



BRILL

## After Marx, the Deluge

*A Review of Nach Marx: Philosophie, Kritik, Praxis, edited by Rahel Jaeggi and Daniel Loick*

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### Abstract

‘After Marx’ or ‘According to Marx’. Thus translates the intentionally ambiguous title of ‘Nach Marx’, an international collection of twenty diverse essays in German on Marx and social philosophy today. ‘Nach Marx’ contains over five hundred pages of contributions from twelve prominent German philosophers and sociologists (Hauke Brunkhorst, Alex Demirović, Rainer Forst, Axel Honneth, Rahel Jaeggi, Daniel Loick, Andrea Maihofer, Oliver Marchart, Christoph Menke, Hartmut Rosa, Michael Quante, Titus Stahl), six American political philosophers, German idealists, and historians (Wendy Brown, Daniel Brudney, Raymond Geuss, Frederick Neuhouser, Terry Pinkard, Moishe Postone), along with a British Hegelian philosopher (Andrew Chitty) and a French political thinker (Étienne Balibar). Although the book is divided into six themed parts (I. Freedom and Community, II. Normativity and Critique, III. Truth and Ideology, IV. Right and Subjectivity, V. Critique of Capitalism and Class Struggle, VI. Political Praxis), the essays are mostly individual excursions in Marx scholarship.

### Keywords

Marx – Hegel – philosophy – politics – Critical Theory – capitalism – class struggle

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*After Marx* or *According to Marx*. Thus translates the intentionally ambiguous title of *Nach Marx*, an international collection of twenty diverse essays in German on Marx and social philosophy today. The book is a result of the conference 'Re-thinking Marx' organised by philosophy professor Rahel Jaeggi at the Humboldt University of Berlin in May 2011. *Nach Marx* contains over five hundred pages of contributions from twelve prominent German philosophers and sociologists (Hauke Brunkhorst, Alex Demirović, Rainer Forst, Axel Honneth, Rahel Jaeggi, Daniel Loick, Andrea Maihofer, Oliver Marchart, Christoph Menke, Hartmut Rosa, Michael Quante, Titus Stahl), six American political philosophers, German idealists, and historians (Wendy Brown, Daniel Brudney, Raymond Geuss, Frederick Neuhouser, Terry Pinkard, Moishe Postone), along with a British Hegelian philosopher (Andrew Chitty) and a French political thinker (Étienne Balibar). Although the book is divided into six themed parts (I. Freedom and Community, II. Normativity and Critique, III. Truth and Ideology, IV. Right and Subjectivity, V. Critique of Capitalism and Class Struggle, VI. Political Praxis), the essays are mostly individual excursions in Marx and Marxist scholarship. The philosophical landscape of this collection ranges from thick forests of textual interpretation (Chitty, Quante, Pinkard) to high peaks of historical comprehension (Geuss, Brunkhorst, Postone), along with barren deserts of liberal and radical politics (Neuhouser, Brudney, Loick, Forst, Balibar, Demirović), to beaches full of play (Brown, Marchart, Maihofer), and cities bustling with struggles, practices and ideologies (Rosa, Honneth, Menke, Jaeggi, Stahl).

What does the *nach* of the title refer to? On the one hand, it is Marx *according to* Hegel, Foucault, Adorno, Rawls, Luhmann, Habermas, Derrida, Butler, Lukács, Weber and Schmitt. Each contributor brings along his or her own favoured philosophical heroes with which to re-evaluate Marx today, searching for what can and cannot be rescued from the dustbin of Marxist history. On the other hand, it is Marx *after* class struggle, crisis, Fordism, real socialism, feminism, liberalism, secularism and postmodernism. In short, it is Marx after the twentieth century, and each contributor emphasises one or two historical shifts in the terrain of contemporary politics or capitalism, asking what Marx can still teach us for today. The overriding impulse that emerges from this collection is that we must hold onto both meanings of *nach Marx*: to think *according to* Marx requires us to think *after* Marx, that is, to adapt our critique of modern society to the conditions of the present moment.

Before I analyse the particular articles included in this volume, I should note that this is primarily an academic collection by university philosophers and sociologists, and not a representative anthology of contemporary German or American Marxism. The German field of Marx research has taken a

completely different path than that of France, England and the United States for numerous reasons. Perhaps it is due to the philological work on Marx's original manuscripts in Germany or maybe it is because of the specific political context in which Marx's work was received in the postwar period. Either way, there have been waves of critical Marx interpretations that leap beyond the crude instrumentalisations of most scholars in the West. From the new Marx readings of Krahl, Backhaus and Reichelt in the 60s to the *Wertkritik* of Kurz and Scholz in the 70s, from the polemics of Wolfgang Pohrt, Karl Heinz Roth, WF and Frigga Haug in the 80s to the analyses of Arndt, Altvater and Bonefeld in the 90s, the plethora of material is overwhelming. Not even to mention the writings from the last few years on law, money and individuality in Marx by Ellmers, Harms, Stapelfelt and Engster, or the indefinite number of Marxian journals and magazines like *Das Argument*, *Prokla*, *Gegenstandspunkt* and *Kosmoprolet*. Just to note a few of the most recent and important contributions, Michael Heinrich's *Science of Value* (1991, now in its sixth printing!), Ingo Elbe's overview *Marx in the West* (2008) and Jan Hoff's kaleidoscopic *Marx Worldwide* (2009) all provide in-depth reconstructions and interpretations not only of Marx's mature economic and social theory, but also of the ways in which that theory has been itself received, constructed and critiqued in the last century across the world.

That is all to say that the authors in this volume, *Nach Marx*, stem not from within German Marx research *per se*, but rather from within the disciplines of political theory, sociology and philosophy that have been influenced by particular readings of Marx, usually originating with the Frankfurt School. All the authors could be said to have sympathy with the Frankfurt School approach to critical theory, although what that concretely entails is open to interpretation. Perhaps the only points of agreement are that Marx inaugurated the critical approach to society, and that capitalism is the object of critique. But how to read Marx and how to critique capitalism are anything but settled.

### Marx and Hegel

Let us begin with the Hegelians. Frederick Neuhouser of Barnard College at Columbia University, known for his seminal work on Fichte, Hegel and Rousseau, poses the question of which ideal of freedom we should orient ourselves towards for an emancipatory politics in his 'Marx (and Hegel) on the Philosophy of Freedom' (p. 25). Taking Marx's *Jewish Question* and Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* as exemplary answers to this question, Neuhouser argues that Marx and Hegel agree on a lot more than is usually assumed. First, they

agree on the method of analysis, one that does not evaluate a specific ideal (like freedom or equality) in the abstract, but rather looks at the concrete actualisations of that ideal in specific spheres of life, such as law, the family, the workplace, and so on. Marx and Hegel, according to Neuhouser, share a normative pluralism in which the idea of freedom has many possible contents depending on different concrete conditions of realisation. Freedom *as such* means nothing to them, but the freedom to speak, to love, to buy and to sell requires institutional structures that cannot be determined *a priori*. Second, they both share a particular form of holism, one that judges each realised ideal in terms of how much it supports or denies other goods. If the freedom to buy and sell one's labour intrinsically denies the possibility of realising the equality of human beings, then there is a problem with that very form of freedom.

Neuhouser is right to stress these deep similarities, especially against the trope of the bitterly opposed 'idealist' Hegel and 'materialist' Marx. Where they differ, according to Neuhouser, is in their respective analyses of the concrete. Briefly, Hegel judges the concrete conditions of modern civil society and the state to be forms of life which can accommodate, with tension and in struggle, the different contents of freedom that modern life demands. Marx, on the other hand, thinks that while bourgeois society allows some types of freedom (to own property, for instance), they are nevertheless structurally incompatible with other kinds (collective self-determination, for instance). For Neuhouser, the young Marx underestimated the value of liberal freedom, wrongly thinking that there would be no need for individual rights after overcoming the egoism of bourgeois society. This is a fatal mistake for any theory of emancipation that seeks to move beyond the present order, and not fall behind it. To rectify this error, Marx should have been more Hegelian, not less.

Andrew Chitty's 'Human Recognition and True Property in the Young Marx' claims just this, that the Marx of 1844 was *already* Hegelian in his description of the alternative to capitalism, that is, what constitutes communism. For Chitty, who teaches at the University of Sussex and works on Hegelian themes in Marx, Marx's vision of 'true property [*wahres Eigentum*]' in the *Comments on James Mill* is based on Hegel's own concept of property in the *Philosophy of Right*. Chitty's close reading of both Hegel and Marx is very fruitful, revealing a shared commitment to the mutual recognition of free subjects at the core of the concept of 'property'. Property is just one form of right for Hegel, a structure of mutual recognition that expresses the freedom of subjects in relation to each other. Another word for this structure of freedom is spirit [*Geist*]. Property for Hegel represents freedom between subjects *abstracted* from the consideration of needs. A fuller conception of freedom takes us beyond the abstract right of

property and contract into morality, the family, civil society and the state. Only together, in one complete system of right, are we satisfied, at home with one another.

For Marx though, as Chitty shows, the system of right is not a coherent but contradictory system of mutually exclusive kinds of freedom. A communist vision overcomes this tension with the concept of *true or human property*, in which individuals recognise each other as collective beings with needs, as *Kollektivwesens*. This entails 'production-for-another as free reciprocal production', that is, producing not for any external cause but for the satisfaction of another, which satisfies my own needs as well (p. 58). This production expresses a form of recognition Chitty calls 'human recognition', in which each person's essential powers are expressed and recognised in the mutual production and satisfaction of each other's needs. This recognition is objectified as true property. Objects become true property not through legal mechanisms of right, but through material production of each other's needs. Such property objectifies our collective freedom, and is the opposite of private property, which only objectifies our collective alienation.

Although Chitty convincingly shows the intrinsic connection between Marx's vision of true property in communism and Hegel's theory of property in a system of right, he ends surprisingly by siding with Hegel. The reason is because Marx's argument is mostly based on *ad hoc* historical claims about needs while Hegel's is more firmly grounded on a theory of freedom as mutual recognition between persons (p. 67). To reclaim Marx's early vision of communism, Chitty hints, we need to bolster it with Hegel's theory of freedom.

Michael Quante, professor at the University of Münster and mostly known for his analytic work on Hegel's concept of action, argues that Marx's idea of species-being [*Gattungswesen*] is still relevant for social and political philosophy today in his 'Objective Species-Being: Remarks on the Intrinsic Value of Human Dependence'. First, because the theory of alienation presupposes it (p. 72); and second, because the standpoint of objective species-being provides a good criterion from which to criticise key aspects of capitalist society (p. 81). The originality here lies in the analysis of species-being as *the intrinsic value of human dependence*, an understanding that Quante claims Marx assembled from synthesising elements of Strauss's critique of religion, Feuerbach's concept of objectivity, Hegel's theory of subjectivity as the self-activity of objectification, and Moses Hess's account of the externalisation of human essence in material production and reproduction (pp. 76–78). Although the concept of species-being is still problematic for Quante, its faults are mostly resolvable, and it can provide a useful counterbalance to narrow conceptions of autonomy in political philosophy. While Quante successfully rehabilitates a

particular reading of species-being for critical theorists today, he fails however to take into account why Marx himself moved beyond this concept in his later work, a story which might make us wonder whether it is ultimately worth the trouble.

Terry Pinkard's 'Hegel's Naturalism and Second Nature: From Marx to Hegel and Back' is clear: Marx should have been more Hegelian. Why? So Marx could have understood his own naturalism better, of course (p. 196). To get to this point, Pinkard has first to show that Hegel's idealism is really a modern form of Aristotle's naturalism, and second, that Marx's materialism is lacking precisely where Hegel's naturalism is strongest: in the theory of action. Marx's error comes from adopting a romantic interpretation of Hegel's philosophy, one in which spirit is the growth of an organic whole, blossoming throughout history. For Marx, capitalism is an irrational system that follows no organic law of growth; it is precisely growth in capitalism that is irrational and must be overcome. This irrational system provides us with an appearance of freedom, yet this appearance is really only a fetish of the domination of commodities over our practical lives. Real freedom requires an organisation of society not based on our mutual exploitation; real freedom means a system in which each person can *act* according to his or her own nature as a social being in relation to others. But this is exactly what Hegel's naturalism consists in, and so we are back to where we began.

What is action for Hegel? To be an actor, in Pinkard's reading, one must be located in a social space in which the authority to give and demand reasons has become central for one's own self-understanding. Such self-consciousness contains the ability to take one's own actions as true, appropriate or valid reflections of oneself (p. 201). This already implies a self-division in which one can recognise one's own actions as expressions of rational claims or not. This 'rational' aspect of action is not something given but is itself the result of a long historical struggle, one which develops out of nonrational sources of authority (faith, beauty, tradition). Action, in this sense, is different from a reaction, process, or effect; it can be called to account for its existence, to give reasons for its expression, to be identified as one's own and not something alien, random, automatic, uncontrolled. For Pinkard, this is what Hegel (and Aristotle) means by *second nature*, the appropriation of one's own activities, habits, desires, wishes, deeds as expressions of who one is. Between nature and freedom, there is no great break, but rather an internal development within nature that is able to reflectively relate to its own activities.

For Marx, human action is teleological (i.e. the architect vs. the bee), but such teleology is limited when it is not embedded in a form of naturalism (p. 204). Such naturalism can be found in Hegel's *Logic*, particularly the

chapter on teleology which recapitulates and reconciles the Kantian antinomy of freedom and determinism through an account of the infinite form and finite contents of action. Without this, Marx's account of action and freedom remains constrained within a mechanistic, causal framework. Such a view cannot think human activity beyond the horizon of instrumental reason.

Pinkard's tour through Hegelian concepts is impressive for its depth and brevity, a rare achievement, but not to be unexpected from the author of many works elucidating, or rather, *translating* Hegel's obtuse metaphysical categories into the language of contemporary social philosophy. Here, Pinkard carefully illustrates the subtle connections between action, rationality and freedom that make up Hegel's account of second nature. If Marx was more of a naturalist, or if Marxists were more naturalistic, then perhaps Pinkard is right that the theoretical basis for criticising modern capitalism would be much stronger, being based on a comprehensive theory of freedom and not abstract calls for justice, equality or some future utopia. Yet Pinkard's account of Marx falls short here. For he accepts the false position that Marx wants to get rid of all conflict, contradiction and alienation in human existence. A Hegelian perspective, according to Pinkard, is to take such negativity as an ineradicable factor of the modern human condition; struggling with our own alienation is just what it means to be modern actors. Yet Marx does not want to get rid of conflict, contradiction or even alienation *as such*, but rather only those forms of negativity that are intrinsic to capitalism. Is that so much to ask?

### Justice and Right

Let us move on to the post-Habermasians and post-Foucauldians, or those who try to come to terms with problems of right, justice and law in relation to Marx. Rainer Forst, former student of Habermas and current professor at the Goethe University in Frankfurt, has been developing a normative theory of justice over the last two decades combining insights from Kant, Arendt, Rawls, Adorno and Habermas. His paper here, translated as either 'Justice according to Marx' or 'Justice after Marx', is a short but effective intervention in the continuing debate on justice in Marx. This debate, which has spanned numerous books and articles since the 1980s (including contributions from Geras, Lohmann, Buchanan, Peffer, Cohen and Wood) has been split, more or less, on whether or not Marx relies on a concept of justice in his critique of capitalism. Or, even stronger, the debate hinges on whether or not anyone can critique capitalism and exploitation without an implicit account of justice. Forst rehashes the standard critiques of distributive justice from a Marxist

perspective. First, it ignores the question of production, or how the distributed goods themselves come into the world. Second, the political question of how and who is to determine the distribution itself is left behind. Third, it assumes that the right distribution of goods is somehow immediately knowable, yet such knowledge can only come about mediated by discursive struggles and disagreements. Finally, it is blind to the question of injustice, unable to see the difference between socially produced harms and natural catastrophes, both of which disrupt the distribution of resources. One demands justice, the other pleads for solidarity (p. 108).

Forst accepts all these critiques and yet still pushes forward the need for a theory of justice in Marx. The idea of justice that Forst defends however is not based on the status of goods, resources or needs that an individual has or lacks in society. Rather, it is based on *interpersonal social relations* amongst people. Justice is not about helping some people get more goods, but about rectifying unjust relations between individuals, groups and classes. This materialist theory of justice presupposes the social cooperation amongst individuals of equal respect in the reproduction of society. Any distributional arrangement must be capable of justification to any participant in the social and political order. Marx's critique of capitalism, in this version, has a normative basis in just social relations, not equal distribution of goods. Armed with this idea of justice, Forst takes up the aforementioned four problems of the distributional account of justice and shows how an interpersonal, social-relations theory of justice can make up for all those failures. The norms of collective autonomy, transparency, self-determination and justification arise as guideposts from within the 'reflective virtue' (p. 121) of relational justice. Forst's brave attempt to rescue justice for Marx succeeds in showing how another kind of justice is possible beyond the distributive version, but whether this idea of justice as justification of social relations is compatible with capitalism is left unclear.

Daniel Brudney of the University of Chicago once wrote a fantastic book on the young Marx's relation to philosophy. Now, however, in his 'The Young Marx and the Middle Rawls', he unconvincingly tries to make the case that the young Marx's understanding of communism in his 1844 manuscripts is analogous to the middle-period Rawls' understanding of democracy. For Brudney, Marx's communists who demand a society of mutual recognition without alienation are like Rawls's citizens who demand a society of mutual respect. Brudney claims that Rawls's idea of justice as fairness is in principle *acceptable* to Marxists of the 1844 variety (p. 161). I am not sure what the point is here: to purposely turn Marx into a social democrat and hence make him palatable to today's liberals, or to give Rawls some edge by saying that Marx agrees with

him. Either way, Brudney's two separate academic interests – the young Marx and the middle-period Rawls – should probably remain separate from now on.

Christoph Menke's 'The "Other Form" of Domination: Marx's Critique of Right' takes Marx to task for his critique of right [*Recht*]. Menke, who holds the chair of practical philosophy at Goethe University in Frankfurt, has taken up the legacy of aesthetic critique after Adorno in his works, borrowing liberally from postwar French and German thinkers to investigate art, law and politics in a dialectical fashion. In this essay, Menke criticises Marx's narrow view of right as merely the 'other form' of capitalist domination for misunderstanding the dialectic of right in bourgeois society. To Forst, there are two kinds of right in capitalism, private right *and* social right, and these have completely different logics, producing different kinds of freedom *and* different kinds of domination. Private right emerges from capitalist relations of production, while social right emerges from the socialistic demands that run through Babeuf to Proudhon and Lasalle about working conditions, the length of the working day and human rights, some of which were incorporated into the social state of the twentieth century. Marx, however, only sees one side of right, bourgeois right as private right, not as social right. Menke's claim is that Marx not only did not see this aspect of right, but that he *could not* (p. 282). This is directly tied to Marx's following two premises which ground his critique of right.

What is bourgeois right to Marx? First, relations of right are another form of social domination; there is no relation of right that does not also function as a relation of domination (e.g. equality as inequality, freedom as unfreedom). The content of right is unright; it enables it, allows it and conditions it. Second, the social relations of bourgeois society are determined by capitalist relations of production, and only through that can they be explained. Taken together, we get the following conclusion: there is no right that does not enable social domination, and the form of social domination is grounded in capitalist production relations. In bourgeois society there can only be rights whose meaning consists in enabling capitalist production relations. Such a right is the right of property and contract. There are no other rights in civil society, and there *cannot* be any more (p. 281).

According to Menke, however, Marx's implicit premise is wrong. Right in civil society is *not only* bourgeois private right. Right is always determined by a second aspect: *social right*. This is another concept of right, opposed to private right. These are two shapes of right, which have two opposed conceptions of the bourgeois basic idea of equal, rightful freedom: right a) as equality of (private) owners in free use and disposal over property; and b) as equality of (social) participants in the free development and exercise of their abilities

(p. 282). The idea of social right was heavily criticised by Marx, Engels, Kautsky, as well as Pashukanis. According to them, capitalism only needs private right. The social logic of right is just another form of social domination. The very idea of 'social right', according to Marx, is an *Albernheit*, an absurdity (p. 284).

Menke challenges this by arguing that social right has a necessary *presence* and *function* in bourgeois society. This is not about the legitimacy of such right, but about the very *existence* of it. He is not justifying it, but showing its necessity, its functionality for that form of social domination which constitutes civil society. Menke does this in two steps, first by laying bare the social logic of right and its connection to social domination, and second, by showing the different forms of critique and struggle that mediate the different kinds of right.

The social logic of right, according to Menke, is not determined by relations of production, it is not about the equal distribution of goods, but about the ability to equally participate in social life. Hence, its logic arises from what Menke calls 'relations of participation', relations of social-disciplining normalisation, without which no social participation takes place. Such a structure of right is based on mutual recognition of equal participants. But, like all forms of right in bourgeois society, its *content* takes on relations of social domination. Yet these forms do not come to fruition fulfilled in production relations, but rather in participation or communication relations. Here Menke mentions Foucault's work on the history of disciplining populations and the normalisation of state power that arose in the eighteenth century, which does not function through relations of property and contract (p. 287). 'Social rights' express the normalisation of social domination in terms of right, and hence make it possible. Normalisation is to social right what production relations are to private right. Without it, social domination would not function.

Rights do not fall from the sky but emerge from struggle, particularly the struggle against other rights. To Menke, the history of capitalism develops out of a struggle between private right (to equal exchange) and social right (to equal participation). Right against right, in which right is not only the object but also the medium of struggle and domination. A critical theory of right, in Menke's account, must hold both forms of right in tension to move beyond the antinomies of each: a social critique of right is needed to shatter the illusion of the autonomy of law from production relations, and a political critique of right is needed to dissolve the shape of right from its apparent fixity. Whether or not this dialectical critique of right can function without bringing new forms of domination into being is still an open question.

Daniel Loick extends this Foucault-inspired supplement to Marx's critique of right even further in his 'Explaining Dependency: Right and Subjectivity'.

Loick's work in general straddles the intersection between poststructuralism and critical theory, he having written on law, aesthetics and sovereignty at the Goethe University in Frankfurt. His point of departure in this volume begins when Marx writes that bourgeois society does not 'let' each person find their actualisation of freedom in another person, but only their limitation. For Loick, this 'letting' is an active process, not a passive one. Rights, according to Loick, deform and separate human beings in two ways, producing a whole regime of subjectivisation: first, as a mode of *policing*, and second, as a form of *psychology*. The police-form of subjectivity that rights enable isolates us as individuals from each other, requiring an external police force to bind us together for safety, schooling and health. Such procedures of socialisation construct us as legal subjects, and not as human beings. Discipline and criminal law are the medium of this world, and people are the mere instrument of its production. The psychologically deformed subjectivity that right enables deprives us of the capacity for mutually recognising the intersubjective basis of our own social condition. As subjects, we are shaped to act and interact in certain distorted ways, which are reinforced and institutionalised by civil law and the egoism it engenders.

After rehashing these correct but somewhat mild critiques of right and power, Loick interestingly moves towards a discussion of the Soviet Union. The so-called communism of the Soviet Union rightfully sought to abolish the egoism of bourgeois society, but it did so only by subsuming individuals into an aggregate. The social order thus created did not take into account the interdependency of individuals on each other, what Marx calls their species-being. The dependency of human beings must be actively constructed in an association of free people, not dissolved in private rights or subsumed in collective ones. For Loick, this requires creating non-judicial spheres of human interaction, based on alternative, non-hegemonic relations, such as feminist practices of care, subcultural milieus of experimentation, and so on. While the spirit is in the right place, unfortunately these kinds of 'alternative' relations and social spaces do not and cannot escape the logic of right that Loick so justly denounces.

Andrea Maihofer's 'Thoughts Towards a Materialist-(de)Constructivist Understanding of Normativity' challenges the entire framework of normative critical theory from a Foucauldian-Butlerian perspective. A professor of Gender Studies at the University of Basel, Maihofer has written extensively in German on gender, law, Marx and morality since the early 90s. Her fusillade against Habermas, Honneth and associated forms of critical theory is a welcome rebuke to the uncritical nature of so many of these enterprises. Unfortunately though, she does so within an even weaker theoretical framework. Maihofer is

right in claiming the necessary historicity and uncertainty of all social norms that make up both the object and standpoint of critique. Normativity cannot be simply taken for granted as our shared standpoint, for what makes up the normative field is a result of historically-contingent power relations, constantly transforming and adapting themselves to new circumstances. Domination does not evade these norms, but permeates them as much as our everyday lives. Maihofer argues for holding fast to the uncertainty of our norms, but this leaves us woefully unprepared in dealing with the very certain forms of domination that structure our lives.

### Ideology and Critique

How are we then to criticise capitalism today? This question runs through more than a few of the contributions. Raymond Geuss's 'Marxism and the Ethos of the Modern' contains some lovely sentences on the decline of Marxism as a worldview with 'transubjective authority' in the twentieth century (p. 89). The end of such Marxism is as significant for us as was the decline of the authority of the Church for previous generations. To adopt a new 'ethos of the modern', Geuss argues, requires a new reading of Marx, freed from his instrumentalist and productivist tendencies. To be sure, but do critical Marxists really need to hear this today? Is this not what makes the tradition of Western Marxism and the Frankfurt School so unique? Geuss's critique of bad Marxism ignores the prolific heterodoxy of Marxism since World War II, and frankly seems a bit out of date in the twenty-first century. That is especially unfortunate, since Geuss's other work on politics and critical theory is usually stellar.

Wendy Brown suggests a different focus for critique in her essay, 'How Secular is Marx's *Capital*?' Taking Marx's early critique of religion as the source for the critique of politics, Brown claims that the relation between the religious and the secular is much more intertwined than we usually assume. Hence, any critique of religion must also contain a critique of the secular. Capitalism, according to Brown, desacralises some phenomena while sacralising a whole host of others. Money becomes the god of secular man, commodities transform into fetishes, and the state assumes a heavenly power. These modern religious-secular phenomena express capitalist forms of ideology and fetishism, both of which arise from the ways in which people are alienated from their own social power. Capital is the name for this alienation. Thus, the critique of religion today can be nothing else but the critique of capital. Brown's essay reaffirms her commitment to unravelling the ties between religion, critique and power that she has elsewhere explored.

Titus Stahl attempts to rescue the project of ideology-critique from the horns of the epistemological dilemma which has racked its proponents for a while now in his 'Ideology-Critique as Critique of Social Practices: An Expressivist Reconstruction of the Critique of False Consciousness'. Stahl is currently assistant professor at the University of Groningen, where he edits the journals *Krisis* and *Critical Horizons*. In the spirit of Habermas and Honneth, Stahl writes on the normative foundations of critical theory, yet supplemented with a contemporary account of social ontology. The critique of ideology, for Stahl, has been stuck with two contradictory understandings of what makes ideologies wrong. On the one hand, ideologies are wrong because they contain false beliefs about the world; specifically, these are beliefs which contribute to the justification of domination, inequality or other usually reprehensible social relations. This is the *cognitivist* critique of ideology. On the other hand, Marxists are suspicious of any approach that takes beliefs themselves to be the object of critique, as if they were autonomous from the social relations of production which engender them. This is the *materialist* critique of ideology. Marx's critique of the Young Hegelians is apt here, for the critique is not simply of the falseness of their perspectives, but of the false theory of knowledge which guides their perspectives. The object of critique here is not belief but the very epistemology which takes beliefs to be the object of critique. In this case, their beliefs are not false *per se*, but adequate expressions of a false world.

But how can a world be false? Usually, this is taken to mean that the material relations of production that structure the social world are wrong, unjust or express distorted ways of living. Such social relations give rise to sets of beliefs that are internally consistent with this warped world, and hence cannot be considered epistemically false. What is false, then, is how we collectively organise society. Now comes the dilemma. For how can one say that epistemic standards are inappropriate for the critique of ideology while simultaneously claiming that ideological beliefs express something right about a *wrong* world? The world is not a belief, and only beliefs have representational content that can be determined as true or false, right or wrong. It is literally nonsense to call a 'relation' wrong or false. So, either we say that ideologies consist in false beliefs, but are then stuck with the impotence of cognitivist critique, or we say that ideologies require a materialist explanation, but are then obliged to refrain from criticising them. The cognitivist critique is insufficient to explain ideology and the materialist explanation is unable to criticise ideology. Where do we go from here?

Stahl's way out of the dilemma is a good one, albeit not particularly original. Instead of arguing that social structures are *causally* or *functionally* related to ideological beliefs – a strategy used by many Marxists to save ideology-critique

from obsolescence, with mixed results – Stahl claims that ideologies ‘express’ social reality as all human action ‘expresses’ normative standards for their own evaluation and justification. Influenced by Charles Taylor’s reading of Hegel, Wittgenstein’s understanding of language, and somewhat by Robert Brandom’s account of pragmatics, Stahl claims that human action is only intelligible in normative terms which already contain collectively formed distinctions for evaluating social practices dependent on their purpose.

Social practices institutionalise these distinctions as the criteria for their own success, but they are never settled. When conflicts or problems arise, a certain revisability is needed for dealing with the implicit norms of the practice. This in turn requires second-order norms that can guide us in dealing with which norms to revise, critique and discard. Ideologies arise when a practice institutes second-order norms that block the ability to revise, critique and change the distinctions with which we evaluate the success or failure of the practice. If Marx criticises ideology for wrongly assuming that ideas are separate from social reality, then Stahl criticises ideology for wrongly assuming that the norms are independent from our social practices. This approach, according to Stahl, maintains the materialist emphasis on social reality underlying ideologies while also allowing us to express such wrongness in epistemic terms. Stahl has helped us in clarifying the thicket of problems which plague ideology-critique, but I am doubtful that his expressivist solution really captures what is specific about capitalism and the form of ideology it produces, as opposed to a generic account of ideology as such.

It is exactly this problem of the specificity of capitalism that motivates Rahel Jaeggi’s article, ‘What (If Anything) Is Wrong with Capitalism? Three Ways of Criticising Capitalism’. Rahel Jaeggi, professor of Social Philosophy at Humboldt University in Berlin, writes about classical themes of the Frankfurt School tradition, such as alienation, reification and critique, yet does so attuned to problems of right, normativity and forms of life. Jaeggi’s titular question in this volume is not meant cynically, but rather seeks to pinpoint exactly what it is that is wrong about *capitalism* and not other aspects of modern life. There are lots of ills in the world, and one cannot blame capitalism for every fever and broken heart. To find out what is intrinsically wrong about capitalism, Jaeggi surveys three kinds of critique, showing the insights and limits of all. The first is the functional critique of capitalism, which states that the economic system is malfunctioning. Capitalism is inevitably prone to crisis, and it does not do what it is supposed to do. The problem with this strategy is that it is insufficient for a condemnation of capitalism. To criticise the functionality of a system presupposes a purpose which it fails to live up to. One cannot fail without a norm (p. 329). Yet it is incredibly difficult to attribute any purpose

to capitalism. Why is it really a problem for capitalism if it immiserates and destroy the world? To ground a functional critique, one must first develop a normative one.

The second way of criticising capitalism is by moral critique, usually based on an account of justice. Capitalism is unjust because it exploits people, because it is necessarily based on exploitation. Exploitation, however, can mean two things. First, there is the common-sense understanding of the term, where to be exploited is to not get one's full share of an exchange or where one is wrongfully taken advantage of by another (p. 335). But surely this kind of exploitation occurred before capitalism, with slavery, feudalism, etc. So it is not really a critique specific to capitalism but rather of one of the injustices within it. The second meaning of exploitation is the more Marxist, technical sense of the appropriation of surplus labour from the worker by the capitalist. To be more precise, it is the appropriation of that labour which the worker performs beyond what is necessary for the reproduction of their labour-power; what the capitalist captures from this surplus labour is surplus value (p. 337). The capitalist does not capture this through force or theft, but through the banality of the free labour contract and the dull compulsion of the market itself. What is striking about this account of exploitation is that it is explicitly non-moral. This is merely a description of capitalist production relations, nothing more or less. Yet how can a non-moral account of exploitation be used to criticise capitalism morally? Either the injustice of exploitation is not intrinsically capitalist or capitalist exploitation is not intrinsically unjust.

Something must be wrong here, argues Jaeggi, for Marx clearly uses strong moral language to condemn, ridicule and attack bourgeois society in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, *The German Ideology*, *The Communist Manifesto* and parts of *Capital*. The problem for Jaeggi is that the moral idea of exploitation is too narrow to get at what is wrong with capitalism. We need an expanded sense of the moral realm, one which can bring the entire mode of production into view, and not just a particular relation within it. Just as Hegel criticises Kant's conception of morality as inadequate for grasping the already-ethical content of social life, Marx's critique of capitalism moves beyond the empty ought of the moral subject and into a comprehensive critique of an entire ethical world.

The final way of criticising capitalism is the ethical critique, usually based on an account of alienation. In this view, capitalism is not a neutral economic system but carries with it a form of alienation from our selves and world, the reification of human relations, and the commodification of all sorts of intrinsically valuable goods that should not be bought or sold. There are two problems here. First, as before, is this *specifically* capitalist? We could also be

talking about modernity in general, or the problems that arise with markets in general, but not yet capitalism. Second, and more devastating, what is the criterion here? The critique of alienation, commodification and reification can also be seriously conservative and reactionary, a kind of cultural pessimism. What this means is that the ethical critique is structurally *ambivalent*. Labour markets, commodified services, the use of money – all can also be liberating from certain kinds of dependency.

To overcome the limits of these approaches, Jaeggi suggests that we see all three ways not as separate paths but rather as mutually reinforcing dimensions of a single critique of capitalism as a form of life. Such a critique would include the following elements: a) a determination of the ethical deficits of capitalism under specifically capitalist conditions (e.g. how does the accumulation of capital institutionalise harmful self-interest), b) an illustration of the self-contradictions of capitalism which produce alienation not out of nostalgia but out of its own promises (e.g. of freedom), c) a renewed functional critique of capitalism not in terms of crisis but in terms of the irrational form of life it facilitates, and, finally, d) an elaboration of a meta-criterion for seeing forms of life as themselves collective learning-processes. This materialist perspective hopes to read the desires for another form of life from within the distorted values of this already normatively dense system. Although Jaeggi provides just a bare sketch for such a comprehensive critique of capitalism, it seems to be very promising as a methodological primer for those who wish to avoid the cul-de-sac of much anti-capitalist critique today.

### Capital and Totality

The final seven essays of the volume, some of the strongest in the whole collection, can be roughly divided into two camps: those who emphasise the systematic totality of capitalist domination, and those who focus on the contingent politics of class struggle. While these are obviously not mutually exclusive domains, some authors argue that the choice of focus is not neutral, that it has political consequences.

Harmut Rosa unambiguously sides with the critique of capitalism as an all-encompassing system in his 'Class Struggle and the Escalation Game [*Steigerungsspiel*]: An Unholy Alliance. Marx's Accelerationist Diagnosis of Crisis'. Rosa, director of the Max Weber College in Erfurt, as well as professor at the Schiller University in Jena, has written extensively on the acceleration of time in late capitalist societies from a sociological perspective. Rosa claims here that there are two sides to Marx's analysis of capitalism. One focuses on

class, class-struggle, poverty, distributive justice, bourgeoisie and proletarians, exploiters and exploited, winner and losers; and another focuses on the accelerating dynamic of capital, in which both winners and losers are alienated, not just economically or ecologically, but in so far as their entire personality is sacrificed to the logic of capital. According to Rosa, the first reading has too-long dominated how we read Marx, how we think of capitalism, and how we think of overcoming it. Rather, we should remember Marx's description of capitalism in the *Communist Manifesto* as a 'system of dynamic stabilisation' (p. 397) that can only reproduce itself through intensification, growth, acceleration, innovation and revolution. All social and intellectual relations get sucked up in the vacuum of self-valorising value and spat out again across the world in new and dynamic forms. The logic of capital entails an infinite, coercive drive to increase everything more and more, to remake the world in its own image.

Rosa cites Postone, Heinrich and Adorno as critical theorists who have grasped this accelerationist element of capital (he could have also included Lukács and Debord in this tradition). Instead of a political-economic approach though, Rosa opts for a pathological diagnosis of society under such conditions: life in capitalism is sick, plagued by depression, anxiety, suicide. Above all, Rosa wants to emphasise that in capitalist societies *everyone* is sick, *everyone* suffers *everywhere* capitalism has spread, from Japan to Chile to France. From this perspective, there are no winners and losers in capitalism, there are only losers. Capitalists are just as alienated as proletarians, exploiters are as sick as the exploited, and no redistribution of misery will change the rules of the game. Rather, the entire game must be abolished. If capitalism is like *Parcheesi*, then the logic of class struggle only focuses on the board, hoping that some do not get sent back to zero (p. 407). But the dice are rigged, the board is unequal, and everyone loses no matter who is ahead at one moment or the next.

The task of the left is to refocus on the alienation-centred critique of capitalism, not the justice-centred one. But, as Rahel Jaeggi showed in her article already, such an ethical critique of capitalism brings along its own problems. Rosa hopes to avoid these by hitching his ride on the accelerating dynamic of capital. This aspect of Rosa's analysis is a welcome respite from the regressive tendencies of certain anti-capitalisms. However, by avoiding the question of class struggle altogether, Rosa evades any discussion of who and how such a movement for the abolition of the rules of the game will commence. The overcoming of capitalism can take many nasty forms, and so, without an anchor in the present of class struggles, Rosa's analysis accelerates aimlessly.

Moishe Postone grounds his critique of capitalism within the dynamic of value itself in his 'Thinking Marx Anew', the highlight of this volume. Postone's

article is perhaps the best summary there is to date of his *Time, Labor, and Social Domination* (1993), an impressive work of re-interpreting the critical theory of capital from Lukács to Habermas by means of a renewed focus on Marx's *Grundrisse* and the fundamental categories of value in *Capital*. Postone begins his article on the offensive. Along with the decline of the dominance of Marxism, the fall of the USSR, China's path to capitalism, global decolonisation, and the end of emancipatory workers' movements, there has emerged a whole range of new theoretical approaches like postmodernism, poststructuralism, deconstruction and postcolonialism to explain the world anew with an emphasis on difference, contingency, identity and discourse. The recent global crisis, however, puts all these schools of thought in doubt; the social sciences cannot explain the universality of capitalism within their schemas, and neither can traditional critical theory or postmarxism. The universal rise and breakdown of the welfare state after the war, the dissolution of state-centric Fordism, the end of the planned economy and rise of the neoliberal capitalist world-order also cannot be explained by local, political, contingent or cultural factors. Rather, capitalism needs to be understood as a historically dynamic form of social mediation that limits politics universally (p. 367).

For many critical theorists, Marx's theory is a critique of exploitation from the standpoint of labour, in which labour seeks to free itself from the shackles of modernity and become the dominant principle of a new society. This is not only categorically wrong, according to Postone, but harmful to any project for emancipation. Rather, capitalism is a unique form of social mediation which structures modernity. This form of social mediation is constituted through a unique form of social labour, both abstract and temporal, which manifests itself in particular, quasi-objective forms of domination. This domination cannot be understood as the domination of one class over another. These forms of domination are marked by the categories of the commodity and capital; they are not static, but generative of a historical dynamic which is determinant for capitalist modernity and forms its core. Marx's critique, for Postone, is not an affirmation of labour in human societies but a critique of its central role as historically specific to this society. It is neither objectivist nor functionalist, for the categories relate to historically-specific social forms of praxis which are simultaneously forms of objectivity and subjectivity (p. 365).

Traditional Marxism for Postone is based on the class theory of private-property owners who exploit proletarians mediated by the market. Domination is class domination, and the structural contradiction is between the productive relations (private property) and the productive forces (labour). This critique from the standpoint of labour seeks to institute new forms of collective property over the means of production (p. 367). To Postone, the

twentieth century has killed this theory, and it is no longer, if it ever was, emancipatory. Marx, however, understood capital differently as a form of domination mediated by social forms of praxis whose historical logic shapes human activities. Marx does not deny personal freedom but wants to show the structural, historical dynamic which determines it. Labour in this reading is not the standpoint but object of critique. When poststructuralists respond to the faults of traditional Marxism with a *jouissance* for contingency against grand narratives and totalities, they forget that Marx was the first great critic of totality. The difference is that he acknowledges that the totality of capital exists! To ignore this form of domination is ahistorical. Marx's theory is a self-reflexive, historically specific account of how history itself comes to dominate individual lives as an alien force (p. 369).

For Postone, the transhistorical view of labour misunderstands the nature of value and surplus-value as class-dominated exploitation. This can naturally lead to a theory of revolution as the self-affirmation of the proletariat. Yet the *Grundrisse* provides a different interpretation, one in which these categories are forms of social being, both objective and subjective, specific to modern capitalism. The abstract quality of these categories (money, labour) makes them appear transhistorically valid, but that is part of their very form. Value is rather a specific form of wealth in capitalism, different from material wealth. Value is both the essential condition for the existence of capital and the condition of possibility for its overcoming. This is precisely where the critical standpoint emerges, in which the self-abolition of labour and not its self-affirmation becomes possible because of, and not in spite of, value as the form of wealth in capitalist society.

What makes capital unique is its form of abstract domination. Marx's analysis here, according to Postone, is much better than Foucault's idea of power, for Marx's form of domination is not only spatial, but also processual, temporal and dynamic (p. 378). It is this temporal dynamic of value which grounds the possibility for its overcoming. For in its ceaseless drive towards more productivity, value as the form of wealth both makes possible the reduction of labour-time necessary for one's own reproduction, and denies its realisation. The realisation of this possibility remains alienated from the actors who create it due to the abstract, structural form of domination that ties wealth back to a specific form of social mediation constituted by labour. This state of moving forward while staying put is what Postone calls the *treadmill effect* (p. 379).

The self-movement of value takes on the forms of money and the commodity, yet capital is the abstract subject which maintains its unity in the diversity of such appearances. If the language sounds Hegelian here, it is because Postone

claims that Marx's concept of capital has all the same qualities of Hegel's concept of spirit. It is both the substance and subject of history, producing endless cycles of destruction and creation without any purpose beyond its own self-development. Contra Lukács, it is not the proletariat but capital that is the subject of history, the dynamic structure of abstract domination, made by people, but independent of their wills. Contra many Marxists, this is not the materialist anthropological inversion of the idealist dialectic, but its materialist justification. The idealist character of capital constitutes its rational kernel: it expresses the alienated relation of constituted forms of domination with quasi-independent existence that coercively structure social practice. The 'historical subject' which plagues so much postmodern thought is not 'man' but this alienated structure of social mediation, and Marx was the first to critique it (p. 381).

According to Postone, the abolition of this form of social mediation comes from within the dialectic of transformation and reconstitution that constitutes the temporal dynamic of value. Against all notions of abstract 'resistance' which can take reactionary and conservative forms when presumed to be somehow outside of capital, Postone refocuses the critique of capital onto the transformative possibility of another form of social mediation that arises within this dynamic but is not characteristic of it. Such a form of social mediation would not be based on the historically specific kind of labour corresponding to value, but a different form of wealth altogether.

The celebration of contingency is not a critique of capital but the very expression of capital in its most modern, neoliberal form of appearance. To move beyond such appearances requires a critique that goes to the core of capitalist logic. Postone's critical vision is breath-taking, and much to be lauded against almost every other strawman Marxism that exists. His attempt to develop the negated possibility of another form of life from within the dialectic of capital itself is also a nice rebuke to those who believe in some quasi-transcendental proletarian subject that is just waiting to reveal itself. However, the critique of traditional Marxism does not necessitate an abandonment of class struggle or the theory of class as such, for that too is one-sided. Only a unified understanding of the mutual constitution of class and capital can break through the deadlock of critical theory today.

One such attempt to unify a theory of revolution and evolution is Hauke Brunkhorst's 'From Crisis to Risk and Back: Marxist Revisions'. This text is a strange beast, jam-packed with historical insights, sociological debates, Marxist scholarship and theoretical guidelines towards a deeper understanding of revolution and crisis. Brunkhorst, professor at the University of Flensburg, is one of the most well-known living German sociologists, having written over a

dozen books on themes such as solidarity, democracy and praxis, and figures such as Marx, Habermas, Arendt and Adorno. Brunkhorst begins his essay by subjecting German sociologist Niklas Luhmann's risk paradigm to a trenchant critique. To Brunkhorst, 'risk' is the neutral, technical term that since the 1980s has replaced the more political, controversial idea of 'crisis'. With risk, one no longer needs unions, socialists or activists to organise, only technocrats, experts and managers to administer. The solution to risk is always the same: more capitalism, more technology, more administration. The categories of injustice, oppression and exploitation vanish in the risk paradigm, replaced by neglect (of the individual in the mass), exclusion (of the surplus populations) and destruction (of the environment, health) (p. 414). Normative problems become technical affairs for systems theory, which cannot be debated, only solved. Luhmann's sociological paradigm of stratification, functional differentiation and integration is profoundly anti-social, according to Brunkhorst. Social issues like poverty or exploitation are approached only on a case-by-case basis via experts within this framework.

Challenging this perspective are the Hegelian-Marxists who weld together normative problems and technical issues, crisis theory and class struggle, systems analysis and the life-world. Marx's critique of political economy is the paradigm of this model, which is the first completely reflective theory of modern society (p. 418). Lukács, Marcuse and Habermas further developed this critical approach of immanent social theory by providing it with sociological foundations. Brunkhorst wants to add to this tradition by providing an *evolutionary* strand to the understanding of historical materialism, in which structural conflict and learning processes of society develop under objective constraints along the model of punctuated equilibrium (p. 422). In this framework, legitimation crises of the system are not only symptoms of class antagonism but also a product of the numerous structural conflicts embedded in the social differentiation that marks civil society. Three sorts of these simultaneous structural conflicts and collective learning processes are law, politics and economy, each of which has their own relative autonomy, history and logic. Brunkhorst takes the example of law [*Recht*] and provides a schema of revolutions and evolutions in its development from the eleventh century to the twentieth along four axes: the particular idea freedom institutionalised, the normative limits of adaptation, its functional differentiation, and structural conflict (p. 439). Brunkhorst's ecumenical style of uniting a revolutionary and evolutionary model of society by means of conceptual tools from various sociological, economic and biological paradigms stretches the bounds of what Marxist research can be. Yet its love-hate relationship to systems theory as well as the grab-bag approach to concepts from all over the spectrum leave

one feeling a bit lost concerning the stakes at play. Is it the task of Marxism to transform sociology, or social reality?

### Politics and Struggle

Rejecting the totalising impulse of systematic analyses of capitalism which sacrifice politics on the altar of economic forces, the final four essays hearken back to Marx's political writings as inspiration and model for the kind of critical theory needed today. Axel Honneth, for better or worse, carries the mantle of the third generation of Critical Theory, a more Hegelian than Marxian flavoured take on justice, morals and social recognition. Professor at both Goethe University in Frankfurt and Columbia University in New York, Honneth's debates with Nancy Fraser in the 1990s on recognition versus redistribution brought him into the mainstream anglophone orbit. Honneth's 'The Moral in *Capital: Attempt at a Correction of Marx's Critique of Economy*' places the tension between the *Eighteenth Brumaire* and *Capital* front and centre. They contain, according to Honneth, two very different understandings of temporality, one linear and logical, one broken and political (p. 351). *Capital* presents a logical exposition of the forms of value, in which individuals are nothing but character masks of their respective roles, personifications of capital and labour; the temporality of such a system is closed, predetermined by the functional imperatives of the categories. *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, *The Civil War in France*, and Marx's political writings in general are packed with concrete individuals with competing ideologies engaged in normative conflicts over values, interests and rights. The temporal framework is constantly punctured by class struggle, which erupts in unpredictable ways, transforming both the consciousness and conditions of all the actors. How can such contradictory visions of time, action and possibility be reconciled, asks Honneth?

The answer is to bring in the subjectivity, norms and values of the political writings into the analysis of capital. Workers and capitalists need to take off their masks and be regarded as concrete individuals with many different values. They have to be seen as collective actors within capital who can also challenge the normative framework of capital. Contra Postone, Honneth argues that these temporalities are not sufficiently mediated in *Capital*. On the contrary, they stand fundamentally in tension and the task of the critical theorist is to mediate them adequately. On the one hand, collective actors seem to actualise new normative orders institutionally, while on the other hand, the logic of capital already sets the terms in which any collective action can take place.

As Honneth puts it, the normativity of social action confers power onto facts, while the facticity of the capital-relation confers power onto norms (p. 358).

If Marx would bring the normative framework into the economic analysis, then we could find the 'moral' in capital. For Honneth, this means that the market would not just be a sphere of utility and self-interest, but one of competing norms and values. What follows would be the politicising and sociologising of our basic economic concepts. Capital would have the same temporality as class actors; capitalists and workers would not just be agents of capital but self-conscious players who make a variety of claims upon each other. This does not deny the structural compulsion of capital, but supplements it with the friction of human action that actively engages in choices and exchanges every day. Hegel and Hirschmann are Honneth's models here, for they both develop an account of the moral economy of the market. This sociologisation of time in capital for Honneth allows one to see historical shifts in social relations of exchange, labour, production and consumption as normative shifts as well. Labour-cooperatives, Chartism, consumer capitalism, the eight-hour day, and financial speculation are all instances of changes in capitalism that are both economic and normative (p. 361). Social struggle is not separate from capital's logic, rather every movement of value must also be seen as a movement of norms, a claim to be taken up or denied.

'What about the chapter on the working-day in *Capital?*', asks the eager student of Marx. Surely that is an example of the 'moral' in capital that Honneth is looking for? Not so much for Honneth, for that struggle is presented as an eventless confrontation between two homogenous, collective actors whose interests are already set by their social positions and whose dispute is only economically motivated. The capitalist and the workers' interests are given, nothing changes, no new norms or groups emerge; it is just the logical development of two forces already set up for collision by the rules of the game. Honneth's call to reintegrate the politics of social struggle into the logical schema of capital probably irritates both political Marxists and value-form Marxists, each of whom seek to maintain a strict separation of the domains of history and logic when it comes to understanding capitalism. While one cannot simply place one schema on top of the other, as Honneth sometimes seems to do, it is just as disingenuous to ignore the other one altogether, as Postone sometimes seems to do. The mediation of both temporalities might have to stay in tension, for perhaps that very alienation of time is how capital is experienced in the world.

Politics is itself the problem in Alex Demirović's 'Critique of Politics', which defends Marx's early anti-political writings from their many detractors.

Demirović, a senior fellow of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung and an editor of the Marxist journal *Prokla*, has taught in Frankfurt, New York and Basel, having written numerous and influential texts on democracy, Adorno, neoliberalism, Poulantzas and critical theory in German. An assortment of postmarxism and critical theory provides the theoretical backdrop to Demirović's investigation here into the role and limits of politics today. The paradox of politics under conditions of capitalism is that it simultaneously forms the medium and obstacle for collective social action. The state represents the alienated species-being of man, the permanent conflict between the general will and particular interests; the law binds us together as separate monads while the state appears as a supra-individual force. All political action is directed at the state, as if the state were something beyond our own activity. For Marx, the point is not to engage in the endless struggle between particular and universal that characterises politics in bourgeois society. Rather, it is to overcome this separation altogether which is only a result of the alienation of people from each other. The proletariat does not represent universal humanity, but the dissolution of humanity under the form of classes and social divisions. How to achieve this is not some romantic return to the state of nature, but a new mode of cooperative living together, argues Demirović.

The sphere of politics is separate from society, cut off from our everyday life and needs. The return of politics into society brings with it many dangers, not the least of which is the authoritarianism that decides on who is part of the political community (p. 480). Another threat is the idea of politics as merely the 'administration of things', the dream of technocrats and experts who wish nothing more than to do away with political questions over needs, values or goals. For Marx though, according to Demirović, we cannot avoid such questions, and the free association of people collectively producing their needs cannot happen without debate, struggle and conflict. The task is to transform the liberal, abstract freedom of bourgeois society into positive, actual freedom. But how? To Demirović, politics can also be the form which gives social contradictions room to move, to develop and fight out the ways towards a different social order (p. 483). Will this take the form of councils? A transition stage? Demirović pins his hope on Marx's announcement in the *Civil War in France* of the 'political form of emancipation' finally discovered as the commune, which signals the destruction of state power itself. But a commune is not an event, rather just a *form* in which the contents of emancipation can be developed and expanded to all realms of social life (p. 485). What exactly the contents of emancipation are, however, Demirović does not say. And how could he? For any critique of politics that does not touch on the distinction between form and content cannot see beyond the limits of even the most revolutionary form of politics.

'Class-struggle as Concept of the Political', Étienne Balibar's contribution to *Nach Marx*, can be read as a Marxist rejoinder to Carl Schmitt's *Concept of the Political*. Balibar, the lone French Althusserian of this mostly German Hegelian compendium, claims that Marx's concept of class struggle redefines what is political by *relativising* the distinction between Hegel's two spheres of the (political) state and (economic) society, or citizen and bourgeois. This relativisation occurs in three ways: first, Marx turns the extremities of the social structure (Hegel's *estates*) into a central force of historical development as *classes*, which become polarised through the development of the industrial economy. Second, Marx shows how different classes arise out of the institutional development of the production process, in which exploitation and domination are inextricable. And third, Marx binds the political and economic practices of polarised classes together not in some organic totality, but in *contradiction*, as a principle of permanent instability and transformation (p. 448).

Balibar reads Marx's critique of the separation between society and the state as evincing the fact that society already contains irreparable political conflicts within it, conflicts that are organised and conscious, irreducible to state practices of the citizen. Rather, such struggles denote an alternative form of politics as a negation of the state, starting beneath it and reaching beyond it. The political character of class struggle, in Balibar's view, challenges both the pluralism of civil society and the decisionism of the sovereign authority (p. 449).

There are three consequences of this paradoxical concept of the 'political' in Marx for Balibar. First, the Machiavellian aspect of Marx is shown by the removal of any substance to politics beyond praxis, struggle and social transformation. There is no Marxist distinction between some deep essence and surface appearance of politics, but rather only one ontology of class struggle. Second, the myth of the nation and its enemy which Schmitt takes as central to political order is broken by Marx's identification of the internal, class enemy. Yet class struggle is not organised around myth, but goals and the conditions of conflict, a sort of materialist utopianism. Third, the element of conflict always present in history cannot be integrated into legal, contractual terms of the state. There is an *ethical* dimension to struggle which arises from resistance to capitalist exploitation, one that does not defend some particular interests from the state, but rather defends the *universal* (of freedom, equality) against its particular limitations (p. 451).

What are the strategic possibilities of class struggle in capitalism for Marx? With special attention to the first volume of *Capital* and the unpublished *Results of the Immediate Production Process*, Balibar believes that Marx does not reject any particular political strategy when it comes to class struggle. The three most common interpretations of the political possibilities of class

struggle to Balibar are reformist, revolutionary and nihilist. Reformist class struggle engages in a permanent legal civil war that seeks to limit the violence of those who profit from exploitation. Revolutionary class struggle beckons for a messianic expropriation of expropriators guided by the historical tendency of capitalist production to concentrate and socialise labour. Nihilist class struggle expresses the condition of those who are fully subsumed into the logic of capital, whose entire daily life is commodified, not only their labour-power. For Balibar, all possibilities are on the table, and Marx's theory of capital neither prescribes nor precludes any.

When there is no longer any distinction between *politics as praxis* and *politics as institutions*, as Balibar claims with the concept of class struggle, then we need to rethink the aporias of Marxist political movements in history. Where one locates the political content of social conflict tends to determine the theory and strategy of such movements. Is it in civil society as whole? The factory? The technical division of labour? The home? Each answer provides a different praxis and a different relation to the state. Along with this comes the question of the party-form. For Balibar, the concept of the party always swings between two extremes: either too little state-determination, as a purely tactical form, or too much state-determination, as the synthetic unity of the class. This 'not enough' or 'too much' dilemma of party organisation is inescapable, for it is not a theoretical question to be solved, but a practical problem to be elaborated.

Balibar ends by asking whether there is any political relevance to the Marxist concept of class struggle under conditions of neoliberalism, in which the citizen/bourgeois distinction is dissolved in the postnational state at the end of history. Is class struggle still a problem in a world where classes seem to have disappeared? It appears that there is no longer a binary antagonism of classes, that conflicts have multiplied across the political spectrum and the concept of class is no longer fit for describing this situation. In other words, while class struggle *was* once relevant, it no longer is.

Against this, Balibar stresses two main points. First, the analysis of contemporary capitalism requires a more complex understanding of class which can grapple with all the changes that have come with new modes of work, social reproduction and property relations since the end of Fordism. The real subsumption of labour under capital, the incorporation of women into the labour market, and the proliferation of new social groups have not abolished class relations but polarised them even more in differentiated forms. Second, as a result of globalisation, the relation between the state and civil society (or the state and the market) has been completely inverted. The state is subsumed under the market, contrary to what Hegel thought; it has not been

dissolved but instrumentalised by market forces. Finance, government and the economy are fully interpenetrated. Class struggle as a critical concept of the political must challenge the illusion of the state/civil society binary and its corresponding pseudo-political options for change. Balibar's explicit defence of class struggle as a political concept is a breath of fresh air against the litany of strawman critiques from postmarxist, postcolonial and liberal theorists against it. Strangely though, Balibar never once mentions *actual* class struggles in his essay; he never once mentions any literature from the fields of labour studies, history or sociology, which would lend real flesh to his thesis. His brushing aside of Tronti at the beginning of the essay is a missed opportunity to engage in theoretical traditions of Marxism that take class struggle seriously yet rethink its meaning in modern conditions of capitalism. Balibar's purely philosophical defence of class struggle as a political concept is still worthwhile, yet it remains only the skeleton of a thesis until it joins together with the actual class struggles that rock the world today.

Oliver Marchart concludes the volume with his sanguine piece, 'Marx on the Beach: The Negative Ontology of Marxism'. Marchart, a former student of Balibar, now professor at the Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf, has written on politics, art and poststructuralism in a sense influenced by Laclau and Mouffe's critique of Marxism. In 1880, while journalist John Swinton was strolling along with Marx on the beach, he asked him about the final law of being: '*What is?*' To which Marx supposedly replied: *Struggle!* This probably apocryphal story frames Marchart's investigation into the ontology of Marxism. Why did Marx not say *class* struggle? And what is the relation between struggle and production? Marchart claims that Marx has a 'strugglist' ontology, in which social being in its totality is determined through class struggle (p. 488). This means that there are no idyllic moments in life, that whether at work or on the beach, class struggle pervades the atmosphere like a ghost. Indeed, Marchart picks up Derrida's term *hauntology* to describe the spectral presence-absence of class struggle in every crevice of society, from museums to parliament to radio to university to chess. In effect, society reproduces itself through class struggle (p. 489). The wager of Marxism, for Marchart, is that class struggle appears even in peace, that stasis is struggle, that it is always ready to burst out at any moment onto the surface. Forgetting, suppressing, or displacing class struggle are all forms of struggle. The spectre of class struggle is ineradicable.

Yet, there are other ontologies in Marxism that challenge this perspective. Namely, 'economism'. To Marchart, economism names the framework which takes the central contradiction in society to be between the forces and relations of production. The economic determination of social being trumps any other factor in this view. This ontology, however, has no space for the hauntology of

class struggle, for two reasons. First, because class struggle takes place at the epiphenomenal level of the superstructure, not at the ground-level of the base. And second, class struggle in this framework has no autonomous logic; it is only the unfolding of an economic contradiction with lawlike certainty under set parameters and goals. Against the one-sidedness of such economism, Marchart stresses the fundamental negativity of Marx's approach. The historical development of the class contradiction does not follow any rule, but is rather a relation of *antagonism* between incommensurable parts that periodically explodes and reconfigures the terrain itself. Class struggle is a *labour of the negative* in the Hegelian sense, a constant task of projection and failure, conflict and loss, self-fulfilment and self-undermining with no guarantees of satisfaction. For Marchart, the most interesting strands of Marxism are those that attempt to free such negativity from necessity to contingency (p. 494). The three stations of Marxism on the way to this redemption of contingent negativity are Adorno's negative dialectics, Althusser's theory of overdetermination, and Laclau and Mouffe's theory of antagonism.

Adorno garners a moment in this narrative for theorising an antagonistic totality in which the 'scum of the concept', what is non-identical, or the object can never be fully integrated into a logical scheme. For Adorno, there is an irreducible heterogeneity between reality and the concept which resists any necessary mediation. This alienation between self and world however is an expression of the real contradictions of bourgeois society, its production relations and forces. Hence, while Adorno pushes against the economic determinism of traditional Marxism, his materialist impulse ties him back down to a faulty foundationalism. Althusser's theory of overdetermination seeks to overcome economism by positing a plurality of contradictions which are expressed in all aspects of life in various conjunctures. While the capitalist mode of production is a process without a subject, it still retains an economic base which determines the rest 'in the last instance'. Although this instance never comes, the fundamental contradiction still applies. By theorising a totality of contradictions, Althusser comes close to post-foundationalism, but does not quite arrive at it. Laclau and Mouffe finally achieve the negative ontology that Marchart describes through their postmarxist theory of hegemony, antagonism and articulation. For them there is no totality anymore, only a field of differences marked by real and symbolic struggles that are never fully subsumed into any objective order. The negativity of social struggle exists not only amongst differences but within each identity itself.

The result of this brief tour through the gallery of Marxist shadows is an account of social objectivity shimmering with 'microconflictuality' (p. 507). Since this conflictuality permeates reality beyond any reduction to class or

economic base, Marchart concludes by affirming that Marx's negative ontology is indeed one of struggle, and not class struggle. The law of being *is* struggle, and only a post-foundationalist social ontology of antagonism, negativity and contradiction is adequate to explaining it. Haunted everywhere by the presence of negativity, being 'trembles' in absolute unrest (p. 512).

Marchart's lyrical ode to negativity in Marx is right, but for all the wrong reasons. The main problem is the caricature of any references to the economy, class or production in Marx as somehow a sign of economism or determinism. This postmodern fear of necessity, totality and economy sadly misunderstands the nature of capital, as Postone has previously shown. The negativity of struggle *is* inherent to social objectivity marked by capitalist antagonism. This negativity however is not the result of Adorno, Althusser or Laclau/Mouffe's theoretical sophistication, but is rather inextricably bound up with capital as a specific form of mediation characterised by abstract domination. Without the totality of capital, the contingent negativity of struggle hearkens back to a metaphysical understanding of dialectics as somehow part of nature itself. One cannot wish the totality of capital away and replace it with the contingency of struggle.

Thus we end up *after Marx* or *according to Marx*, depending on one's point of view. But after reading this volume, one might feel that, if anything, we are still *before* Marx, stuck with the same mess of problems that wracked the Young Hegelians, political economists and social revolutionaries of that era: universality or particularity, freedom or equality, ideology or critique, capital or class struggle, resistance or revolution. Only this time, there is no Marx to help us.