

DEMOCRATIZING DEMOCRACY

Beyond the Liberal Democratic Canon

Reinventing Social Emancipation:
Toward New Manifestos

VOLUME 1



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PREFACE

Ours is a paradoxical time. On the one hand, it is a time of great advances and amazing changes, dramatically brought about by the information and communication revolutions and the revolutions in electronics, genetics, and biotechnology. On the other hand, however, it is a time of disquieting regressions, a return of the social evils that appeared to have been or about to be overcome. The return of slavery and slavish work; the return of high vulnerability to old sicknesses that seemed to have been eradicated and appear now linked to new pandemics like HIV/AIDS; the return of the revolting social inequalities that gave their name to the social question at the end of the nineteenth century; in sum, the return of the specter of war, perhaps now more than ever a world war, although whether cold or not is as yet undecidable. The paradox resides in the following. On the one hand, the technical conditions to fulfill the promises of Western modernity appear today to be finally in place; on the other hand, it has become increasingly obvious that such promises were never farther from being fulfilled than today. The promises of liberty, equality, solidarity, and peace, heralded by Western modernity, constituted the major legacy of what came to be designated as social emancipation. Modern political struggles focused on the conception of such promises and on the ways to fulfill them or, on the contrary, on the ways to prevent their fulfillment. Thereby occurred the division between capitalists and socialists, liberals and Marxists, reformists and revolutionaries, nationalists and internationalists. For different reasons (at least apparently), such divisions today seem anachronistic or incapable of accounting for the cleavages that traverse the world. The difference between capitalists and socialists appears to have been totally and irretrievably resolved in favor of the capitalists. Moreover, if one considers that neoliberalism, contrary to what is commonly maintained, is not a new form of liberalism but rather a new form of conservatism, both liberalism and Marxism seem to be undergoing