

**PRESENTATION**

**SPECIAL EDITION “MARXISM AND CRITICAL THEORY”<sup>1</sup>**

Marxism and Critical Theory derive from a long and broad intellectual tradition that originated in the nineteenth century in the so-called “Hegelian Left” group in Berlin, which included the young student Karl Marx. This German philosopher has left us a rich theoretical-critical legacy that, from philosophy to political economy, sociology, history, psychoanalysis, etc., allows us to subject capitalist society to a substantive social critique with emancipatory interest. Nevertheless, it is in this critical spirit that the idea of this publication emerged as a special issue entitled *Marxism and Critical Theory*.

This dossier results from an editorial proposal by *Problemata - International Journal of Philosophy*, conceived in the bicentennial year of the birth of Marx. In its process of affirmation and construction, the idea has unfolded in a collective and dialogical way until it became effective in the broad representativeness of collaborators and approaches that the present issue expresses.

The volume consists of texts derived from three author profiles: professors and doctoral students from Brazil with experience of study abroad<sup>2</sup>, Latin American researchers from Argentina and Mexico, and professors of outstanding international expression who work at European universities in Germany, Italy, England, France and Portugal.

These authors include scholars and editors of Marx’s work in different languages, as well as some of the most representative authors of Critical Theory. This is in keeping with one of the aims of this edition, which is to contribute to the enhancement and expansion of the relations of dialogue and collaboration of research at the international level – in the case of this issue, especially around the dialectical thinking which inherits the Marxian legacy.

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<sup>2</sup> The internships were supported by the universities of origin – in the case of researchers who were already professors – and by various research funding agencies. Among them: CAPES, CNPq and FAPESP (Brazil); DAAD, Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and Konrad Adenauer Foundation (Germany).

## The texts

The following synopses are guided by the isonomic economy of pointing out minimal topics about which the texts are about, leaving the reader with the substantive and open task of their exploration and interpretation. Articles by international authors are sorted in descending order by the dates of their original editions. Brazilian authors are ordered by the delivery dates of their texts for editing.

Opening our collection, David McLellan presents a mapping of the ways in which the idea of communism appears in various texts along Marx's trajectory. At the same time as it seeks to highlight its changes, it also seeks to understand the degree of internal coherence of such an idea, as well as to indicate the productive scope of the Marxian conception of communism for emancipatory experiences in contemporary society.

Joachim Hirsch discusses the plural developments of Marx's intellectual heritage in the German state of Hessen, where, among others, the Institute for Social Research, the home of the so-called "Frankfurt School" or Critical Theory of Society, stood out. It critically thematizes the meaning of Marx's theory today and presents the idea of a "radical reformism" rather than the traditional formulations of Marxist theory.

Alex Demirović reflects on the validity condition of theory in Marx. It starts from the idea that theories are born in the melee clashes of social life and the problem arises of how Marxian theory deals with the contradiction of being linked to conflicts, immanently forming part of them, whereas in this it intends to affirm its claim to truth. To this end, the text also retrieves elements from Horkheimer and Foucault.

Andreas Arndt develops a critique of elements of methodology and content involved in Paschukanis' thesis on the determination of the State form by the commodity form. It questions the association of certain Marxian ideas with such a theory, rejects the prospect of the total extinction of law, and argues that it disregards the mediations necessary for social life and is based on an erasure of personality.

Mario Schäbel resumes the debate around New Marx Reading developed by members of the first generation of Critical Theory. It refutes the interpretation that class struggle did not play an important role for these authors and argues that the critique of political economy constituted its central background paradigm, from which it evaluates that Critical Theory departed with the rupture established by Habermas's thought.

Rahel Jaeggi presents an excerpt from his theory on the "critique of forms of life", the

title of his main book yet unpublished in Portuguese. It problematizes life forms as beams of social practices, as objects of criticism and problem solving instances. It discusses the normative aspect of criticism in a mediation with Hegel and emphasizes the immanent character of this critique, discarding an external orientation that would sound authoritarian.

Rolf Hecker provides an overview of Marx and Engels' basic study materials published in the fourth section of *MEGA*<sup>2</sup>. Written between the 1840s and 1870s, these documents cover various areas of knowledge and reveal the great multidisciplinary basis of Marx's work. They express the author's concern with the apprehension of phenomena in their entirety and globality, as well as in their historical and dialectical development.

Giovanni Sgro' rereads the "Unpublished Sixth Chapter" of *Capital* through a circuit of related themes between the production of commodities, surplus value and the reproduction of the capital relation. Noting that Marx considers all work that produces surplus value to be productive, he notes that this legitimizes the term *Arbeiter* as a *worker*, broader than a *factory worker*, which allows Marx's analysis to reach new and current forms of labor.

Facundo Nahuel Martín performs a meta-reading of approximation between Marx's *1844 Manuscripts* and Adorno's *Negative Dialectic*. It considers that the critique of the Hegelian dialectic takes young Marx away from an anthropocentric philosophy and the primacy of the subject. Taking up Adorno's concepts, he sees in Marx's critique elements of a negative dialectic retrieving the empirical and the natural, as well as the oppositional and the diverse.

Ferruccio Andolfi takes up Marcuse's formulations on the emancipation of labor, whose emphasis is on liberation capable of overcoming the contradiction pointed by Marx between the realm of necessity and that of freedom. And it questions whether what is called utopianism in Marcuse is not a necessary condition of denial in an age that forbids thinking about alternatives and where the left itself speaks of socialism with embarrassment.

Christoph Türcke deals with aspects of the Horkheimerian theory, giving rise to the tension of his conceptions of social change. He would invent the philosopher's thinking in order to take up in criticism the elements that contributed to the annulment of the individual and the exaltation of the ideally fascist society. He makes it clear that facing the radical diagnosis without giving in to certain temptations is a singularly challenging task.

Wolfdietrich Schmied-Kowarzik thematizes the critical philosophy of social praxis from Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach*. Criticizing limited understandings of the theory-practice relationship, as well as scientific-positivist readings, he grasps the very understanding of

praxis as part of itself as it stands in a history as a process in which individuals play an active, transformative role with solidarity.

In the subsection “Conference”, José Barata-Moura writes about aspects of the historical trajectory and critical meaning of *Capital*. It maps contents and explores related meanings of the work, which offer a key dialectic for deciphering and transforming the phenomena of the capital system. And stresses that Marx warned of criticism capable of judging and condemning, but unable to *conceive* in the dialectical sense of understanding properly to revolutionize.

The national articles begin with the work of Leonardo da Hora Pereira, who discusses the relationship between social ontology and Critical Theory. Draws attention to the need for it to reflect on its own social and ontological assumptions in order to rescue a critical social theory that takes into account the following aspects: the epistemological of its principles and methods, the sociological about the social nature of criticism, and the political, about the practical consequences of theory, or the relationship between theory and practice.

Robson Loureiro and Emerson Campos Gonçalves retrieve the authoritative personality studies developed by the Berkeley Group to substantiate a critique of neoliberalism and how it is aligned with the rise of far-right governments in Latin America as a phenomenon related to the advancement of neonazifascism worldwide.

Eduardo Soares Neves Silva and Luiz Philipe de Caux propose a reading of “Elements of anti-Semitism”, by Adorno and Horkheimer, based on an exegesis based on a double heuristic key: an interdisciplinary approach associated with a dialectical-analogical investigation of the object. The article contributes to unravel the thorny riddle of the analysis of the authors of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, encoded in the “Elements”, a text that was later added to this book.

Thiago Simim places the reading of the theory of recognition in its context of emergence, which he does inseparably from an immanent critique of this theory itself. It critically explores, in Axel Honneth’s thinking, the conditions of possibility of a theoretical perspective that allegedly transcends the paradigm of labor, as well as analyzes the scope of the relations between the principle of performance and solidarity in the author.

Rosalvo Schütz affirms Schelling’s influence on Ernst Bloch’s thought, as opposed to Habermas’s critique, for whom this would have compromised the critical character of Bloch’s theory. Emphasizes that Bloch, in fact, deepened and broadened the critical character of his theory as it approached Schelling’s thought, especially this author’s conceptions of nature in

becoming and knowledge as an open system.

Henrique Wellen analyzes, from the rescue of Marx's forms of value in *Capital*, how relations between commodities in capitalist society correspond to the phenomenical expression of social wealth, constituting parameters for determining the economic sovereignty of value. It argues that the analysis of wealth in capitalism should be approached with commodity as its main form of manifestation in this society.

Marta Maria Aragão Maciel proposes some links between the works of Ernst Bloch and Walter Benjamin, having as a touch point between the two authors the bias of a heretic Marxism, with emphasis on the critique of modernity as elaborated by each one of them, and about how their thoughts establish a symbiotic relationship. Bloch and Benjamin argued for two revolutionary projects of brushing history backwards.

Luciana Azevedo Rodrigues and Márcio Norberto Farias discuss the materiality of toys in the equipments that occupy the public spaces of the city. They start from Walter Benjamin's idea that "the toy condenses in its materiality a silent dialogue between adults and children". They associate this theoretical scheme with Christoph Türcke's philosophy of sensation and elaborate a critique of present times and its mechanisms of excessive imagetic stimuli in the virtual world.

Paulo Denisar Fraga argues that the denied potentiality of the wealth of needs is the assumption of criticism in Marx's *Manuscripts of 1844*. And that the passive-active dimension of needs constitutes an object of peculiar material-subjective nature for an critique of immanent character and open forward, since Marx, as well as Hegel, conceives of needs as multiple and historical-infinite.

Wécio Pinheiro Araújo examines the concept of fictitious capital in Marx from an ontological-dialectical reading of the third book of *Capital*. It essays an update of the mediations of Marxian critique of value for present times and shows his concept of real virtuality to explain the contradiction established between the content of social relations in the age of digitized finance and the alienated form of individuals living as real that which is virtual, under the domination of fictitious capital.

Sônia Maria Schio and Davi Inácio Nascimento problematize the conceptions of "power" and "power relations" between Michel Foucault and Axel Honneth. They address the actuality of Critical Theory as they synchronically present the transience of Foucault's concept of power in addition to a brief analysis of the reception of his thought by Honneth.

In the subsection "Comment", Luiz Gustavo da Cunha de Souza presents an expanded

review of two Honneth works: *Reification* and *Anerkennung*. It scrutinizes the structure of the theoretical design of these titles and then draws the line between the place of the concept of reification in the theory of recognition and, on the other hand, the Honnethian quest to uncover the levels at which the concept of recognition can contribute for the construction of a critical social theory.

Finally, the edition brings reviews of relevant published works on themes of Marxism and Critical Theory: by Michael Löwy, Wolfdietrich Schmied-Kowarzik's book, which deals with the dialectical relationship between man and nature in Marx; by Elisa Zwick, who deals with Christoph Türcke's book on attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and the proposition of ritual studies; by Pablo Luiz de Oliveira Lima, on Michael Heinrich's biography on the life and work of the young student Marx; by Emmanuel Nakamura, who discusses Sangwon Han's book on politics and Adorno's *Negative Dialectic*; and by Natália Teixeira Rodrigues and Wécio Pinheiro Araújo, who review Silvia Federici's book on the hidden history of witches in patriarchal domination, necessary for capitalist formation during the advancement of productive forces in feudalism.

### **Acknowledgments**

In the name of the editor of *Problemata*, there is a triple acknowledgment: to Brazilian colleagues who presented their works or who read and collaborated in other texts of the issue; especially those who contributed to the process of capturing texts and/or took responsibility for their translations; and to the international authors, who trusted the project and gave this edition the honorable task of receiving and ensuring the preparation of their texts in another language.

May this edition contribute to the intellectual spirit that produced it. The critical spirit that is openly associated in the work of intellectual collaboration, without which the gathering and preparation of this expressive set of texts would not have been possible. That is the highest achievement to be celebrate at the conclusion of this work. After all, the left should always consider it as a value when something from the form of practice meets something from the content of its ideas. No matter how modest this may be for its great tasks.

*Berlin/João Pessoa, fall/spring 2019.*

*The organizers,  
Paulo Denisar Fraga and Wécio Pinheiro Araújo*