front of National Liberation (FZLN), an independent civilian political force, was formed at the end of December (*ibid*). The EZLN also consulted its entire membership when is was time to decide whether or not to sign the federal government's proposal for peace (Marcos, 1995b:234).

Not only do the Zapatistas strive for democracy within their ranks, but they strive towards the democratic process as a valuable end in itself. They do not wish to seize state power. Zapatistas insist that they fight for the democratic process - not just one particular vision of social change. In response to the PRD's early offer to be the "peaceful wing of the EZLN", the EZLN responded:

> The EZLN did not rise up in arms in order to support one or another candidate for the presidency of the republic. The EZLN doesn't seek the victory of any party; the EZLN seeks justice, freedom, and democracy so that the people can elect the person who best suits them, and so that this decision, whatever it may be, will receive the respect and understanding of all Mexicans and everybody else. (Marcos, 1995b:62).

The EZLN have a vision of the 'good life', but they believe that decisions on the direction of Mexico should not be forced through, but decided on in a democratic system. The EZLN writes:

> The EZLN has an idea of what system and direction the country should have. But the political maturity of the EZLN, its coming of age as a representative part of

> the nations sensibilities, depends on the fact that it doesn't want to impose its idea on the country. The ELZN hereby declares what is already evident: Mexico has come of age and has the right to decide, freely and democratically, the direction it will take (Marcos, 1995b:234).

The EZLN see themselves as only part of a larger process, one voice among many. When speaking to reporters, Marcos explains how the EZLN can only be one movement among a larger conversation of voices striving towards democracy:

> ...we cannot say to the nation: We have already negotiated democracy...Because then the country is going to say to us: 'Who appointed you our spokesperson?' For that, there has to be a larger movement. And for there to be democracy in Mexico, there has to be a larger discussion...(Zapatistas! 1995: ch. 8 p.217)

In a very important passage, Marcos reveals the extent to which the EZLN believes in the democratic process, and the extent to which they have abandoned the idea of a revolutionary vanguard:

> We think that revolutionary change in Mexico is not just a question of one kind of activity. It will come, strictly speaking, from neither an armed revolution nor an unarmed one. It will be the result of struggles in several fronts, using a lot of methods, various social forms, with different levels of commitment and participation. And the result will not be the triumph of a party, organization, or alliance of organizations with their particular social programs, but rather the creation of a democratic space for resolving the confrontations between different political proposals (1995b:85).

These writings suggest that democracy is a critical normative reference point for the *Zapatistas*. The next question we might ask is what kind of democracy do the *Zapatistas* envision? What rights and conditions do they want incorporated into an expanded citizenship bundle?

The vision of democracy advocated by the *Zapatistas* is not the minimalist Western conception of periodic voting, or what Marcos calls, "democracy white-washed with imported detergent and the water from anti-riot tanks" (1995b:246). The *Zapatistas* perceive democracy as entailing more than the right to vote. Democracy is justified as an ethical principle promoting positive liberty.[12]

Using the EZLN communiqués and letters, I will explore possible components of an expanded citizenship bundle which would allow for self-determination of Chiapas' indigenous peoples. I will examine how the Zapatistas envision democracy as a way of

facilitating self-determination at a communal, national and international level.

The *Zapatista* writings indicate that they see democracy as a way of organizing social life on a local communal level, and as a weapon capable of resisting the historic authoritarianism of the Mexican state. Marcos writes:

> Collective work, democratic thought, and majority rule are more than just a tradition among indigenous people; they have been the only way to survive, to resist, to be proud, and to rebel (1995b:46).

In a letter to the student council at UNAM, the EZLN invites students to come and visit them, and to dialogue (Marcos, 1995b:113). What the students can give is technical knowledge, literacy skills, and help in the fields. What the *Zapatistas* believe they can offer is knowledge of organizing democratic communities. Marcos writes: "I believe it most likely that you would learn from us what a true democratic and participatory organization is" (*ibid*).

But the *Zapatistas* are not so naive to think that democracy at a local, communal level will ensure democracy at the state and federal level. The *Zapatistas* have faith in democracy as a system of national governance. Clearly local self-determination can be constrained by choice made at higher levels of government. For example, national-level decisions to rely on oil revenue to finance food imports has had a direct link to the crisis in agriculture (Collier, 1994b:374). As Mexico became dependent on food imports from the American mid-west, debates began over whether or not Mexico needed peasants anymore (*ibid*). These debates sharpened with the fiscal crises of the 1980s, when state support for capital inputs into agriculture like fertilizers and pesticides sharply diminished.

Although the EZLN demands self-determination for indigenous communities, they also see the national and state government as an important source of power, capable of withholding and providing resources which enable self-determination. For example, although the schools built in Zapatista territory are considered private indigenous schools, built entirely by private donations, the goal is to incorporate these schools into a national public school system where they would receive state resources. In contrast to the lust for privatization we witness in Western Canada, in indigenous Chiapas, we see a demand for 'public-tization' - a demand for the state to take responsibility for basic services

(electricity, education, water) that have been badly neglected.

Although the EZLN believe that democracy is a way of life and a principle of self-determination, they have not abandoned the more traditional meaning of democracy as an important method for choosing leaders within a democratic system. Marcos writes:

> Revolutionary change in Mexico will not be under the sole command of only one homogenous group and its great leader; rather leadership will be shared by various groups that change over time but that all rotate around a common goal: the utopia of democracy, freedom, and justice which will or will not be the new Mexico (1995b:85-86).

As part of this democratic space, the EZLN demands "free and democratic elections", as stated in a communiqué of March 1, 1994 (Marcos, 1995b:156). But they demand more than elections - they demand positive liberty. The same communiqué puts forth a demand for a "new pact among the elements of the federation, which puts an end to centralism and permits regions, indigenous communities, and municipalities to govern themselves with political, economic, and cultural autonomy" (1995b:157). It also states that "we indigenous people must be permitted to organize and govern ourselves autonomously; we no longer want to submit to the will of the powerful, either national or foreign" (1995b:159). Autonomous decisions about personal, group, and national development are an important component of the Zapatista demands for democracy. In the Zapatistas' political declaration on the "Special Forum on the Reform of the State", held in July 1996, they stated:

> Autonomy, understood as self-government, as the right to choose or remove one's own representatives and to make decisions regarding one's own future, should be established as a basic principle for social and political functioning. We want an autonomous society, as we want women and men who, autonomously, can define the destiny of their own lives. (FZLNb, 1997)

Important movements towards indigenous self-determination have been inspired by the Zapatista uprising. Ten months after the uprising, five regions in Chiapas declared themselves "autonomous multiethnic regions" - an area that included at least half of the state (Stephens, 1995:97). Some areas even went so far as to set up parallel indigenous, elected institutions such as community parliaments, regional councils, and a general statewide council, although heavy militarization in the region has made it difficult to run

these institutions (*ibid*). The National Indigenous Convention, also set up in response to the CND, holds as their primary goal a national plan to establish autonomous multiethnic regions (*ibid*). The uprising also sparked a wave of land seizures as peasant groups struggled to take advantage of the crisis to seize their demands. Sebastian Lopez, a Tzotzil Indian peasant who led the seizure of a 300 hectare ranch, said, "They [the Zapatistas] have opened the doors for all of us. The government has to take us into account" (Murray, 1994:20).

Although the Zapatistas have not orchestrated all of these movements, there is clearly an element of EZLN inspiration, and a commonality of spirit with the general principles of self-determination and autonomous development espoused by the EZLN. Although the Zapatistas were a military movement, they inspired a tremendous movement of civil society towards a more democratically determined social project.

Bardacke writes that "the kind of nationwide democratic space that Marcos is proposing is not an imitation of the 'democracy' [people] suffer from in the United States" (1995:262). Instead, on a local level the Zapatistas want democratically organized communities, and on a national level, they want the ability to democratically determine the nature of the dominant social project (*ibid*).

Part of determining the dominant social project is giving the state the power to implement this social project, and transcend the narrow confines of protecting negative liberty. In particular, the EZLN sees a national democratic project as one which will promote distribution of the material resources necessary to allow self-determination. The rebels strongly supported a socioeconomic conception of democracy, and have insisted on linking issues of poverty to lack of liberty and democracy. In the words of the EZLN itself, in its second public communiqué:

> ...the grave conditions of poverty of our compatriots have a common cause: the lack of liberty and democracy...just as we call for the improvement of the living conditions of the Mexican people, we demand freedom and political democracy. (1995b:55-56).

The *Zapatistas* writings suggest that self-determination should not be limited to the political realm, but must include the ability to make independent choices over resources. In short, there can be no political rights of citizenship without economic

rights. Their vision of democracy is one of genuine alternatives which are premised on a norm of greater justice:

> This democratic space will have three fundamental premises that are already historically inseparable: the democratic right of determining the dominant social project, the freedom to subscribe to one project or another, and the requirement that all projects must point the way to justice (Marcos, 1995b:85).

This passage suggests the highly substantive nature of *Zapatista* democratic vision. There must be parties, fair elections, and the like, but the democratic space must be filled with alternatives oriented towards justice, which in the *Zapatista* lexicon, means economic justice (Bardacke, 1995:261). Bardacke writes:

> This is the kind of democracy that frightened the original theorists of liberal capitalism: the kind where once the poor have political power, they will use that power to take property and wealth away from the rich. The new *Zapatistas* have in mind a great redistribution of wealth...(1995b:261).

For the Zapatistas, greater democracy and justice require a more equitable distribution of wealth in its many forms. Land is an especially important form of wealth, given its close links to the self-determination and cultural autonomy of rural indigenous peoples. Yet land is not usually considered by contemporary democratic theory. Land is one of the most concrete concepts one could consider. Put simply, it is dirt. Democracy, by contrast, is supposed to lie in the abstract realm of political rights. The *Zapatistas* make frequent links between democracy, and having a piece of land. Like the *Zapatistas* of the Mexican revolution, the contemporary *Zapatistas* demand "land and liberty". In one communiqué they write:

> Must we ask pardon from those who have denied us the right and ability to govern ourselves?...Those who pressure us, torture us, assassinate us, disappear us for the serious "crime' of wanting a piece of land, neither a big one nor a small one, but a simple piece of land on which we can grow something to fill our stomachs?" (1995b:82).

The lack of land not only inhibits self-determination; it makes survival itself highly uncertain, and judges indigenous lives as literally worthless. Major Moise, a member of the CCRI reports in an interview:

> In these parts, it is a miracle that the people are alive, because families of seven to twelve people have survived on a piece of land of about one hectare, one-half of a hectare of infertile, uncultivatable land...that is why we feel an urgency to have

> land in our hands, as *campesinos*. We need the land...All Indigenous peoples need land. We know that there are people who are not *campesinos* who own thousands of hectares of land where cattle are fed. This means that it is better to have hundred of cattle than hundred of *campesinos*. That means that we are worth less than animals (Zapatistas! 1995: ch. 3 p.95).

In a letter to General Emiliano Zapata on the anniversary of his death, Marcos makes the connection between democracy and land explicitly:

> And yes, my General, just like you, we understood that land and liberty, that memory in other words, can only become true in justice. That is why we rose up in arms, like you taught us Don Emiliano, for liberty and justice. And we also saw, like you did, that *they could only be gotten through democracy*. (Chiapas95, April 13/97, emphasis mine).

The EZLN associate their very existence with land, both the land they work and the land where their ancestors are buried. In one communiqué they conclude with:

> Until the national flag waves with democracy, freedom, and justice above the Mexican soil, we, the furious earth, will continue our struggle. Democracy! Freedom! Justice! (1995b:248).

The *Zapatistas* clearly see rural self-determination as closely linked to having a piece of land. As Frank Bardacke writes:

> The land should belong to them - they know it, they work it, they could make their world from it - but it has been taken away by the "bad government." Freedom would get them their land back, and give them the power to create their own world and their own history (1995:258).

Or in the words of the Zapatistas themselves, as spoken by Major Moise:

> ...ownership of the land should pass into the people's hands..As Indians, we believe and feel that we have the capacity to direct our own destiny. There is no need for them to hold our hand. As mature people, as conscious people, we can direct our own destiny. We can govern our own destiny, we can govern our own people. (Zapatistas! 1995: ch. 3 p.95).

The Zapatistas' conception of land as a critical element of democratic self-determination is also reflected in their demand for the reversal of the amendment former President Carlos Salinas made to Article 27 of the Mexican constitution. According to an EZLN communiqué:

> Article 27 of the Magna Carta must respect the original spirit of Emiliano Zapata; the land is for the indigenous people and *campesinos* who work it". Not for the *latifundistas*. We want, as is established in our revolutionary agricultural law, the

> great quantity of land that is currently in the hands of big ranchers and national and foreign landowners to pass into the hands of our people, who suffer from a total lack of land (1995b:157).

Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution was a victory for *campesinos* who wished to expand the realm of rural citizenship rights. It established the right to petition for land, and put forth the basis of an alternate form of rural social organization. Article 27 defined land and natural resources as a social good rather than a private market good, and gave the state the right to distribute these goods in the interest of the public good. The Roman Legal principle of unrestricted access to land and property was rejected in favor of an approach which recognized that land and other resources had a non-market, social function (Arzipe & Botey, 1987:68). Although a private land sector was allowed, peasants had the constitutional right to appeal to the state to receive a piece of land, to be redistributed from the private holdings which exceeded legal limits.

As discussed in Chapter 3, "social property" could be of two types: agrarian communities and *ejidos*. The recognition of the importance of communal forms of property holdings in Article 27 institutionalized the right of indigenous communities to organize their farming systems according to tradition, rather than being forced into a larger system of capitalist ownership and production. When *ejidos* were originally conceived, *campesinos* saw them not just as a form of communal production, but as a socio-cultural unit as well. They were viewed as a way to preserve indigenous community's cultures, and provide space for members who were not economically productive (Arzipe & Botey, 1987:67).

In short, this amendment was a partial, yet major discursive victory for Emiliano Zapata and his *campesino* army. Although it institutionalized a strong role for the state as arbitrator over land, it brought land into the realm of democratic citizenship rights. It gave peasants the right to petition for land, and set forth the basis of an alternative sector to private capitalist agriculture where indigenous communities could be more self-determining. The extent to which these formal rights were fulfilled was a different matter. The Article did not eliminate the power of large landowners who kept core, productive areas of their estates intact, and distributed only marginal lands (Barry, 1995:20).

As discussed in Chapter Three, the principal idea of the amendment to Article 27, introduced by President Salinas in November of 1992, was to end the state's commitment to land reform, and encourage the privatization and capitalization of *ejido* land. Even though the right to land was not always enabled under the Mexican state's development model, now a retraction of the right itself was taking place. Peasants lost the constitutional right to simply request land from the state. In the process, they also lost the legal basis from which to protest inequality of resource distribution, as well as the basis for an alternative form of social organization which allowed greater self-determination. The amendment to Article 27 of the constitution is an outstanding example of top-down policy-making, and an important factor in the continuing absence of self-determination for *campesinos*. The amendment was also described by Marcos as the most "powerful catalyst in the communities", since it "canceled all legal possibilities of their holding land" (Zapatistas! 1995: ch. 5 p.141)

The EZLN's demands for economic justice and land are part of a vision of democracy where indigenous communities not only have negative liberty, but they also have the material conditions which allow them to determine the course of their lives. Such expanded rural citizenship rights might include many of the EZLN demands: the right to a piece of land, the right to adequate health care and education, the right to adequate nutrition.

The existence of formal rights is important, as seen in the struggle against the amendment to Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution. But formal rights mean little if the material conditions needed to fulfill these formal rights are non-existent. The Zapatistas see the democratic state not just an instrument to protect property-holding rights and individual liberty, but they see it as a necessary mechanism to promote economic justice for all rural citizens - a justice which will allow self-determination for indigenous communities and impoverished *campesinos*.

But the national state may have difficulty acting to promote emancipation in the form of self-determination if its efforts are blocked by strong supra-national powers. As scholar of rural 'underdevelopment' Wim Wertheim notes, "experience has taught us that for the underdeveloped agrarian countries of the Third World, living under the impact of

foreign capitalism in general has highly unfavourable effects", leaving "little scope for emancipation for the rural poor" (1992:272).

EZLN communiqués clearly identify international barriers to emancipation, and make reference to the idea of self-determination on an international level. Marcos noted that when the communities finally made the decision to go to war, they stated their reasons clearly: "What we don't agree with is the selling of our country to foreign interest" (Zapatistas! 1995: ch. 5 p.141). The EZLN demands that the democratic state be a mechanism of citizen demands, rather than an instrument of international capital. They frequently compare the PRI regime to the *Porfiriato*, where Mexico's elite was closely tied to U.S. capital. In an interview Marcos stated:

> Evidently it's about the Mexican country being up for sale to the "modern world" and Mr. Zedillo has become a sales agent, someone who is visiting other countries and other possible buyers to show a product that includes not just oil, in this case, the case of Mexico, but also the people and the history. What they did in that meeting was to bargain about the conditions of the merchandise that is now offered that includes almost 100 million Mexicans and many centuries of history and many years of being independent, almost 200 years of independence...The big money of North America wants to buy the whole country and wants to know the condition of the merchandise (Chiapas95, April 2, 1997).

The EZLN demand for national autonomy is also reflected in their demand that NAFTA be renegotiated to respect the indigenous traditions of rural self-sufficiency, instead of mandating that *campesinos* serve as labour inputs for a program of international trade in agricultural products. NAFTA, which will allow the free importation of cheap U.S. corn, will destroy the the already precarious basis for subsistence maize agriculture in the region[13] (Cockburn, 1994:22; Young, 1995:51). A key EZLN demand is,

> [r]evision of the North American Free Trade Agreement signed with Canada and the United States, given that in its current state it does not take into consideration the indigenous populations and sentences them to death for the crime of having no job qualifications whatsoever (Marcos, 1995b:157).

Having looked at the ways in which the EZLN demand democratic self-determination at a communal, state, and international level, it is necessary to provide some qualifications on the idea that the armed EZLN uprising is a pro-democratic force.

c. the paradox of viewing the Zapatistas as a pro-democratic force

> That is why we became soldiers: so that one day soldiers will not be needed. We chose this suicidal path of a profession whose purpose is to disappear: soldiers who are soldiers so that one day no one will have to be a solider.
>
> Subcomandante Marcos, on the first day of the San Andrés Dialogue

Before the Zapatista uprising, many on the left declared that the age of armed uprising was over and gone. Out went the Guevera model of the guerrilla *foco*, and in came new social movements, frequently posited as the new, powerful weapons of social change. Prominent Latin American scholars like Jorge Castañeda deemed the military tradition a cold-war vestige, an artifact that the left must disown given the perceived incompatibility between armed struggle and democracy (Hammond, 1995:115).

The Zapatista uprising suggests that it may not be so simple to draw a clean line between armed uprising and democracy. The *Zapatista* uprising has been remarkable precisely for its galvanization of pro-democratic forces in Mexico. They have been credited for motivating a renewed democratic spirit, and a sense that change is possible. Jorge Regalado, University of Guadalarjara professor who studies social movements, speaks of "a milestone where for the first time in Mexico's history, there is a sense that as individuals we can make a difference..." (Chiapas-95, May 1/97).

The paradox of the *Zapatistas*' pro-democratic struggles is that they are also an armed uprising. They demand democracy, but they demand it while holding guns. They are a military movement which has mobilized civil society, and strengthened the pro-democratic side of the equation in rural areas of Southern Mexico.

This paradox has not gone unnoticed by the *Zapatistas* themselves. Marcos spoke of the "absurdity of a civilian movement in dialogue with an armed one" at the National Democratic Convention held in *Zapatista* territory at Aguascalientes, Chiapas, which in itself was a "joint military/civilian effort" - a "peaceful effort by armed people" (1995b:243). Because of this paradox, the EZLN refused to admit delegates who saw

armed struggle as the only alternative. They also refused to play a role in the collective leadership of the Convention, Marcos stating that "this is a convention that is looking for a peaceful road to change and should not be led by armed people" (1995b:247). The armed route at the convention must step aside, indicating that ultimately the EZLN would subordinate itself to a legitimate democratic government. Marcos stated:

> It is not our time now, it is not the hour of arms. We have moved to one side, but we are not gone...The only deadlines for the EZLN are the ones that are determined by the peaceful, civic mobilizations. We subordinate ourselves to them, and if called upon to do so, we will even disappear as an alternative (1995b:250).

Even though the EZLN supported democracy from the beginning, choosing the paradox of military strategy was risky. Recognizing these risks is important. These risks caution against glamorization of a military approach to democracy[14], and remind us that 'using war to bring peace' is in fact a paradox in the true sense of the word: an absurdity that contains truth - a self-contradiction. As Marcos notes:

> There is a risk that the government might be able to politically isolate us on a national level, to present us as desperate extremists, intransigents, all those descriptions that are currently floating around. There is a risk that civil society might say: 'Yes, long live peace, death to the extremists', and leave us alone. (Zapatistas! 1995: ch. 5 p.141)

In a letter to Citizen Attorney Mario Robledo in Michoacán, the CCRI-CG describes the paradox of being forced to take up arms, but at the same time realizing that armed struggle is incongruent with the goal of peaceful democratic processing of conflict:

> We see that being only good and polite changes nothing. We see that we must take up arms. All this we see, and so have we done...But we also see that it is not only through the mouth of a gun that we will achieve liberty. We see that many other mouths must open and shout so that the powerful tremble. We see that the struggles are many, and those who walk in struggle are on many colors and use many tongues. And we see that we are not alone. And we see that we do not die alone. (1995b:123).

This paradox was exemplified in Marcos' speech to the National Democratic Convention. During the opening ceremony, the *Zapatista* soldiers marched in with white ribbons wrapped around the end of their weapons. Marcos explained, that:

> Those ribbons signify the purpose of our weapons; they are not arms to be used in confrontation with civil society. Those ribbons on the guns represent, like

> everything else here, a paradox: *weapons that aspire to uselessness* (1995b:242, emphasis mine).

To understand this paradox, it is necessary to make two observations. First, throughout Latin America formally democratic governments have been highly repressive, and even authoritarian. Second, we need to recognize the specific violence and oppression that pervades the Chiapan landscape.

To many observers, the 1980s was a decade of great hope and promise for the countries 'transiting' to democracy. Slater writes, "In Latin America, by the middle of the 1980s democratization had become as crucial as revolution had been halfway through the 1960s" (1994:2). This may have been the lost 'decade of development,[15] but democracy was frequently seen as a prolific, irresistible movement, capable of pulling even the most 'backwards' developing countries into its wake. In the words of Francis Fukuyama, "socialism has inexorably given way to capitalism. Meanwhile, capitalism and democracy have found a way of coexisting, indeed, of reinforcing one another." (1992:100).

The question remains, however, to what extent these new 'democracies' were, and are actually democratic. To many living in these countries, the new 'democracies' appear hollow, more subject to IMF control than input from the popular sectors. As Hammond notes, during the time when Latin America 'transited' to formal democracy, poverty statistics doubled and the real minimum wage fell by 13% on average, and a staggering 43% in Mexico and Brazil (Hammond, 1995:115). No Latin American country has yet achieved growth with equity; it seems that growth orchestrated by the neoliberal model of social development consistently came at the expense of the poor and the marginalized (*ibid*). Moisés called this the Latin American paradox: the decade of the 1980s was characterized by a transition away from overt authoritarianism, yet these years also saw the worsening of social and economic conditions for the majorities of these countries populations (as in Slater, 1994:22).

Black argues that the spread of electoral ("input") democracy was possible:

> precisely because those whose interests would be most threatened by egalitarianism did not feel threatened by the US-marketed election-as-spectacle approach to democracy, with its soaring costs and sinking value (1993:545).

It may seem that the new Latin American democracies represent what Black calls "the victory of form over substance", and are less indicative of genuine movements towards popular participation in government (1993:545).[16] No matter what kind of faith you hold in democratic values, it seems important to recognize that popularly elected governments exist alongside autocratic leadership, worsening civil liberties, guerilla warfare, growing impoverishment, and the increasing closure of state structures to societal inputs. We might ask whether these elections represent an exit of authoritarianism, or are they formalities disguising a reality of non-democratic power structures?[17]

The examples of formal Latin American democracies clearly suggest that elections are not a sufficient condition to alter the highly inegalitarian power structures of Latin American nations. Pushing for fair elections may be part of the struggle for democracy, but should not be seen as a democratic panacea. Parekh notes that a peaceful revolution may be possible in principle, "as a matter of historical fact every revolution has involved varying degrees of violence", since "dominant groups rarely abdicate voluntarily, and violence is needed to overthrow them" (1992b:106).

The particularly violent and pernicious situation in Chiapas made it even more difficult to believe that movement towards democracy and social change would occur easily, and without bloodshed. Stephens writes:

> While Chiapas shares its poverty and discrimination against its indigenous inhabitants with other states, such as Oaxaca and Guerrero, it is distinguished from the rest of Mexico by a brutal style of governing that is intolerant of opposition or even of efforts at improving the living conditions of the indigenous population (1995:90).

In response to the uprising, the government brought massive military force into the area. U.S. military aid to Mexico has been tremendous (Willson, 1997). Local *caciques* have hired their own private military forces: *Chinchulines* (the PRI shock troops), the notorious *Paz y Justicia* (Peace & Justice), and the *Guardias Blancas* (who have existed since the 1920s, and was formed by cattle ranchers and land owners to prevent agrarian reform in Chiapas) (Chiapas95, April 11/97). Unemployed indigenous youths are offered relatively lucrative bribes to participate in these groups, and are trained on the myriad army bases in the area (*ibid*). These groups are used to terrorize *Zapatista*

families and supporters until they are forced to flee from their communities. In fact the roots of the EZLN are in the alliances formed between *campesino* self-defense squads organized to keep the *Guardias Blancas* out of communal lands (Ross, 1995:11).

On top of this violence, peaceful protest efforts appeared innocuous, consistently stymied by the extreme corruption of elites. As Marcos noted:

> Nobody can say, 'no, you should have tried elections'....how can it be that the State of Chiapas had the highest percentage of votes in favor of PRI and that it has the highest percentage of guerrillas? That contrast points to electoral fraud of gigantic proportions. (Zapatistas! 1995: ch. 5 p.141, la Jornada interview).

Major Ana María also describes this frustration with non-violent protest and empty promises:

> ...we could not find any other way out of this situation. We had spent years struggling peacefully, we held marches, we had meetings, we went to the municipal palaces and the Government Palace, and we went to Mexico [City] to the National Palace of Mexico to shout, to ask, to agitate in front of the government. They never paid attention to us. They always gave us papers full of promises. Then, what good is a piece of paper, filled with promises, to us? And we would look at that paper when we went back to our towns. We would read the papers and the promises and nothing ever came. Or, with that Pronasol they sent some thing, they ordered a clinic built, but they left it half-built. They left buildings, with no medicine, no doctors. What good is a building, a house like that, to us? Or, for example, we asked for schools. The only thing they did, that work of Solidaridad, was that they sent paint and they painted the school, and they painted "Solidaridad on the wall. But they did nothing else. They didn't send teachers, they didn't send materials...None of that came. They were nothing but promises. (Zapatistas! 1995: ch. 8 p.227)

Even liberation theology, a project of peaceful change had its limits in bringing justice for the *campesinos*. Marcos reports:

> What happened is that the Church-led projects failed, and the *compañeros* realized that even this strategy didn't offer them many options. If they organized into cooperatives, they get harassed, and the cooperatives are broken. If they organize themselves to ask for land, they are rejected. If they organize to take over the land, they are killed. They don't have good health; they're dying. That's the source of the "boom," the source of thousands of Zapatistas (Zapatistas! 1995: ch. 5 p.141).

Extreme violence, combined with the inefficacy of traditional means of protest, made the *Zaptistas* feel that they were left no other option but rise in arms to fight for democracy. An EZLN communique describes this decision, while recognizing that it is

not necessarily the right decision for all Mexicans:

> In fact, we organized ourselves this way because we were not left any other way. The EZLN salutes the honest and necessary development of all independent and progressive organizatios that fight for freedom, democracy, and justice for the entire nation (1995b:93).

Even though they see armed struggle as only part of an emancipatory process, at the National Democratic Convention, Marcos made clear that the EZLN did "not regret rising up in arms against the federal government" (1995b:247). He stated unequivocally that more blood would be shed if necessary for the future of democracy:

> ...we say again that they left us no other way, and that we neither deny our armed path nor our covered faces, that we do not lament our dead, that we are proud of them and that we are ready to shed more blood and suffer more deaths if that is the price we must pay for democratic change in Mexico (*ibid*).

Looking at the violence perpetrated by socialist regimes throughout history, Parekh concludes that for a revolution to maintain legitimacy by promising to introduce a human social order, it cannot rely on violence alone, and must have alternate strategies to armed struggle (1992b:107). He writes, "a revolution requires violence: at the same time it is constantly tempted to misuse it, and runs the risk of losing its legitimacy and sense of direction. Every theory of revolution therefore needs a well-considered theory of violence" (*ibid*).

The EZLN fulfill Parekh's criteria of a "well-considered theory of violence" to an impressive degree. Although the ELZN felt that armed struggle was an appropriate path for them, they do not see it as the singular key to unlock emancipation, and they do not hold the seizure of state power as the objective. In an interview Marcos explained:

> We don't understand armed struggle in the classic sense of the previous guerrillas. That is, we do not see armed struggle as a single path, as one single almighty truth around which everything else spins. Instead, from the start, we have seen armed struggle as one in a series of processes or forms of struggle that are themselves subject to change; sometimes one is more important and at times another is more important (Zapatistas! 1995: ch. 5 p.141)

Although the EZLN believe armed uprising was necessary, they use violence with caution, and vigorously support non-violent, educational tools of struggle. For example, in December of 1994 the EZLN launched a new, "nonviolent" military offensive in

Chiapas with the help of the civilian population. Overnight, over half of Chiapas became "*Zapatista* territory". No shots were fired, and 38 municipalities remain under *Zapatista* control.

Although the *Zapatista* felt that their only option was violence, they also do not require that all those supporting democracy, freedom and justice take up arms. In one communiqué they explicitly name their respect for all "independent and honest organizations of Chiapas and all of Mexico" (1995b;90). They note that they:

> ...have always respected and will continue to respect different honest and independent organizations...We respect your form of struggle; we salute your independence and honesty, as long as they are authentic. We have taken up arms because they left us no other choice. You have our support if you continue on your own road, because we are struggling for the same thing, and the land that gives life and struggle belongs to all of us....We will continue to respect you and your forms of struggle (1995b:90-91).

Another communiqué from the CCRI-CG of the EZLN writes:

> Our form of struggle is not the only one; for many it may not even be an acceptable one. Other forms of struggle exist and have great value. Our organization is not the only one, for many it may not even be a desirable one. Other honest, progressive, and independent organizations exist and have great value. The Zapatista Army of National Liberation has never claimed that its form of struggle is the only legitimate one. It's just the only one we were left. (1995b:92).

Although the *Zapatistas* take up arms, they can still be thought of as a pro-democratic force because of their unwavering support for democracy. The idea that the democratic process is comprised of pluralistic groups in democratic struggle is reflected in the EZLN comments made on the importance of Mexican civil society, an importance which even surpasses the importance they give to themselves. Marcos writes:

> The current peace process is driven not by the political will of the federal government or by our supposed political-military force..but rather by the firm action of what is called Mexican civil society. And the future actions of Mexican civil society, not the will of government or the force of our arms, will determine the possibilities of democratic change in Mexico (1995b:86).

To understand the paradox of an armed pro-democratic force, it is useful to think of the *Zapatista* uprising not as an armed overthrow of state, but as a *pedagogical* military action. The specific objective of armed, violent uprising was to inform, to raise

consciousness, not to conquer the state. Marcos describes their pedagogical military strategy in these words:

> [Intellectuals] are right when they say that things exist only when they are named. Until someone names it, Chiapaneco death doesn't exist. But now it exists....[Zapatistas] named it by dying [in military struggle], because no matter what, we were dying. It wasn't until you turned around to see, the press that is, that you named it...We didn't go to war on January 1 to kill or to be killed. *We went to war to make ourselves heard.* (Zapatistas! 1995: ch. 5 p.141, emphasis mine).

Perhaps armed uprising was the most effective method of pedagogy available to them, given the paucity of other resources. An early communiqué reads:

> On January 1st of this year, our *Zapatista* troops began a series of political-military actions whose *primary objective was to inform* the Mexican people and the rest of the world about the miserable conditions in which millions of Mexicans, especially us, the indigenous people, live and die....with these actions we also let the world know of our decision to fight for our most elementary rights in the only way that the governmental authorities have left us: armed struggle (1995b:55, emphasis mine).

On the first day of the dialogue for peace, Marcos explained again the primary pedagogical motivation underlying the uprising:

> And we want to ask [the country] again, through you: Why is it necessary to kill an die, to get you, and through you, the world, to listen to Ramona here say such terrible things as that Indigenous women want to live, want to study, want hospitals, medicine, schools, food, respect, justice, dignity?...*What is happening in this country that makes it necessary to kill and die in order to say a few small, true words without seeing them lost in the void?* We came to the city armed with the truth and with fire, to speak through violence on the first of this year. Today we return to the city to speak again, but not with fire... (Zapatistas! 1995: ch. 8 p.213, emphasis mine).

And in part, the pedagogical objective of the uprising was accomplished, remembering that the Zapatista objective was not to take over the state. As Marcos noted:

> ...we weren't expecting the Mexican people to say: 'Oh, look, the Zapatistas have taken up arms, let's join in', and that then they would grab kitchen knives and go after the first policeman they found. We believed that the people would respond as they did, that they would say, 'Something is wrong in this country, something has to change'. ((Zapatistas! 1995: ch. 5 p.141).

In an interview Marcos recognized the success of the EZLN strategy of armed struggle:

> This approach has worked. Proof of its effectiveness can be found in the changes that have taken place since the first of January. The federal government's sudden attention to Indian questions comes only after the first of January. The cult of social-liberalism and everything it implies has been suddenly set aside...all of a sudden, the success of the Mexican economy is being questioned...We have a clear sense of the uprising's impact, and we think that non-militarized organizations at the national level also understand that these changes are a product of the armed uprising of desperation (Zapatistas! 1995: ch. 5 p.141).

Perhaps the most poetic way of describing the paradox of pedagogical armed uprising is in the phrase Marcos uses to describe the EZLN: "tender fury". The following passage aptly demonstrates the subtlety and sophistication of this paradox. The paradox is that the *Zapatista* chose death because death was their only choice, and they hope that through their death, more peaceful democratic movements may live and growth. As Marcos said on the first day of the dialogue for peace:

> Whatever happens, we know that we all have contributed something to this long, painful, historical beginning. Love and pain not only rhyme ["*amor y dolor*" in Spanish], they go together and they travel together. That is why we are soldiers who want to stop being soldiers because the dead of yesterday and of tomorrow, the living of today and of always - all those we call the people and the country, those who have nothing, the eternal losers in the face of tomorrow, we who have no name, we who have no face - can grow the powerful tree of love, a wind that cleans and that heals; not small and selfish love, grand love, the love that makes better and makes great (Zapatistas! 1995: ch. 8 p.215).

An armed struggle for democracy is less of an oddity when one recognizes that death is seen as inevitable for the impoverished *Zapatista* communities: "anguish will never find peace; never more will we be able to rest our bones and blood' (1995b:199). In Marcos' words:

> Zapatista Army of National Liberation. Tender fury that arms itself. Unnameable name. Unjust peace that becomes war. Death that is born. Anguish made hope. Pain that laughs. Silences screams. One's own present for another's future. Everything for everyone; for ourselves nothing. The unnameable, we, the forever dead...Dying, death lives. (1995b:197).

To reiterate, the Zapatistas' armed uprising is a pro-democratic force, albeit a paradoxical one. It demands a broader, substantive vision of democracy, not just the right to vote. The Zapatistas vision of democracy is not one of greater welfare handouts, or simply clean elections. It is based on the demand for autonomy and self-determination

for indigenous peoples and Mexico's impoverished *campesinos*. It respects the importance of democratic procedures, but does not seem them as simply a means to an end of rational, efficacious governance. Democracy is important as an end in itself, a value, a normative reference point mandating self-determination at a communal, national, and international level. Ultimately, the Zapatista conception of democracy highlights the fundamental weaknesses of a minimalist interpretation of democracy, and suggested the limits of seeing democracy simply as a rational method of leadership selection.

1. Although the question of democracy is often limited to the sphere of positivist political science in North America, it seems important to note the much broader importance of questions of democracy for Latin American intellectuals. Beverley and Ovideo write that the theme of democratization has been a critical one for Latin American think tanks and networks who have faced the "problem of the long-term viability of democratic construction in Latin America, particularly in the face of the worst economic crisis it has experiences in this century" (1995:6). Democracy is not always approached in the tradition of North American positivism, but acts as a central theme in discussions of subjectivity, identity, and understanding of religious, cultural, and ethnic heterogeneity. Beverley and Ovideo write that "the theme of democratization has played the same role in the Latin American discussion of postmodernism as the shift in aesthetic-epistemological paradigms did in Anglo-European postmodernism" (1995:5-6).

2. For an example of such an approach, see the highly influential multi-volume set on democracy in the developing world by Diamond. Linz, and Lipset (1989).

3. Francis Fukuyama is perhaps the most blatant adherent of such an approach. In his essay on "Capitalism and Democracy", he equates the minimalizst Anglo-Saxon paradigm with an ideal model of democratization to argue that capitalism and economic growth are essential preconditions to democracy (1992). He also suggests that Western democratic ideals may not be suitable in Asia, because the "traditional group hierarchies" which pervade all Confucian societies make democracy [based on individualism] less appropriate than "soft" authoritarianism (1992:109).

4. The case of Venezuela - where formal democratic procedures existed but the potential for substantive reform was limited by elite pacts - demonstrates that the mere existence of democratic formalities does not root democratic ideals firmly in popular political culture. After an attempted coup was defeated in 1993, the popular classes displayed a profound ambivalence towards the restoration of democracy, suggesting that a conception of democracy based solely on electoral procedures in insufficient, and not necessarily emancipatory.

5. The concept of a contested democratic space is inspired by an argument made by Michael Kearney, in an article on the border area between the United States and Mexico (1991). Kearney argues that the U.S. - Mexican border represents a contested space, where meanings of nation, culture, and society are struggled over. This contested space is particularly due to the fluid movement of people across the supposedly fixed boundaries between nations, but it is also rendered ambiguous by the unresolved nature of the viewers themselves. Kearney is more specifically referring to the gaze of the American anthropologist who studies Mexican border crossers. He argues that the notion of borders themselves is contested because of the decomposition of the epistemological basis of anthropology, which rests on Anthropological Self studying Ethnographic Other.

6. One notable exception is the special issue in the Journal of Development Studies (Vol 26. No. 4. 1990), edited by Jonathan Fox, focusing on "The Challenge of Rural Democratization". 6.

7. More disturbing and overt examples of the academics' tendency to marginalize democratic issues for rural peoples also exist. Riordon Roett, a Johns Hopkins professor of Latin American Studies and former president of the LASA (Latin American Studies Association) inadvertently demonstrated the extent to which mainstream academic institutions are a) not interested in promoting democracy at a substantive level, and b) operating to maintain a political and economic system of extreme injustice and inequality. As a consultant for Chase Manhattan Bank, Roett sent a now famous, four page report to a number of U.S. senators, including Bob Dole, which was accidently leaked to the press. In this memo he wrote,

> There are three areas in which the current monetary crisis can undermine political stability in Mexico. The first is Chiapas; the second is the upcoming state elections; and the third is the role of the labor unions...*The government will need to eliminate the Zapatistas to demonstrate their effective control of the national territory and of security policy...The Zedillo administration will*

need to consider carefully whether or not to allow opposition victories if fairly won at the ballot box (FZLN, emphasis mine).

When members of LASA attempted to make a statement distancing themselves from the views expressed by the former president, the members of the board refused to allow the statement to be made (*ibid*).

8. As recently as 1979 all governments in developing countries made a commitment to equitable land distribution and elimination of rural under-nutrition oat the World conference on Agrarian Reform in Rome (El-Ghonemy, 1995:13).

9. One mild example is the Reagan administration devised "Project Democracy", and the "Democracy Program"; programs used to promote a vision of the U.S. as 'global carrier' of democratic values, and promote what Samuel Huntington called, "democratic institutions in other societies" (as in Slater, 1994:21).

10. In this section I can only make suggestions on the nature of a revised conception of citizenship, rather than definitive conclusions. Why? Because many of the writings of the EZLN are written by Subcomandante Marcos, and although his words are approved by the governing committee of the EZLN, it would be wrong to equate his letters with the general opinion on democracy held by all indigneous people involved in the *Zapatista* struggle. As Frank Bardacke cautions, 'Marcos is a master pamphleteer writing in the midst of war" (1995:255). His job is to "inspire, mobilize, amuse, touch, anger", and "move people to action" - not to work on developing fully developed theories (*ibid*).

11. Although there is a long list of peasant organizations, most *campesinos* do not participate in any political organization, and in particular, do not participate in any opposition organization (Harvey, 1990:42). When Salinas passed the controversial amendment to Article 27, which ended the state's historical commitment to land redistribution and opened the door to *ejido* privatization, he did not bother to consult the recently formed network of peasant organizations (CAP) which he brought together to supposedly give input into agricultural policy (Foley, 1995:67). Their severe reaction against the proposed amendment was completely disregarded, and the amendment passed with only two weeks debate in the legislature.

12. This democratic interpretation was also evident at the CND. During the first meeting democracy was defined as the "participation of civil society in its own governance by identifying a project of nation building", rather than as a mere act of voting. (Stephens, 1995:96).

13. Optimistic analysts, using aggregate data, argue that increased employment in fruit and vegetable production will offset the loss of jobs by small maize producers. There are several problems with this prediction, as Young notes (1995:51-53). *Campesino* agriculture uses minimal capital and technology, and will not likely to attract investment capital which will instead flow towards the already prosperous capitalist enterprises. In addition most fruit and vegetable production is in the northwest of Mexico, where maize production is minimal; conversely, maize production is more common in central and southern states like Chiapas, where the soil and technological requirements do not easily facilitate crop transference. A *campesino* family growing dry-land maize, without irrigation could not switch to asparagus production, even as the relative prices changed and irrigation infrastructure was provided. Such a family lacks the credit necessary to purchase costly inputs for asparagus production, and would have no way of weathering the three to five years it takes for the plants to become productive.

14. At the same time that there are risks to a military strategy, there is also the possibility that the Zapatistas' military survival and successes could set an example for, and galvanize other armed uprisings. Marcos complains that there is a deliberate effort to *not* publicize the military aspect of the uprising, and stay with the consensus that armed uprising and democracy are fundamentally incompatible.

> It seems clear to me that there is consensus among the government, all of you [the press], and civil society that the world has to be shown that military alternatives are not a viable option. I don't know

why. The January offensive demonstrated that it's possible to carry out sizable military operations if a series of conditions are present, and that military knowledge need not be drawn from traditional guerrilla or Central American guerrilla tactics. Rather, it can be drawn from our country's own history. I don't think anyone wants to deal with that (Zapatistas! 1995: ch. 5 p.141).

15. In the 1980s - the decade of democratization - Latin America experienced a GNP/capita growth rate of negative 8% (Black, 1993:545).

16. The Peruvian experience with democracy presents a puzzle for optimistic predilections about the new democratic transitions. Elections have been held five times since 1980, which according to some democratization theorists, is a sufficient condition for democratic consolidation (McClintock, 1989:126). Despite the enthusiasm of academic onlookers, in the years following the resumption of elections in 1980 there have been myriad signs suggesting that the Peruvian political system is still marked by authoritarian tendencies. Despite the popular sector's new-found ability to choose their own government, they had little success channelling their demands into the policy-making process or encouraging redistributive economic programs. Elections did not lead to opening up the policy-making process, but rather, policy was increasingly made by executive decree. The formal existence of a democratic government did not bring a method of peacefully resolving political conflict, but instead existed alongside internecine guerilla warfare which took the lives of over 20,000 people (Mauceri, 1995:25). By 1990, more than half of the country was living under military rule (Mauceri, 1991:90). One observer commented that because of the direct clash of social forces and the lack of legitimate means of resolution, Peruvian society could only be described as Praetorian (Graham, 1992:3).

17. The answer from the American political science establishment is highly revealing: Samuel Huntington's advises that democracy cannot solve substantive issues, and must instead be thought of as a mechanism for the populace to replace leaders (as in Graham, 1992:5).

SOME TENTATIVE CONCLUSIONS...

> And all of you, what are you going to do?
> Subcomandante Marcos. February 4/94

As I stated in the introduction, I have not attempted to write the last word on emancipation. Instead, my goal in this thesis has been to act as a sort of intellectual midwife, nurturing emancipatory themes which have been badly neglected in our current Western intellectual climate. As shown in my analysis of modern and postmodern conceptions of emancipation in Part I, the tendency towards totalizing and Eurocentric analysis persists, even in the most intellectually sophisticated variants of modern and postmodern theory.

The Zapatista case-study has served to demonstrate where certain theoretical approaches fall short, and what emancipatory themes maintain relevance. The theme of *hope* is an important one in this thesis. The reason I have focused on the term 'emancipation' is because of its connections with elements of critique and resistance, as well as an element of moving beyond, transcending, dreaming of a different future.

The EZLN call themselves 'professionals of hope', and indeed their words and actions provide tremendous inspiration and reason for hope. While some intellectuals have capitulated to despair, the Zapatista rebels have maintained their struggle. They have incorporated democratic organization into a military structure. They have risked their lives in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds. They have conducted vast democratic experiments in the midst of tremendous suffering and violent terrorization by public and private military forces. The EZLN has resisted dogmatism, and remained open to new possibilities: forming a civilian organization in response to popular demands, organizing a national democratic convention in the middle of the rainforest, and resisting cynicism even while the spotlight of the international media capriciously drifted elsewhere.

The theme of praxis has also played a prominent role in this thesis. Removed, detached theorizing has serious limitations as we approach the twentieth century. In Part I of this work I concentrated on the theoretical backdrop to the issue of emancipation, and

outlined some of the problems created by intellectuals locked in the important, yet highly abstract modernity/postmodernity debates. In Part II, I offered the work of Paulo Freire as an inspiring, grounded counter-point.

Sociologists may look to their own history for examples of grounded theory. The traditions of social activism present within the discipline should be explored and celebrated. W.E.B. DuBois, for example, (who interestingly, is not usually listed as one of the founding fathers of sociology) was one of the first to combine the role of sociologist with that of social reformer, collecting data on race relations as well as working to improve the conditions of African-Americans in the United States.

Another theme which I have focused on in this thesis is the need for both plurality and solidarity. Because of my respect for multiplicity, I cannot purport to have the produced the final word on emancipation. What I can suggest is that we pay attention to important emancipatory touchstones such as democracy. On these points we can enjoy solidarity, even if it is provisional, dynamic, and imperfect, at the same time we are respectful of the different interpretations and ways of organizing around these values. On these points we can be explicit about the values we hold, and strive towards acts of solidarity based on these values.

Listening to the words of the Zapatista rebels, and other social movements both within our national borders and beyond, can both inspire, and act as a counterpart in dialogue. The very nature of dialogue demands that emancipatory reference points be formed through a process of dialogue with social movements, and not by introverted academic analysis. Through dialogue, our understanding of social movements and emancipatory theory expands. This was shown clearly in Chapter 7, where I demonstrated how the Zapatista rebels' conception of democracy widens the scope normally considered by Western political science.

The Zapatista rebels explicitly ask for solidarity and dialogue around emancipatory touchstones like democracy. Our current intellectual climate however, is characterized by modernists who prioritize reason as a way of producing values, and by postmodernists who display scepticism toward the idea of values used beyond the locality.

I have argued that the only way to stand in dialogical solidarity with emancipatory groups being studied is to make one's value position as explicit as possible. I have also argued that a modern faith in rationality is an insufficient substitute for an explicit commitment to emancipatory values like equality and democracy. To renounce all values is not only Eurocentric and totalizing, but it misleadingly implies that it is possible to objectively step outside one's emotional, historical and intellectual subjectivity. Anti-foundationalist theorists such as Stanley Fish teach us that not only is this impossible, but it takes attention away from our efforts to understand what social values are important and why.

There are no easy answers, especially in an age when the powerful forces of neoliberalism seem insurmountable. Just a modicum of self-reflection combined with observation of a practical emancipatory struggle like the Zapatistas, however, will remind academic specialists that surrendering to despair is not a universal trend, nor is it a luxury that everyone can afford.

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