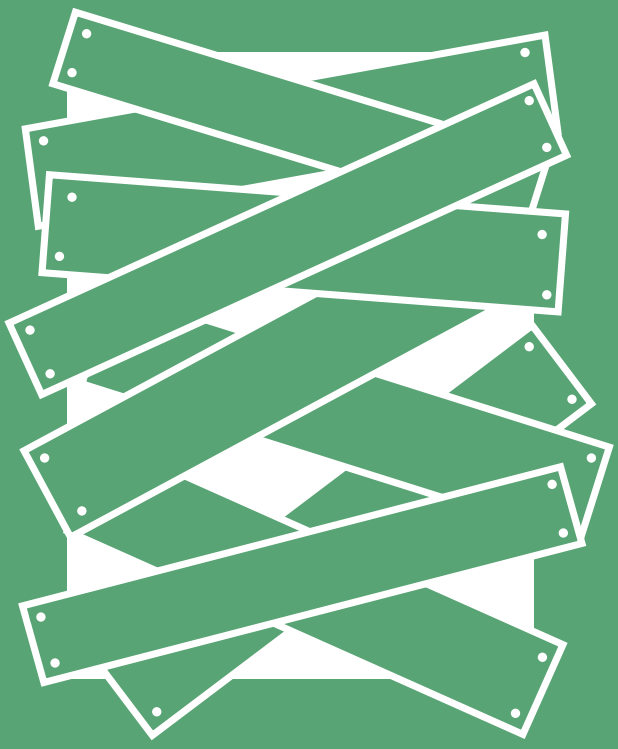
NR 4 /42/ 2021
ISSN 2081-8130

praktyka teoretyczna



LATENCY OF THE CRISIS

Byrd/ Gandesha/ Hall/ Kalia/ Listik/ Morelock/ Narita/
Pichnicka-Trivedi/ Silva/ Szadkowski/

praktyka teoretyczna

LATENCY OF THE CRISIS

Praktyka Teoretyczna
ISSN: 2081-8130
Nr 4(42)/2021 – Latency of the Crisis

Wersją pierwotną (referencyjną) czasopisma jest wydanie on-line publikowane na stronie https://pressto.amu.edu.pl/index.php/prt/

Wydawca:
Wydział Filozoficzny Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza
ul. Szamarzewskiego 89, 60-568 Poznań
Tel. (061) 829 22 80
E-mail: filozof@amu.edu.pl

Adres Redakcji:
„Praktyka Teoretyczna" Wydział Filozoficzny
Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza
ul. Szamarzewskiego 89, 60-568 Poznań
E-mail: praktyka.teoretyczna@gmail.com

Poznań 2021

Table of contents:

Spis treści:

FELIPE ZIOTTI NARITA (ORCID: 0000-0002-3139-1919)
JEREMIAH MORELOCK (ORCID: 0000-0002-6506-4940)

Critical Social Analysis of Crisis

In this article, we offer a critical social analysis of crisis in light of capitalist development and, above all, in the post-2008 world. We discuss five approaches in the social sciences that deal with the problem of crisis and develop some theoretical lines for a critical approach to the theme. We argue that precarity can be an important topic for grasping the current crises via critical approaches. The text also presents the six articles that are part of the issue we edited for *Praktyka Teoretyczna* entitled "Latency of the crisis."

Keywords: crisis, critical theory, social theory, precarity, globalization

Crisis is embedded in our social being in contemporary capitalist society. It can erupt in many forms and symptoms, like financial troubles, unemployment, collapsing health systems, urban planning problems, drug addiction, volatile housing prices, etc. It can also involve structural transformations in social relations subjected to the priorities of capital accumulation and pressures for technical modernization. Good examples are the market liberalization reforms under Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s (which first involved a deep recession and then, with the recovery, growing inequality), the privatization processes in Latin America in the 1990s (with structural unemployment rates and the construction of new relations between citizens and state) and the boom of the gig economy in the early 2010s. If "we must learn to live with crisis" (Bordoni 2016)—the very logic of financial capitalism expressed in the volatility and uncertainty of contemporary life (Feldner and Vighi 2015)—the current social grammar of resilience, adaptation and innovation interpellates us as needy subjects. The omnipresent sense of crisis then points us toward reconciliation and conformity with the current state of things.

Since the collapse of the postwar order in the late 1970s and the fall of the Bretton Woods system, financial capitalism has depended on a mix of periods of relative economic stability and long periods of economic crisis (McDonough et al. 2010). It comes as no surprise that mainstream reformist agendas, at least since the 1990s, have advocated public policy as a practical strategy to deal with abrupt economic oscillations and declining living standards. Under a functionalist perspective, the construction of welfare institutions is supposed to attenuate class conflicts, stabilize expectations, and mitigate the effects of market asymmetries (Farnsworth and Irving 2015). The problem, in this case, would be how to build the state's capacity to correct the social distortions provoked by volatile markets and how to reconcile deregulated markets with enduring human needs (Gray 1998, 132). With public policy designed to counter social deterioration, we are confined to confronting the possibility of managing crises yet to come. Critique seems empty under the rhetoric of technical interventions that are primarily concerned with political reforms of the institutional design of society.

Our *démarche* here goes in the opposite direction. *Crisis* and *critique* are cognates, since crisis-claims occasion critique as a way to inquire into the limitations and conditions for overcoming the distress (Roitman 2014, 30). In the spirit of the transdisciplinary efforts of the early Frankfurt School, we would like to conceive crisis as a theoretical tool for a critical approach that facilitates flexible and broad-reaching conceptualization of multidimensional social problems, a critique that is not

committed to false reconciliation, but rather exposes the current precarious situation as rooted in the immanent contradictions of capitalism. Inspired by Max Horkheimer's (1968d, 156–158) famous articulation of critical theory in 1937, we are interested mainly in dialectical social critique aiming not to better the functioning of this or that social institution, but that is rather "suspicious of the very categories of better, useful, appropriate, productive and valuable"; and that does seek to transform the present distress (*Not*), but not in a myopic spirit which kowtows to the immediate facts of the present.

A critique that is not committed to false reconciliation, but rather exposes the current precarious situation as rooted in the immanent contradictions of capitalism.

In what follows, we divide this article into four sections. In the first part, we discuss some important approaches to crisis in the social sciences, organizing them according to five delineated matrixes. The second part is devoted to building a theoretical perspective on crisis that is based upon early Frankfurt School critical theory, especially in light of the writings of Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno. The third part offers a framework for our main axis in this issue, that is, latent crisis (and the sense of precarity) as an important topic for understanding the contemporary crises of capitalism, above all, in the wake of the post-2008 financial crisis and the COVID-19 crisis. In the fourth part, we draw some connections between our general discussion and the articles that are part of this special issue.

Five Approaches to Crisis

Modernity has been a constant state of crisis: as a latent signature of the new historical time, the notion of crisis marked an epochal change whose condition is the acceleration, the growing uncertainty of the horizon of expectations and the volatilization of traditions (Koselleck 2012, 51–52). Critical events disrupt livelihood and compel society into a chronic sense of instability (Koselleck 2012, 80–84). Normative assumptions of modern progress, such as the affirmation of productivity, accumulation and rationalization of nature, became increasingly opaque. Strategies that were considered to bring the promises of modernity to fulfilment, e.g., promises of personal autonomy to self-create and self-assert, and of society's security with improvements in the forces of production and control of nature (Bauman and Bordoni 2014, 59–64; Jonas 2017), stumble when up against climate change and other environment problems in the Anthropocene (Ehlers and Krafft 2006; Moore 2016). Even the thesis of the aseptic triumph of medicine and, due to immunological technologies, the end of the "viral age" (Han 2015), seems untenable

with the socioeconomic and health troubles in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Crisis is the order of the day.

In the Marxist tradition, economic crisis is inevitable under capitalism (Mészarós 2022). In his categories for the critique of political economy articulated in *Capital*, Marx highlighted many socioeconomic dimensions of crisis. He demonstrated the constant perturbations that emerge from the crises of production and exchange due to fluctuations (*Wechsel*) of value (Marx 1962, 136). It affects living labor (within the theory of *Arbeitsprozess*) via violent interruptions on productive chains of value (ibid., 221) and, with a surplus worker population (i.e., mass unemployment), the threat of poverty pressures workers into accepting worse working conditions and more exploitation. The "industrial reserve army" of unemployed workers is thus a tool toward the valorization of human material (ibid., 661–662), rooted in the precarization of wages and living standards for working classes (ibid., 697). A distinctive achievement lies in the connection between economic oscillations of capital and the subjectivity of workers: in this sense, cycles of expansion, overproduction, crises and stagnation produce insecurity and instability for the living conditions of workers in light of the need for constant productive turns of machinery (and the subjective pressure to adaptation to new conditions of production and life) and competition for economic niches in the market (ibid., 476). Crisis theory played a major role in the writings of early Marxists, such as Friedrich Engels, Karl Kautsky, Eduard Bernstein and Rosa Luxemburg (Clarke 1994).

Capitalism is only viable as a world market grounded in the asymmetrical integration of centers and peripheries (especially former colonial areas) (Pradella 2014). This trend has paved the way for a Marxist tradition that tried to grasp crises from peripheral countries, where the dominant mode of production (capitalism) coexists with other relations of production, which are repurposed by capitalist accumulation and subjected to the oscillations of financial market. In Latin America, a Marxist revision of dependency theory took place in the 1960s and 1970s. Dependency relations were seen as a form of globalization (Santos 1978). The 1980s counted on the expansion of asymmetrical structures in the world market, above all, through the deregulation of financial institutions and the corrosion of state policy in the wake of the economic crisis in Latin America (Marini 1993).

Marx Beyond Marx, published by Antonio Negri in 1979, is an influential attempt at updating the Marxist approach in light of capitalism's post-1950s sociotechnical transformations. For Negri, Marxism is a "science of crisis and subversion," which he uses to articulate how

the contradictions of capitalism bring deprivation and reactivate subjectivity, making the latter appear in its revolutionary potentiality at a level determined by the productive forces (Negri 1991, 11). Crisis should not be misunderstood as a malaise that can be cured to restore a functional and normal state of society, nor should subjectivity be misunderstood within a restricted framework of economic exploitation. Instead, Negri's view is dialectical—crisis is immanent to the circulation of capital. "[T]hrough the circulation process the contradictions are endlessly reproduced" (Negri 1991, 94–95). Crisis is both the positive process and the negative determination of capital. On the one hand, as a positive moment, the valorization process of capital engenders limits which capital must go through with the creation of new needs, new use values and the cultivation of the qualities of social being via socialized labor. On the other hand, necessary labor limits the exchange value of living labor capacity, that is, a contradiction between necessary labor and surplus labor, since the working class represents the subjectivity limit of this antagonist relationship that is strengthened in form of crisis (ibid., 97). The subsuming of living labor and the increasingly socialized nature of labor (with abstract, intellectual cooperation in automation systems and machines) turns the circulation of capital relations a subjective *potenza* for the consciousness of the dependence of production to the appropriation of social forces, paving the horizon for the liberation of needs created by market (ibid., 133). Crises politicize the antagonisms structured by capital (ibid., 54), since the class cleavages of capital/labor and the oscillations of social conditions prone to abrupt crises open up a multitude (different social groups) that is affected in many ways by the private appropriation of socially generated goods. The liberated negation of this plural subject is not a new synthesis, but rather, it dismantles all homogeneity in favor of a plural structure of antagonisms (ibid., 150) in which the enlargement of class composition can connect the different moments of capital production.

Marxist approaches are well grounded in the material production of life—in the broad sense of Marx and Engels' *Lebensprozess*, that is, a process of production and reproduction that is not confined to economics, but also includes subjectivity (Marx and Engels 1978, 25–26). It highlights the dialectical processes behind capitalist crises and how these processes imply class antagonisms, exploitation and deprivation of the working and lower classes. However, an overly economistic approach can be reductive of the complex institutional and social dynamics in the highly differentiated societies of late capitalism. Marxism provides essential tools, and we will later suggest a dialectical approach that addresses

how the current crisis is inseparable from capitalist economics. Still, it is important to consider other social forces and avoid economistic or "vulgar" reductions.

The second matrix to understanding crisis is institutional, using systems theory (Holton 1987) to grasp sociocultural and political impasses in modern societies. Reformulating Talcott Parsons' structural-functionalism, Niklas Luhmann argues that modern societies are functionally differentiated due to the complexity of managing the many spheres of life. The social system lies in a latent state of "self-produced indetermination" (*selbsterzeugter Unbestimmtheit*) (Luhmann 1997, 745). Systemic protocols and procedures tend to handle contingencies, but the future is always unpredictable. Due to the high differentiation of social tasks, systems cannot intervene on behalf of each other nor perfectly substitute for one another's tasks (ibid., 763); crises, thus, tend to proliferate within each branch of the system. This is why, according to this systemic institutional approach, modern societies are prone to crises (ibid., 770): institutional differentiation enlarges the monitoring protocols through which social system becomes more sensible to its internal disorders due to the availability of more descriptions (data) of its *modus operandi*. In other words, if functional differentiation tends to integrate institutions to manage social demands, it also delivers insecurity under the latency of crises.

The institutional approach is also relevant for Jürgen Habermas (2002, 386), who points out that the systemic disequilibria become crises when the performances of economy and state remain manifestly below an established level of aspiration and harm the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld by calling forth conflicts and reactions of resistance there. Since state and economy are conceived as two structural axes for modern society, capitalism depends on a tense equilibrium between state intervention (with institutionalized policy to promote well-being and regulate some economic activities) and the market self-healing powers. The societal integration within lifeworld is affected by the institutional dysfunctionality, because anomic conditions reflect the lack of normative parameters to strengthen the trust in institution, uncoupling lifeworld from institutional systems and producing anomic conditions that are unable to secure the legitimation and the motivations that shelter institutional order of society. Efforts at connecting the systemic/institutional approach and critical theory have been made through the concept of "reflexivity" (Cordero et al. 2017) as a mean to account for the self-destructive tendencies of capitalist social dynamics. It points to practical-political strategy for designing responses to crises through

the amelioration of acquired institutional knowledge based on functional outputs and normative values. If a systemic institution (the congress, the parties, the economy, etc.) goes through a crisis, it implies that the institution fails to deliver those values that are central to their functional contribution. Crisis, thus, becomes a descriptive tool that monitors the functional operations and outcomes of institutions as well as the normative duties they are expected to fulfill; the critique, here, is not properly a dialectical negation of the current distress, but rather a way to denounce the malaise and propose a reformist strategy to the betterment of social system.

The third set of approaches points to a sociopsychological turn in the understanding of crises. It deals with interpersonal, individual and group adjustment to crisis situations, comprising the relational aspects of individuals, their reference groups and social networks (Eastham et al. 1970). The sociopsychological approach highlights the importance of cultural values in reaction to crisis and how people are emotionally impacted by the pressures of health concerns, income instability, mortality and the growing uncertainty/concerns about the future (Gu et al. 2020). The contradictions of globalization are considered in light of the expansion of precarious forms of life, with migration and mobility issues, as well as in light of the intersectional dimensions of crises and the need for adaptations of racialized and gendered lives (Dona and Veale 2021). With reference to current vulnerabilities, in the wake of the socioeconomic and psychological effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic turmoil of the 2010s, many studies (Oliveira et al. 2020; Shavit et al. 2021) have been devoted to analyzing the cognitive and affective components of subjective well-being. Sociopsychological approaches offer important observations of the pressures of our multiple crises on a subjective level, but they do not examine the systemic socioeconomic roots of the crisis, nor do they point toward overcoming these contradictions. They illustrate crisis but do not help us get out or avoid repetition.

A fourth approach argues for a broad sociocultural dimension: the risk society. There is a cognitive trend in the pervasive sense of crisis (Beck 1986, 73), since the invisible hazards are becoming more visible with the diffusion of information and the rationalization of the risks of modern society through the structures for management of the many branches of social system (environmental issues, epidemics, urban violence, growth rates, etc.). Risk implies an ontological condition of being aware of the impending global threats: within this framework, crises no longer occur outside our personal experiences and they are always *latent*

underneath the sense of normality. The sociocultural pressures of risk society imply a growing self-confrontational dynamic between policy and the risks (environmental, financial, urban and health problems) generated inside the modernizing moves (Sznaider 2015; Levy 2016; Le Breton 2018). Due to the global chains of circulation (information, trips, commerce, etc.), crises become disruptive transnational events that affect a global public (Beck 2007). Global risk society spreads uncertainty and volatilizes the secure (*vorgegeben*) credos of modernity (economic progress, division of labor, distribution of wealth, sanitary policy, etc.) (Beck 1986, 345) at the same time as it points to a structural shift from industrial society to a reflexive modernity grounded in the management of risks (Mythen 2014), since crises become normal events in the prospects of reflexive modernity. Risk society theories correctly reveal latency as a major trend of capitalist crises but are not clear in outlining a theoretical structure, beyond descriptive *Zeitdiagnosen*, to grasp and critique the nature of capitalist crises.

The fifth matrix highlights the interconnection approach, which grasps the complex interaction of the effects of the crises on diverse social realms, from sociality to political institutions, from labor market to living conditions, etc., producing a chain of vulnerabilities in the lifeworld (Pignarre and Stengers 2007). Sylvia Walby's (2015) "cascade theory" is particularly relevant for this discussion. According to her, contemporary crises are processes that operate diffuse movements that spread from one institutional domain to another, affecting from financial system to lifeworld. Crises, thus, are fragmented urgencies that intersect with other emergencies. Walby's reference for the cascade effect is the 2008 financial crisis, that is, an economic turmoil provoked by the financial system that strongly influenced austerity policy, which echoed in the exacerbation of class inequalities, violence, unemployment and poverty. Social system, instead of a stable hierarchy of determinations (like in institutional approaches), is conceived as a multiple adaptive system that can be more tightly or loosely coupled, depending on the chain of effects that arise from the current capitalist crises.

If descriptive schemes and causal explanations have contributed to organize multiple approaches on crises in contemporary social sciences, we argue that there is still a room for a *critical* attempt at grasping crises as a theoretical tool posited at the core of a dialectical social theory. A critical theory approach to understanding contemporary capitalist crises includes the critique of historical circumstances, processes, and systemic socioeconomic contradictions that have led us to the contemporary impasses.

Global Crisis through the Structural Analysis of Critical Theory

Ever since its beginnings at the Institute for Social Research in the Weimar Republic, critical theory has been concerned with crisis. In the 1930s, Horkheimer's articles discussed how social theory could employ dialectical critique to understand and dialectically negate the general state of crisis and contribute to its overcoming. In this sense, a dialectical approach contrasts with the positivist science, as he associated the typical primacy of the latter with the impotence of undialectical critical efforts that kowtow to the empiricist status quo and limit themselves to little more than mere description of phenomena. The dominant positivist epistemology veils scientific objectivity with an ideological intonation of neutrality and technicity that is supposed to lie over political engagement and cultural values. Mirroring the division of labor in society and its economic contradictions (Horkheimer 1968a, 6), it is unable to correct human wretchedness and has no structural responses to crises, because it eschews normative principles. This narrowing of the modern scientific purview, thus, fetishizes concepts avoiding them to shed light and to engage with the dynamic movement of events and social problems, since it understands knowledge as an immediate (*unmittelbar*) relationship between unchanging individual concepts and their application in reality (Horkheimer 1968a, 4). A science that is aware of its reflexive position regarding the contemporary distress implies the ethical task of pointing to alternatives coagulated in social structures.

Critique does not mean the immediate condemnation of a thing, but rather an intellectual and practical effort that does not stop at accepting prevailing ideas and conditions unthinkingly and from mere habit (Horkheimer 1968b, 310). It implies the examination of the foundations and validity claims of any knowledge claim that tries to impose itself as absolute. Critical theory is neither a description of facts nor an effort at harmonizing existing conditions: it unveils social contradictions disowned in popular ideas and invisible in the surface appearances of immediate facts. It cannot promise a reconciliation. Such a promise would be false, since the critical attitude is embedded in the contradictory tensions and crises of modern society (Horkheimer 1968d, 157). Contrary to theoretical thinking that is satisfied with grasping at phenomena with denotative concepts, and applying such concepts as external polarities immune to the impurities of reality, critical theory questions narrow separations (*Trennung*) like value/research, knowledge/action, etc. (which is also present in Habermas' [1992, 234] early attempts at unifying critique with knowledge and

interest), that are supposed to shield the subject from the contradictory tensions of reality.

Dialectic plays a key role in this approach, which involves considering not only abstract concepts, but also the material background that produces contemporary misery. The theoretical and practical activity is not an autonomous (*unabhängige*) knowledge of a fixed object that stands, like a transcendental dimension, above historicity and human contingencies (Horkheimer 1968c, 48–49). Instead, it is an irreducible tension between subject and object that are engaged as products of an ever-changing reality (*verändernden Realität*) with which consciousness relates itself. The moments of this process determine each other continually and their presentation (*Darstellung*) cannot hypostasize only one element as an effective factor that does not consider the contradictory relation with the other elements and moments. Subjective and objective factors are tensioned since "knowledge itself turns out [*hervortreten*] to be a historical phenomenon" (ibid., 52). The abstract description of concepts and its reconciliatory attempt at adapting concepts to reality cannot suppress the scrutiny of the material conditions that produce life as much as the normative force of concepts. As a science of crisis, thus, critical theory and its materialist background are concerned with the analysis and the alternatives to the determined relations under which individuals experience the distress (ibid., 53). Critical theory is aware of its partiality, since through the act of knowing (Habermas 1992), it belongs to the objective context of life that it strives to grasp.

As a science of crisis, thus, critical theory and its materialist background are concerned with the analysis and the alternatives to the determined relations under which individuals experience the distress.

Some social theorists have argued that critical theory builds from an ideal of emancipation that was never properly explained (Kolakowski 2005, 1102). If the subject to whom the theory is addressed has become problematic—be it the proletariat or even "the tradition of the oppressed" of Walter Benjamin (1977)—the theory remains critical since it expresses a denunciation and the non-reconciliation with the developments of the socioeconomic system. In this sense, shedding light on crisis as a theoretical challenge for critical social sciences, we attempt to analyze the contemporary distresses of global capitalism through the prism of critical theory, refracting its contradictions and unrealized promises of emancipation. We argue that a theoretical scheme devoted to grasp capitalist crises must articulate dialectical critique with a constellation of socioeconomic processes (class inequalities, power asymmetries, property, income, etc.) and the false prospects of reconciliation (technological disruption, productivity, social mobility, etc.) in global capitalism.

In the late 1960s, Theodor Adorno pointed out in his final lectures that the promises of rationalization under modern capitalism are always

contradicted in a society prone to a permanent sense of crisis. The rationality of modern society unfolds its irrational content since it does not deliver its main *raison d'être*, which is to say, the emancipation of the individual (Adorno 2000, 132–133). Crises are latent since they threaten with insecurity and are part of the immanent conditions of reproduction of reified capitalist relations, which depend on the permanent extension and disruption of its productive forces that collapse the former ones (ibid., 40). The structural susceptibility to crises implies not only pauperization, but also a broader condition of damage over life under modernizing moves that promise abundance and deliver scarcity (Adorno 1975, 170). The critique of industrial society and its crises also emphasized the mechanisms of surplus-repression (Marcuse 1966, 155) and the need for subjective adaptation to productivity.

In the 1990s and the 2000s, within the normative principles of liberal democracy, there was a trend in critical theory to analyze deficits of multicultural democracies, including identity and the politics of difference (Young 2000; Stirk 2005), and the effects of moral recognition and injustice in social cohesion (Honneth 2000). Today the situation could be changing. In the wake of the uneven recovery and the scars of the financial crisis, *pari passu* with the emergencies regarding environmental issues and the strong sense of material inequalities and vulnerabilities, critical theory practitioners have been exploring the damaged terrain provoked by the multiple crises (Schweiger 2020). Liberal democracy, instead of a normalized horizon, became problematic with the rise of far-right populism in the late 2010s (Morelock 2018; 2021; Morelock and Narita 2021). The emphasis on a moral sense of injustice goes and in hand with the presence of social conflict to consider sociocultural criteria of shared belonging to a polity (Barnett 2017). The very concept of reification, which played a major role in early Frankfurt School and connected critical theory to the developments of Marxism and the Weberian theory of rationalization (via Georg Lukács), has been used to grasp conformity and the primacy of instrumental colonization of social relations that are prone to crisis effects under market economies (Chari 2010; Smulewicz-Zucker 2020). It also has been grasping the social effects of the superimposed crises (2008 financial crisis and COVID-19) through the critique of austerity policy and new forms of domination (O'Kane 2021).

When we talk about crisis, we should keep in mind the often-invisible border separating crisis from decadence. If crisis erupts and devastates, decadence generates drift, political disorientation, and inaction. We are dealing with an uncanny combination of both of these social

moods. If we look for historical milestones, we can identify a turning point in the 2007–2008 near-crash of financialized capitalism in core countries/regions (the United States, Western Europe and Japan) and the expansion of the financial crisis to the peripheries from 2012 onwards. About a decade later, we have lived in suspended time of latency: the worst seemed to be over (at least in core countries), but the crisis turned late capitalism into a landscape of unrealized promises considering the growing economic inequality and precarity, and the shock-therapy of radical liberal economic reforms and privatization processes in pauperized (semi)peripheral countries (Argentina, Brazil, Turkey, Greece, etc.).

With the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the latency burst. In other words— and this is the distinctive feature of the contemporary ambivalence—the recovery remains uneven and the scars of precarization extend from the homeless of Los Angeles and Philadelphia (Al Jazeera 2020; NPR 2021) to the poverty in the Brazilian streets (Natalino 2020). More than a crisis, would this be a slow-motion *débâcle*? There is no easy answer to this question. We understand the sense of crisis as a *Stimmung*, meaning a preponderant mood that underlies our historical period. The ambivalent contemporary situation lends itself to a perpetual state of emergency. The critical approach on crisis, thus, has to consider how precarity has been shaping social relations and dismantling the promises of capitalist modernizing moves.

Latency and Precarity

Crisis has been a pervasive slogan in the news over the last decade, a kind of signature of the post-2008 world (Skidelsky 2010; Rodrik 2011). According to Slavoj Žižek (2011, 403–404), the discourse of crisis was normalized. This normalization marked a condition defined by unrest and uncertainty regarding vulnerabilitie—be they repressed, latent, in conformation with the order of things, or diffuse among the urgencies of "risk society" and its different institutions (ecological crisis, financial speculation, corruption in political system, etc.).

The 2010s were marked by global, multitudinary protests in the streets, and expressed the contradictions of growth-at-all-costs policy. The three films by Yannis Youlountas—*Ne vivons plus comme des esclaves* (2013), *Je lutte donc je suis* (2015) and *L'amour et la revolution* (2018)—express the sense of latent crisis with strong disaffection about established institutions and the long-lasting effects of austerity measures. On the

one hand, there were residential expulsions (due to housing prices and mortgages), high unemployment rates, lower wages, and privatization of public institutions to solve debt crises. On the other hand, resistance strategies fed molecular movements (e.g., self-management collectives, struggles for the common, etc.), which, with the eruption of latent demands and multiple crises, exhibited spontaneous street protest as a primary challenge to the surface of order and stability of liberal capitalist democracies (Narita 2019; Morelock and Narita 2021). These movements fit with Marcuse's (2015, 184–185) theory of *practical contradictions* of capitalism, since the political responses to capitalist crises are not only dependent on political parties (such as a Leninist vanguard party), but can rather include diffuse assemblages of small groups that are not properly prepared for political organization. More than established social movements grounded in organized civil society, Manuel Castells (2019) calls these movements "social explosions," that is, eruptions of the multitude out of the surface of normality that tend to last long with violent street protests. In Santiago (Chile), when clashes erupted in October 2019 after a hike in transportation costs, it became evident that the protests were not only about transport prices nor social mobility in the city. The rate of social inequality in Chile, for example, is among the highest in Latin America (a region with chronic inequality). Privatized retirement pensions, falling wages, and inflated healthcare and education costs (which had already been present in the student's mass protests in 2011) soon became part of the leitmotiv of the street demonstrations. The violence of the military apparatus and the militarization of state institutions exposed how the transition to democracy in the 1990s left many authoritarian scars in the country. The story tells us how resentment and frustration are accumulated under the surface of normality, beneath the skin of civility and the progresses of the market economy. A single measure was enough to liberate a multitudinal movement that mobilized many chains of conflict and authoritarianism latent under the normalization mood of liberal democracy. Via Twitter circulated the perfect slogan of this situation in November 2019: "we will not return to normality, because normality was the problem." This Chilean prelude is the best description of the roots of the crisis. It is a metaphor of the post-2008 times and the *expanded precarity*, with growing inequalities, carrying a sense of a damaged sociality that can suddenly burst like a cascading effect of multiple crises.

Precarity, as a concept and an approach in social theory, emerged in the 1960s to describe the impacts of modernization on livelihood. Pierre Bourdieu, in his research on Algeria, coined the approach in reference

to the "precarious mode of existence" of a colonial population that was subjected to inclement weather and the asymmetrical integration into the global market, forcing individuals to sell their land and emigrate to become a sub-proletarian in capitalist core economies (Bourdieu 1962, 135). He used precarity as an analytical tool to examine structural transformations and moral disorientation, for example, in family nucleus and widely extended structures of solidarity in light of the rise of individualistic imperatives of the capitalist economic system (ibid., 141). Robert Castel emphasized the impacts of modernizing moves of capitalism on the transformations of the systems of social protection and the complexification of social risks that expand the sense of vulnerability due to growing insecurity (Castel 2003, 25). Crises and the volatility of social conditions tend to "dissocialize the individual" (ibid., 47) with a lack of cohesion under the pressures of unemployment, precarity of means of assistance (distributive programs, public health system, etc.), uncertainty in relation to wages and revenues and the menace of degradation of individual social status. To sum up, precarity is a two-way street: it refers both to (1) the sense of uncertainty due to modernizing moves and destructive processes of capitalism and (2) a latent state of distress and hardship that affects care and protection to stabilize life conditions.

The condition of precarity is not properly new in capitalist history. The experience of regular, long-term employment, which markets the appeal of Fordist production and the society of consumption of the 20th century (Marcuse 1966), seems to be an exception and only the tip of an entangled iceberg built on unpaid work, invisibility (domestic work), coercive work in colonies, exploitation, etc. (Mitropoulos 2005). In the periphery of capitalism, global cities like São Paulo or Bogotá have been facing the precarization of livelihood since their urban outburst between the 1970s and the 1990s. Colombian urban realism (with writers like Andrés Caicedo and Efraim Medina Reyes) and the film *Rodrigo D: No Future* (1990), for example, emphasize the subcultures (punk rock, decadent night clubs, drug addiction, etc.) forged under social violence in chaotic Latin American urban zones. One of the effects of precarity may be that the self is no longer centered on stable values (derived from morality, religion, career, relatively stable revenues, etc.), but *fragmented* in temporary, unstable experiences in labor, affects, etc. (Wilson 1986).

The new thing is *the spread of precarization in those domains that were long considered secure* in the Fordist era. In other words, precarity is no longer confined to ghettos, low-wage jobs, big urban zones in peripheral countries or colonial areas (colonies and racialization, moreover, were

the hidden counterpart that sustained the progressive imaginary embedded in the welfare policy implemented in many central economies until the 1970s). The standards of the traditional middle classes, counting on long-term job security, correlation between educational degrees and income, decent housing and good remuneration have been drastically reshaped (Maguire 2020; Barbosa 2020). As a by-product of capitalist relations of production, the precariat (Standing 2011) has emerged as a class marked by chronic uncertainty and dependent on on-demand services (the fake self-employment and entrepreneurialism), informal market, crowd-sourcing activities, zero-hour contract and partial-time jobs. From schools and universities to big companies, middle-class positions have been structurally rearranged through the flexibilization of capital relations. In other words, a lack of security (labor rights and a minimum predictability) and the dissociation between higher educational standards and good revenues have been transforming the relationship between the individual and the state as well as turning the horizon of market economies into a terrain of broken promises and failed expectations of social mobility.

Precarity is the most visible sign of the general crisis. In the wake of the 2008 financial crisis and its global effects (the 2010 Euro crisis, the Greek crisis of 2015 and the shock of commodities prices that affected peripheral economies since 2011-2012), stagnant wages and rising costs of living have normalized hard times (Pascale 2021). Austerity policy became a mantra to impose crisis as a way to rule society with the menace of scarcity and affirm the impersonal character of the economic power of capital, paving the way to the reproduction of its rule over social needs (Mau 2021, 303). Financialization and derivatives markets organize power relations as they optimize social relations according to the tendencies of global capital (Sotiropoulos et al. 2013). It is a turning point in the liberal international order constructed in the 1980s: hyper-globalization sought to minimize barriers to global trade and investment resulted in lost jobs, declining wages and income inequality, turning the international financial system less stable and vulnerable to recurring crises (Mearsheimer 2019). This scenario was reinforced long before the COVID-19 crisis with the growing deregulation of labor market, as an economic response to the effects of financial crisis (Durand 2015), with neoliberal reforms in Spain (2012) and in Brazil (2017) (Pérez-Lanzac 2020; Xavier 2021) and the spread of temporary contracts, intermittent work and insecure positions.

Austerity policy became a mantra to impose crisis as a way to rule society with the menace of scarcity and affirm the impersonal character of the economic power of capital, paving the way to the reproduction of its rule over social needs.

In global cities like Bangkok, Hong Kong or Seoul (Rosario and Rigg 2019; Endo 2014), transnational migrants without basic protection,

factory workers employed on casual contracts and minorities dispossessed by land grabbing or resettled to make way for mega-projects point how to live with risk and ever-changing, worsening conditions of material reproduction of life. Objective and subjective factors of precarity, thus, must be paired together. Low and irregular income, employment insecurity, limited access to social security (in the wake of the crisis of the welfare state in the 1980s) and a lack of representation in collective agency (trade unions, etc.) shape living conditions with the restriction of people's ability to plan for the future and accomplish personal life plans (Gardawski et al. 2020).

Precarity is an experience of privation that corrodes the quality of social ties (Pierret 2013; Narita 2021) and comprises different forms of vulnerability that echo the qualitative effects of the breakdown of stable social relations (Butler 2006). It is not only a renaming of Marxism's stress on the steady impoverishment of the labor force, with the steady forced immiseration and proletarianization of the workforce, but also a subjective pressure marked by qualitative deterioration of the conditions of life (comprising the danification of individual autonomy, gender inequalities, racial stigma). In this sense, it involves social positionings of insecurity that are pervaded by class cleavages, neighborhood (urban violence, infrastructure, etc.), access to social security institutions, employment and mobile conditions with a lack of security (e.g. migrant workers without citizenship, but living inside national economic borders under racialized global capitalism). If precarity forces individuals to live *with* contingency, we are governable through precarization (Lorey 2015, 45); that is, we are constituted as subjects-effects of the normalizing power that naturalizes worsening conditions. The need for adaptation subjects the population to the profitability of calculated exchangeability and production: individuals are supposed to modulate themselves according to the constrictions of an ever-changing, asymmetrical condition of competition and according to subjective subservience regarding the lowered minimum of safeguarding (ibid., 70–71). Crisis is a tool for the government of the population and is used to impose measures that can restrict social protection and make precarity a way of life.

The economic rationality that favors accumulation over matters of distribution distorts social cohesion. Inequality is an intersectional problem that connects many social dimensions (gender, race and class) and implies policy committed to mitigate precarity at the same time as it empowers communities. It has implied new public policy for redistribution and recognition with state action, like in South Africa (Ferguson 2015) and in Brazil (Rego and Pinzani 2014) in the 2000s and 2010s,

in which states make cash payments to their low-income citizens to reduce poverty and promote social cohesion via financial autonomy, the positive role of women in conducting their families, integration of children into the school system and health assistance. In this context, it is also important to consider care and affective background of common, embodied experiences of lives struggling with commodification through different strata of gender, class and culture (Majewska 2020; Ivancheva et al. 2020; Illouz 2007). Policy committed to redistribution can thus help overcome precarity with the need for recognition (Fraser 2003) as a combined matrix to correct the distortions of market economies and to empower social identities by providing material goods.

Public policy committed to distributive efforts point to an important outcome of the multiple crises of contemporary capitalism: the form of inequality is not confined to income or wealth; rather, it deals with the lack of security and self-confidence (Azmanova 2020). Society that forces a constant need for adaptation and flexibility makes broken subjects (êtres brisés) due to the constant ruptures and fragmented livelihood (Marin 2019). The rise of gig economy in the 2010s, besides being the outcome of technological disruption, was also a structural response to the 2008 financial crisis with new patterns of capital accumulation (Graham and Anwar 2019) and precarity. With the digital morphology of material labor, cities became an integrated network of services fed by real-time demands that exposed the flaccidity of post-crash recovery based on the loss of worker's rights and the myth of choice, self-employment, autonomy and flexibility of labor forced to pick among various low-paying employers (Ravenelle 2019). Gig work platforms where workers are registered as employees, with the associated benefits, are exceptions. The creation of jobs for millions was not without cost, since the accumulation is based on the transference of significant risk and responsibility onto the workers (Woodcock and Graham 2019). Platform capitalism has diffused on demand services by selling fraudulent togetherness of terms, like peer and sharing, to veil strong asymmetries of highly monopolized platforms (Scholz 2016) that deregulate labor relations and expose workers to precarious forms of material and immaterial work.

As technologies of subjectivity, the spread of gig economy has paired together policies that induce competitivity among citizens and the subjection of population under the optimization of production (Ong 2006). With COVID-19, the crisis seems worse, because the automation and the disruption of "digital economy" (Durand 2020) go hand in hand with a crisis of social reproduction and unemployment (Long 2021).

Beyond sociotechnical disruption, deindustrialization and stagnant economies have been affecting the pace of productivity growth and the generation of employment, with governments under the stranglehold of private sector and the conversion of profits into buybacks and dividends (Benanav 2020). Technology and social relations dialectically affect one another paving the way for new dynamics of accumulation and producing modes for governing, on the one hand, the precarity of an underpaid, insecure workforce that processes data in crowdworking platforms (Jones 2021) and, on the other hand, the impeding crises via the subjection of the population.

Technological disruption also favored new structures for disciplinary control and surveillance techniques. New surveillance capabilities developed in the wake of 9/11, for example, are transforming the ability of governments to monitor and track individuals or remote systems. We normalized technologies of control to manage the circulation of commodities and people, like drones (Chamayou 2013; Peron 2019), and to monitor our lives via automated border control systems, city cameras, etc. According to research led at Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (Feldstein 2019), at least 75 out of 176 countries are actively using artificial intelligence technologies for surveillance purposes, including smart city/safe city platforms, facial recognition systems, smart policing and big data mechanisms linked to public and private companies. Democracies are not taking adequate steps to monitor the spread of sophisticated technologies, since they are linked to a range of violations—for example, the polemic with the military-grade spyware licensed by Israel to governments for tracking terrorists and criminals was used to hack cellphones of journalists and activists worldwide (Priest et al. 2021).

The impetus for critical theory does not disappear in the administered society under the imperative of individual adaptation and reconciliation with capitalism (Fong 2016). Due to the pervasive effects of the crises, a critical theory might play a major role in understanding and overcoming the reified terrain (Bloch 1962) produced by capital.

Latency of the Crisis: A Multidimensional Perspective

With different connotations and modulations between core and peripheral countries, and conceptions varying across different social strata (economic, cultural, political, etc.), crisis has become an intrinsic element of contemporary social imaginations. The issue gathers scholars from Poland, Canada, United States, Brazil and England to illuminate the

multiple angles concerning the problem of crisis in contemporary society and social theory.

In the wake of the Euro crises in the early 2010s, Dustin Byrd argues that the upsurge of right-wing nationalisms is not merely a reaction against the liberal discourse of cosmopolitanism of the early globalization, but rather an identity struggle that deals with the dialectics of history grounded on false hopes rooted in an idealized Christian identity. Byrd proposes a strong framework to grasp the rise of ethno-nationalism as a by-product of the multiple crises of post-secular societies, comprising refugee crisis, socioeconomic uncertainties and the construction of a secular polity *pari passu* the significant force of religion among citizens and democratic deliberations. In this context, identity values and cultural homogeneity are constricted by multiple pressures of liberal policies and the challenges of the multicultural, post-colonial order. The use of Christendom to restore a lost tradition of order and unity implies the politicization of religion and a "palingenetic ultra-nationalist Christianity," which attempts at restoring the cultural purity of the *Volksgemeinschaft* and the mirages of historical continuity between the present and the invented traditions of the alleged Christian foundations of Europeanness and the nativist content of the people.

Besides ethno-nationalism and the force of religion, one of the main expressions of contemporary capitalist crises and liberal democracies instabilities is the diffusion of right-wing populist movements in the United States, Brazil, France, and Hungary. The radicalization of conservative agendas (Strobl 2021) plays a major role in the uses of traditional components (Christianity) in political rhetoric and points to the importance of the politicization of senses and emotions in public sphere. Patrycja Pichnicka-Trivedi argues that populist discourses operate according to a structural logics to shock the senses with moral and divisive connotations to mobilize popular resentment, hatred and the sense of injustice among citizens in relation to state and the elites. The comparative study between two cases (Poland and the United States) shows how populist logics constructs efficacy in different contexts, among other factors, due to the circulation of empty signifiers in the era of digital networks. In this sense, nodal categories of populist discourse (the people, the corrupted, we/them, etc.) can be used as pieces of puzzles and quite arbitrarily matched into combinations to create (empty) signifying structures. If signifiers get their political meaning through emotional investment, authoritarian populist movements may find a fertile terrain to feed disaffection towards liberal democracy.

Samir Gandesha states that the enduring crisis of capitalism and liberal democracy has become a condition of contemporary livelihood. As an effect of ontological insecurity of citizens regarding the changing socioeconomic and cultural conditions, contemporary traits of fascism can be analyzed as political expressions of the right-wing authoritarian attacks on liberal democracy, expressed in the rise of Viktor Orbán, Donald Trump, Jair Bolsonaro and Narendra Modi in the 2010s. On the one hand, economic reason based on extractivist policies and imposition of austerity measures promotes an endocolonization strategy that extends from the ecological crisis (e.g., developmental programs and fires in the Amazon) to the eviction of local communities (e.g., the Adivasi in India) and market reforms that corrode welfare. On the other hand, a "post-human fascism" becomes a way of governing by omission: during the pandemic, the superfluousness of lives becomes clear with negationist policy that put workers (above all precarious workers) at grave risk of contracting or even dying from the virus (United States, Brazil and India count on the most severe death toll and contagion).

The article of Jeremiah Morelock, Yonathan Listik and Mili Kalia discusses the COVID-19 crisis in the United Kingdom and how neoliberal rationality and utilitarian, sympathetic logics were paired together in the management of one of the worst scenarios in Europe. The public speeches of Boris Johnson emphasize the notion of sacrifice to honor a general mass he hails, producing a political effect of responsibilization of the individual citizen for the success in the face of the crisis. In this way, the discourse of governance, with the technical management of society, tends to divert the emphasis on politics and affirm the need for saving the economy as if the common good depended on the efficiency of the market. Government no longer acts politically in the sense of having an overarching responsibility towards all citizens to generate well-being, nor is committed to politics or ideological agendas. It acts technically; that is, it lies above particular interests and, like a wishful thinking, problems are not political, but rather a matter for technical intervention guided by neutral agents. Government is supposed to neutralize ideologies and its role is merely to safeguard individuals and ensure the market can naturally resolve any crisis that might emerge.

In a society in which inequalities are deepening, the normalization of political economic crises defines the contours of many branches of social life. In higher education, the apex of modern educational systems and the "general intellect" (Marx) of society (our shared, collective set of knowledge, innovation, capabilities, etc.), the signs of crisis go hand in hand with the structural contradictions of global capitalism. Krystian

Szadkowski and Richard Hall present a strong analysis of how the university can be a potential site for social imagination to contradict the dominant neoliberal grammar that favors the entrepreneurial subjective engagement based on human capital, productivity, value-for-money, flexibility (a cool concept that generally means precarization), etc. The pressures for production and competition, moved by accumulation and the abstraction of intellectual work through rankings and metrics, is part of an anti-human project grounded in the commodification of the general intellect and its common, shared potentialities. The architecture of knowledge production as a mode of commodification might be ruptured through both the critique of Western hegemony (opening up the theoretical and political imagination to post-colonial scenarios) and new political prospects that posit the university as a privileged site for the production of the common.

The commonwealth cannot deny the access to what is socially produced. This axis is dismantled in class societies, in which economic inequalities turn into social asymmetries, that is, class cleavages affect the distribution of power and subjective well-being: especially in crises conjunctures, this fracture in social cohesion often implies the burst of poverty. Hélio Alexandre Silva sheds light on a critical theory of poverty—a theme that is often implicit in many critical theorists (Walter Benjamin, Max Horkheimer, Giorgio Agamben, etc.) and needs deep analysis for the critique of contemporary society. Silva argues that poverty and its chains of lack and privation imply an assimilation between poverty and the minimum by offering only subsistence to deal with the problem—a false reconciliation that, instead of overcoming the distress, tends to naturalize inequalities.

The critical exposition points to an interesting limitation of contemporary social policy that tries to combat poverty by reproducing market structures. The consumerist hypothesis, based on the expansion of accumulation and private property of goods, is not enough as private property does not mean the expansion of social and individual capabilities. Prompt responses of institutional policies committed to empowering groups, and redistributive policies that soften the abrupt oscillations of market economies and their effects on social cohesion, can play an important role in designing universal basic income projects. But the critique of the precarization of livelihood needs a political grammar that challenges the structures that beget these problems. Capitalism is crisis-prone—if not crisis-destined—due to its immanent social and economic contradictions. Whether latent or manifest in any given instance, crisis is intrinsic to capitalism, and in an interconnected, globalized society, the gravitation

is toward global crisis. Social and economic contradictions are integral to the logic of the system, and inhabit the very foundation of socialization. The society of alienated commodity producers that is dependent on the perpetual and anarchic expansion of capital generates systemic economic volatility and social inequalities, a precarious socioeconomic structure in which strong class inequalities overlaps racial, gender and national divisions. Like a downhill stream, capitalism's law of motion directs it toward total crisis. Shoring up the flow at one junction or another will only change the temporary appearance of the downhill trajectory, but the destination remains the same. A more fundamental shift is necessary to change directions. Instead of the logic of possession, which reiterates the same class structure that generates social asymmetries, a *common* access to what is socially produced is crucial to generate commonwealth.

Instead of the logic of possession, which reiterates the same class structure that generates social asymmetries, a common access to what is socially produced is crucial to generate commonwealth.

Critique, as a dialectical movement of understanding and negation, looks towards the liberation of real possibilities that remain coagulated under the current conditions. If the worsening of the living standards affects multiple dimensions of livelihood with precarization (income, comforts, security and services available), it also generates an expanded sense of inequality (Stiglitz 2006) that goes beyond the gap between rich and poor and entails structural asymmetries of power grounded in propertied and non-propertied segments of populations. The common, as a way to transform the capitalist socialization among owners, might rethink political economy (Papadimitropoulos 2020) with a critical thrust committed to institute new ethics and social relations. Experiences with the common can be tracked from digital goods to education, governance of urban space and community projects dealing with shared, non-profitable access to what is socially produced or inherited (Foster and Iaione 2016; Narita 2020). This collective governance of the common is based on mutuality and co-operation (beyond market imperatives), and introduces ways of managing goods and services (education, health, food, habitation, information) that can counter the unequal patterns of wealth (Rendueles and Subirats 2016) grounded in class cleavages and the damage to collective well-being and subjective security. The shift of the COVID-19 crisis is a challenge to raise a kind of critique that does not kowtow to a false reconciliation with the return to the "old normal". The "old normal" is not only the society that brought us to this impasse, but also the society that was unable to deliver its own promises of development and normalized a permanent, latent state of crisis in the face of a lack of alternatives to solve its inner contradictions.

Acknowledgments: This issue was made possible due to a transnational network that was established between August 2019 and October 2021. Some themes and ideas were discussed in research and teaching activities at the São Paulo State University (UNESP) and Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCar) in Brazil. The call for papers and the main guidelines of this volume were published before the pandemics, but the writing of the articles and the whole editorial process occurred during the pandemic crisis. We are grateful to *Praktyka Teoretyczna* and the Research Network on Dialectics & Society, which provided a strong infrastructure and an intense intellectual engagement for us to deal with the *bouvelersements* of our times. We would like to express our thanks to Marta Wicha, Wiktor Marzec, Krystian Szadkowski and Mikołaj Ratajczak for their patience, editorial expertise and support with the Polish translation of the articles. Thanks are also due to Joanna Bednarek, Łukasz Moll, Zahoor Ahmad Wani, Bartosz Wójcik, Tiago Santos Salgado, Raia Apostolova, John Hutnyk, Jakub Krzeski, Bruno Botelho Costa, Panayota Gounari, Maria Cristina Dancham Simões, Eliasz Robakiewicz, Dallel Sarnou, Bruno Cursini, Dilyana Kiryakova-Ryan, Charles Reitz, Silvio Carneiro, Hille Haker and Robert Antonio.

References

Adorno, Theodor. 1975. „Spätkapitalismus oder Industriegesellschaft?" In *Gesellschaftstheorie und Kulturkritik*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

———. 2000. *Introduction to Sociology*. Translated by Edmund Jephcott. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.

Al Jazeera. 2020. „Cars Become Home for Spain's Pandemic Casualties." *Al Jazeera*, March 24.

Azmanova, Albena. 2020. *Capitalism on Edge: How Fighting Precarity Can Achieve Radical Change Without Crisis or Utopia*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Barbosa, Nelson. 2020. "Espremendo a classe média no Brasil e nos EUA." *Getulio Vargas Foundation News*, January 8.

Barnett, Clive. 2017. *The Priority of Injustice: Locating Democracy in Critical Theory*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

Bauman, Zygmunt, and Carlo Bordoni. 2014. *State of Crisis*. London: Polity.

Beck, Ulrich. 1986. *Risikogesellschaft: auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne*.

Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
———. 2007. *Was ist Globalisierung?* Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
Benanav, Aaron. 2020. *Automation and the Future of Work*. New York: Verso.
Benjamin, Walter. 1977. „Über den Begriff der Geschichte." In *Illuminationen*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
Bloch, Ernst. 1962. *Verfremdungen*, vol. 1. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
Bordoni, Carlo. 2016. *Interregnum: Beyond Liquid Modernity*. Berlin: Transcript.
Bourdieu, Pierre. 1962. *The Algerians*. Translated by Alan M. Ross. Boston: Beacon.
Butler, Judith. 2006. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London: Verso.
Castel, Robert. 2003. *L'insecurité sociale*. Paris: Seuil.
Castells, Manuel. 2019. "Explosiones sociales." *La Vanguardia*, October 25.
Chamayou, Grégoire. 2013. *Théorie du drone*. Paris: La Fabrique.
Chari, Anita. 2010. "Toward a Political Critique of Reification: Lukács, Honneth and the Aims of Critical Theory." *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 36(5): 587–606. https://doi.org/10.1177/0191453710363582.
Clarke, Simon. 1994. *Marx's Theory of Crisis*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Cordero, Rodrigo, Aldo Mascareño, and Daniel Chernilo. 2017. "On the Reflexivity of Crises: Lessons from Critical Theory and Systems Theory." *European Journal of Social Theory* 20(4): 102–134.
Dona, Giorgia, and Angela Veale. 2021. "Crisis, (Im)mobilities and Young Life Trajectories." *Social Sciences* 10(7).
Durand, Cédric. 2015. *Le Capital Fictive. Comment la Finance s'Approprie de Notre Avenir*. Paris: Les Prairies ordinaires.
Durand, Cédric. 2020. *Techno-Féodalisme. Critique de l'Économie Numérique*. Paris: La Découverte.
Eastham, Katherine, Donald Coates, and Federico Allodi. 1970. "The Concept of Crisis." *Canadian Psychiatric Association Journal* 15(5): 463–472.
Ehlers, Eckart, and Thomas Krafft. 2006. *Earth System Science in the Anthropocene: Emerging Issues and Problems*. London: Springer.
Endo, Tamaki. 2014. *Living with Risk: Precarity and Bangkok's Urban Poor*. Kyoto: Kyoto University Press.
Farnsworth, Kevin, and Zoë Irving. 2015. *Social Policy in Times of Austerity: Global Economic Crisis and the New Politics of Welfare*. Bristol:

Bristol University Press.
Feldner, Heiko, and Fabio Vighi. 2015. *Critical Theory and the Crisis of Contemporary Capitalism*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
Ferguson, James. 2015. *Give a Man a Fish: Reflecting on the New Politics of Distribution*. Durham: Duke University Press.
Feldstein, Steven. 2019. *The Global Expansion of AI Surveillance*. New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
Fong, Benjamin. 2016. *Death and Mastery: Psychoanalytic Drive Theory and the Subject of Late Capitalism*. New York: Columbia University Press.
Foster, Sheila, and Christian Iaione. 2016. "The City as a Commons." *Yale Law & Policy Review* 34(2): 230–262.
Fraser, Nancy. 2003. "Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition and Participation." In *Redistribution or Recognition?*, edited by Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser. New York: Verso.
Gardawski, Juliusz, Adam Mrozowicki, and Vera Trappmann. 2020. *Young Precarious Workers in Poland and Germany. Insights into life strategies, political consciousness and activism*. Warsaw: National Science Centre Poland.
Graham, Mark, and Mohammad Anwar. 2019. "The Global Gig Economy: Towards a Planetary Labour Market?" *First Monday* 24(4).
Gray, John. 1998. *False Dawn: The Delusions of Global Capitalism*. New York: W.W. Norton.
Gu, Yuanyuan, Simeng Gu, and Hong Li. 2020. "From Uncertainty to Anxiety: How Uncertainty Fuels Anxiety in a Process Mediated by Intolerance of Uncertainty." *Neural Plasticity* 20(1).
Habermas, Jürgen. 1992. *Erkenntnis und Interesse*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
———. 2002. "The Tasks of a Critical Theory of Society." In *Contemporary Sociological Theory*, edited by Craig Calhoun and Joseph Gerteis. London: Blackwell.
Han, Byung-Chul. 2015. *The Burnout Society*. Translated by Erik Butler. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.
Holton, R.J. 1987. "The Idea of Crisis in Modern Society." *The British Journal of Sociology* 38(4): 502–520.
Honneth, Axel. 2000. *Das Andere der Gerechtigkeit*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
Horkheimer, Max. 1968a. „Bemerkungen über Wissenschaft und Krise." In *Kritische Theorie: eine Dokumentation I*, edited by Alfred Schmidt. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer.
———. 1968b. „Die gesellschaftliche Funktion der Philosophie." In

Kritische Theorie: eine Dokumentation II, edited by Alfred Schmidt. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer.

———. 1968c. „Materialismus und Metaphysik." In *Kritische Theorie: eine Dokumentation I*, edited by Alfred Schmidt. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer.

———. 1968d. "Traditionelle und kritische Theorie." In *Kritische Theorie: eine Dokumentation II*, edited by Alfred Schmidt. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer.

Illouz, Eve. 2007. *Cold Intimacies: Emotions and Late Capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Ivancheva, Maria, Felipe Ziotti Narita, and Natalia-Rozalia Avlona. 2020. "Experiências populares radicais, precariedade, gênero e covid-19 no ensino superior." *Cadernos CIMEAC* 10(3): 13–28.

Jonas, Hans. 2017. *Une Éthique pour la Nature*. Translated by Sylvie Courtine-Denamy. Paris: Flammarion.

Jones, Phil. 2021. *Work Without the Worker: Labour in the Age of Platform Capitalism*. New York: Verso.

Kołakowski, Leszek. 2005. *Main Currents of Marxism*. New York: Norton.

Koselleck, Reinhart. 2012. *Crisi. Per un lessico della modernità*. Translated by Genaro Imbriano and Silvia Rodeschini. Verona: Ombre Corte.

Le Breton, D. 2018. "Ambivalence in the World Risk Society." *Theory, Culture & Society* 35(8): 141–156.

Levy, Daniel. 2016. "Cosmopolitanizing Catastrophism: Remembering the Future." *Theory, Culture & Society* 33(8): 291–299.

Long, Heather. 2021. "Millions of Jobs Probably Aren't Coming Back, Even after the Pandemic Ends." *Washington Post*, February 17.

Lorey, Isabell. 2015. *State of Insecutiry: Government of the Precarious*. New York: Verso.

Luhmann, Niklas. 1997. *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft II*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Maguire, Alex. 2020. "A Dying Class: The Traditional Middle-Class in Britain 2020." *Historical Materialism*, December 11.

Majewska, Ewa. 2020. "Precarity and Gender: What's Love Got to Do With It." *Praktyka Teoretyczna* 38(4): 19–48. https://doi.org/10.14746/prt2020.4.2.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1966. *Eros and Civilization*. Boston: Beacon.

———. 2015. "The Historical Fate of Bourgeois Democracy." In *Towards a Critical Theory of Society*. London: Routledge.

Marini, Ruy Mauro. 1993. "La crisis teórica." In *América Latina: Inte-*

gración y Democracia. Caracas: Nueva Sociedad.
Marin, Claire. 2019. *Rupture(s)*. Paris: Éditions de l'Observatoire.
Marx, Karl. 1962. *Das Kapital: Kritik der politischen Ökonomie I*. Berlin: Dietz.
Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. 1978. *Die deutsche Ideologie*. Berlin: Dietz.
Mau, Soren. 2021. *Stummer Zwang. Eine marxistische Analyse der ökonomischen Macht im Kapitalismus*. Berlin: Dietz.
McDonough, Terrence, Michael Reich, and David Kotz. 2010. "Social Structure of Accumulation Theory for the 21st Century." In *Contemporaty Capitalism and Its Crises: Social Structure of Accumulation Theory for the 21st Century*, edited by Terrence McDonough, Michael Reich and David Kotz. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Mearsheimer, John. 2019. "Bound to Fail: the Rise and Fall of the Liberal International Order." *International Security* 43(4): 7–50.
Mészarós, István. 2022. *Beyond Leviathan: Critique of the State*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
Mitropoulos, Angela. 2005. "Precari-Us?" *Transversal Texts* 3(2).
Moore, Jason. 2016. *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism*. Oakland: PM Press.
Morelock, Jeremiah. 2018. *Critical Theory and Authoritarian Populism*. London: University of Westminster Press.
———. 2021. *How to Critique Authoritarian Populism: Methodologies of the Frankfurt School*. Leiden: Brill.
Morelock, Jeremiah, and Felipe Ziotti Narita. 2021. *The Society of the Selfie: Social Media and the Crisis of Liberal Democracy*. London: University of Westminster Press.
Mythen, Gabe. 2014. *Understanding Risk Society*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Narita, Felipe Ziotti. 2019. "Espectros da multidão." *Revista USP* 122(3): 89–98.
———. 2020. "Between a Double Crisis: Precarization, Extractivism and the Futures of the Commonist Politics." *Praktyka Teoretyczna* 38(4): 124–133. https://doi.org/10.14746/prt2020.4.6.
———. 2021. "No terreno normativo da modernidade." *Transições* 2(1): 189–230.
Natalino, Marco. 2020. *Estimativa da População em Situação de Rua no Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: IPEA.
Negri, Antonio. 1991. *Marx Beyond Marx: Lessons on the Grundrisse*. Translated by Harry Cleaver, Michael Ryan, Jim Fleming and Maurizio Viano. London: Pluto.

NPR. 2021. "Growth of Homelessness During 2020 Was Devastating, Even Before the Pandemic." *NPR*, March 18.

O'Kane, Chris. 2021. "Reification and the Critical Theory of Contemporary Society." *Critical Historical Studies* 8(1): 110–132.

Oliveira, Walter Lisboa, Zenith Delabrida, André Faro, and Elder Cerqueira Santos. 2020. "Intolerance of Uncertainty and Mental Health in Brazil During the COVID-19 Pandemic." *Suma Psicológica* 27(1): 32–49.

Ong, Aihwa. 2006. *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Papadimitropoulos, Vangelis. 2020. *The Commons: Economic Alternatives in the Digital Age*. London: University of Westminster Press.

Pascale, Celine-Marie. 2021. *Living on the Edge: When Hard Times Become a Way of Life*. London: Polity.

Pérez-Lanzac, Carmen. 2020. "La generación arrollada por dos crisis." *El País*, April 25.

Peron, Alcides. 2019. *American Way of War: Guerra Cirúrgica e o Emprego de Drones Armados em Conflitos Internacionais*. Curitiba: Appris.

Pierret, Régis. 2013. "Qu'est-ce que la précarité?" *Socio* 2(2): 307–330.

Pignarre, Philippe, and Isabelle Stengers. 2007. *La Sorcellerie Capitaliste. Pratiques de Désenvoûtement*. Paris: La Découverte.

Pradella, Lucia. 2014. *Globalization and the Critique of Political Economy*. London: Routledge.

Priest, Dana, Craig Timberg, and Souad Makhennet. 2021. "Private Israeli Spyware Used to Hack Cellphones of Journalists, Activists Worldwide." *Washington Post*, July 18.

Ravenelle, Alexandrea. 2019. *Hustle and Gig: Struggling and Surviving in the Sharing Economy*. Palo Alto: University of California Press.

Rego, Walquiria Leão, and Alessandro Pinzani. 2014. *Vozes do Bolsa Família*. São Paulo: UNESP Press.

Rendueles, César, and Joan Subirats. 2016. *Los bienes comunes*. Madrid: Icaria.

Rodrik, Dani. 2011. *The Globalization Paradox*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Roitman, Janet. 2014. *Anti-Crisis*. New York: Duke University Press.

Rosario, Teresita Cruz, and Jonathan Rigg. 2019. "Living in an Age of Precarity in 21st Century Asia." *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 49(4): 517–527.

Santos, Theotonio. 1978. *Imperialismo y Dependencia*. Mexico: Editorial Era.

Scholz, Trebor. 2016. *Uberworked and Underpaid*. London: Polity.

Schweiger, Gottfried. 2020. *Poverty, Inequality and the Critical Theory of Recognition*. London: Springer.
Shavit, Tal, Arie Sherman, and Daniela Aisenberg. 2021. "The Effects of the COVID-19 Crisis on the Subjective Well-Being of the Israelei Population." *Current Psychology* 29(3): 211–235.
Skidelsky, Robert. 2010. *Keynes: The Return of the Master*. New York: Public Affairs.
Smulewicz-Zucker, Gregory. 2020. *Confronting Reification*. Leiden: Brill.
Sotiropoulos, Dimitris, John Milios, and Spyros Lapatsioras. 2013. *A Political Economy of Contemporary Capitalism and its Crisis*. London: Routledge.
Standing, Guy. 2011. *The Precariat*. London: Bloomsbury.
Stiglitz, Joseph. 2006. *The Price of Inequality*. New York: W.W. Norton.
Stirk, Peter. 2005. *Critical Theory, Politics and Society*. London: Continuum.
Strobl, Natascha. 2021. *Radikalisierter Konservatismus*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
Sznaider, Natan. 2015. "Ulrich Beck and Classical Sociological Theory." *Journal of Classical Sociology* 15(2): 220–225.
Walby, Sylvia. 2015. *Crisis*. London: Polity.
Xavier, Getulio. 2021. "Reforma trabalhista completa 4 anos sem cumprir suas promesas." *Carta Capital*, July 13.
Wilson, Elizabeth. 1989. *Hallucinations: Life in a Post-Modern City*. London: Hutchinson Radius.
Woodcock, Jamie, and Mark Graham. 2019. *The Gig Economy: A Critical Introduction*. London: Polity.
Young, Iris Marion. 2000. *Inclusion and Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Žižek, Slavoj. 2011. *Living in the End Times*. New York: Verso.

FELIPE ZIOTTI NARITA, Ph.D. – received his postdoctoral training at the University of São Paulo (USP) and Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCar) and all four of his degrees from the São Paulo State University (UNESP). He is a lecturer in public policy at UNESP and director of research at Baron of Mauá University, Brazil. He was an invited researcher at the Forschungskreis Gregor Girard at the Universität Freiburg (Switzerland) and is a member of the Research Network on Dialectics & Society, Research Nucleus on Ethics, Philosophy and Social Theory of UNESP, Historiar (National Council for Scientific and Technological Development of Brazil) and the Laboratory for the Study and Research on Education of USP. With Jeremiah Morelock, he is the author of *The Society of the Selfie: Social Media and the Crisis of Liberal Democracy* (University of Westminster Press, 2021) and *O Problema do Populismo: Teoria, Política e Mobilização* (UNESP and Paco Press, 2019).

Address:
São Paulo State University (UNESP)
School of Humanities and Social Sciences
Postgraduate Program in Planning and Analysis of Public Policy
900 Eufrásia Monteiro Petraglia Avenue
Franca, SP, 14409-160, Brazil
+55 (16) 3706-8700
email: felipe.narita@unesp.br

JEREMIAH MORELOCK, Ph.D. – is an instructor of sociology at Boston College's Woods College of Advancing Studies, the program coordinator of the Taking Care of Us initiative as well as a postdoctoral researcher at the William F. Connell School of Nursing at Boston College, and the founder and director of the Research Network on Dialectics & Society. He is the author of *Pandemics, Authoritarian Populism, and Science Fiction: Medicine, Militarism, and Morality in American Film* (Routledge, 2021), and the editor of *Critical Theory and Authoritarian Populism* (University of Westminster Press, 2018) and *How to Critique Authoritarian Populism: Methodologies of the Frankfurt School* (Brill, 2021).

Address:
Boston College
Department of Sociology
426 McGuinn Hall
140 Commonwealth Ave

Chestnut Hill, MA 02467, USA
(617) 552-4130
email: morelocj@bc.edu

Citation:
Narita, Felipe Ziotti, and Jeremiah Morelock. 2021. "Critical Social Analysis of Crisis." *Praktyka Teoretyczna* 4(42): 7–37.
DOI: 10.14746/prt2021.4.1

Autor: Felipe Ziotti Narita and Jeremiah Morelock
Tytuł: Krytyczna analiza społeczna kryzysu
Abstrakt: W tym artykule proponujemy krytyczną analizę społeczną kryzysy w świetle szerszych procesów rozwoju kapitalizmu, i przed wszystkim przemian po 2008 roku. Omawiamy pięć podejść rozwijanych w naukach społecznych, które mierzą się z problemem kryzysu i rozwijają teoretyczną refleksję nad problemem. Wskazujemy na wagę prekarności dla uchwycenia bieżącego kryzysu w krytycznym świetle. Tekst przybliża także sześć kolejnych artykułów z tego numeru *Praktyki Teoretycznej*.
Słowa kluczowe: kryzys, teoria krytyczna, teoria społeczna, niepewność, globalizacja

DUSTIN J. BYRD

Palingenetic Ultra-Nationalist Christianity: History, Identity, and the Falsity of Peripeteic Dialectics

The recent upsurge of European nationalism is partially an attempt to address the ongoing identity crisis that began with the Bourgeois revolution, which expressed itself through positivistic scientism and aggressive secularization, and culminated in the post-World War II "liberal consensus": representative democracy and free-market capitalism as the "end of history." Due to the needs of capitalism after World War II, coupled with the liberalization and Americanization of European societies, there has been a growing presence of "non-identical" elements within Europe, which itself is reexamining the very geography of what it means to be European. In this essay, I explore the historical context of the current identity struggles that are facing Europeans. From a Critical Theory perspective, I challenge the idea that Christianity or a Christian age can be resurrected by ultra-nationalists in their attempt to combat the cosmopolitanism of Western modernity. Moreover, I demonstrate how such attempts to return to an *idealized* Christian identity are rooted in a false possibility: Peripeteic Dialectics, or "dialectics in reverse."

Keywords: *Volksgemeinschaft*, *Willensgemeinschaft*, Christianity, Peripeteic-Dialectics, islamization, dialects of history, nationalism, immigration

Introduction: Identity Crisis

In recent years, there has been an upsurge in European nationalism attempting to address numerous political, economic, and most importantly, cultural issues, that are predominately affecting Western and Central Europe. The question of what it means to be European in the contemporary world defined by globalism, pluralism, and post-nation-state democracies has been the topic of discourse in dozens of conferences, political debates, and political party platforms. Beyond the broad question of Occidentalism, political discourses in individual European states have subjected their own particular identities to such scrutiny: "What does it mean to be German, to be Italian, to be Greek, to be Dutch, or to be French?" etc. Are these ethnic signifiers meaningful anymore now that citizenship is merely a legal matter? In other words, is being "European" only an issue of legality, i.e., politics, national will, and democratic deliberations, or is it still ontologically married to pre-political foundations: ethnicity, language, shared history, cultural traditions, and religious identity? Do these neglected "accidentals" comprise the actual "substance" of what it is to be European, or is modern *Europeanness* irretrievably beyond such particularities?

Beyond the broad question of Occidentalism, political discourses in individual European states have subjected their own particular identities to such scrutiny: "What does it mean to be German, to be Italian, to be Greek, to be Dutch, or to be French?" etc. Are these ethnic signifiers meaningful anymore now that citizenship is merely a legal matter? In other words, is being "European" only an issue of legality, i.e., politics, national will, and democratic deliberations, or is it still ontologically married to pre-political foundations: ethnicity, language, shared history, cultural traditions, and religious identity?

Behind these discourses is a foreboding sense that the pre-political particularities of individual cultures, their ethnos, language, shared history, cultural traditions, and religiosity, etc., which once formed the basis of their collective identity, are being replaced by *Völkerchaos* (chaos of peoples) caused by liberal immigration policies, overly beneficent refugee policies, and the ideology of diversity. This *Überfremdung* (over-*foreignization*), as the opponents of such immigration and refugee policies identify it, has undermined the basis of the European nations' collective identities; it has severed the organic "nation" from the state, and it has introduced cultures, religions, and values/principles that are perceived as being irreconcilable with the democratic norms and libertine cultures of European societies. Such nationalist critics of liberal-democracy and neoliberal capitalism argue that the "good intentions" of the post-World War II states have destroyed the historical identity of Europe. As such, Europe has been "Americanized"; it has become an unnatural amalgamation of discordant voices vying for self-interested recognition within a secular culture that privileges no particular traditional culture above another, thus leaving the majority population, which is still bound to the pre-political foundations, to watch as their societies rapidly become something that no longer reflects the ethnic identity of the nation's past (Vogel 2021).

It is the purpose of this article to critically examine the religious aspect of the attempt to reintroduce traditional identities back into European polity and culture through what I call "palingenetic ultra--nationalist Christianity," which relies on the reversal of the dialectic of history, what I described as "peripeteic dialectics." I will demonstrate that palingenetic ultra-nationalist Christianity, although a powerful force among nationalists is not a return to a pre-modern Europe, precisely because peripeteic dialectics itself is false; it is wholly incapable of de--negating that which has been negated through the dialectic of history. As such, the retreat into an idealized Christianity as a form of anti--modernist identity reclamation may be effective rhetoric in the *Kulturkampf* that is currently afoot in Europe, but as a civilizational project, it is bound to fail.

Before we can explore this phenomenon further, we must first examine how religion itself played a part in the disintegration of Europe's pre-modern identity, whereupon it produced the conditions for Christianity's politicization and nationalization in the current post-secular society.

Historical Identity Fissures

Europe's modern identity crisis did not begin in the 20th or the 21st century. It began long before that, with Martin Luther, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, King Henry VIII, and the other Protestant Reformers who broke the Catholic Church's grip on medieval European civilization, therefore fracturing the dominant element that bound it together. Albeit limited, the Protestant Reformers democratized identity within a civilization that had been nearly uniformly determined by the Catholic Church.[1] After the Protestant Reformation took hold, once faithful Catholics could, by their own will, choose a different religious affiliation other than the one they were born into, or even create their own self--fulfilling religiosity outside of the norms of an established tradition. Although the friend/enemy dialectic between *Christendom* and the *dār al-Islam* (abode of Islam) continued to reinforce Europe as a distinctly "Christian" civilization, inside of itself, the singular architecture of its overall Catholic identity was continuing to crumble due to the alternative forms of Christianity created by Protestantism as well as Protestant-

1 The major exception to this is the Catholic/Orthodox schism, which was all but complete around the turn of the first millennium.

-inspired forms of political/ethnic nationalism that began to instill "national consciousness" into the various European nations.

The 18th century Enlightenment, the world-historical event that privileged will over fate, reason over revelation, and eventually secularity over both religiosity and religious rule, increased the freedom of the individual will to self-create an identity beyond the given. Consequently, the individual was shackled even less to tradition as will, reason, and secular/scientific thought delivered to him intellectual horizons that were previously unavailable or even punishable by Church authorities. Through the Enlightenment's critique of religious worldviews, both Catholic and Protestant, it created a geography for the individual to individualize, far beyond what was thinkable in prior ages. Nevertheless, the ability to self-create an identity through the freedom of the will remained the privilege of the few, who could, due to their social domination, exempt themselves from the overall cultural denominators, including religion, that still determined much of the lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) of the masses. However, at least until the 19th century, it was those same cultural, political, and intellectual elites that drove the defining moments of history that laid the intellectual foundations for the form of political freedom associated with the 20th and 21st centuries. The Bourgeois Enlightenment developed and disseminated the ideals that drove the Bourgeois revolutions in France and America. Having shed their religious veneer, visions of a society born out of *liberté*, *égalité*, and *fraternité* fueled the masses' attempts to achieve self-governance, creating a space wherein they could think freely, act freely, and live freely: where they could engage in self-determination. As Horkheimer and Adorno wrote in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, "Enlightenment, understood in the widest sense as the advance of thought, has always aimed at liberating human beings from fear and installing them as masters" (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002).

Those same universalistic Enlightenment values meant to "liberate human beings" fueled their own "inner-critique" via Karl Marx and Marxism. Born out of the dialectic between reality and ideology, those dissatisfied with Bourgeois society fought against the painful truth that the Bourgeoisie failed to substantively achieve the very *liberté*, *égalité*, *fraternité* it promised to all. Thus, the philosophical principles that served as the basis of the bourgeois revolutions were taken seriously by the victims of bourgeois society and were radicalized via their marriage to class consciousness. Such radicalized secular principles were pressed into the service of the substantive freedom of all. Like Marx, those influenced by such radical polity recognized that traditional religious institu-

tions, although mere shadows of what they used to be in the Medieval age still served as a legitimating force for the hierarchical status quo in Bourgeois society, just as it did under feudalism. Thus, despite bourgeois secularity, institutional religion continued to provide the sanctification for the freedom of the few over the freedom of the many. For Marx and his followers, religion, especially all forms of Christianity, had to be *abstractly negated*—left in the dustbin of history—for it was both irrational and counterrevolutionary, and thus an impediment to man's self-actualization and the realization of his political freedom (Marx 1978, 53–55). Unlike the Bourgeoisie, who only attempted to contain (or manipulate) religion by pushing it into civil society, the Marxists fought to thoroughly secularize their societies (Faroese 2008, 22–39). Nevertheless, how the Bourgeoisie's hypocritical critique of religion and Marxism's direct attack on religion affected religious identity was not a concern for either form of revolutionaries. As we will see, such a concern would inevitably return as a major factor in the "identity politics" in the 20th and 21st centuries.

National Identities and the Democratic Demos

Today, liberal democracies, informed by science, positivism, instrumental reason, and the ever-lingering suspicion of religion and its motivations, have effectively severed religion from the state. Although the Soviet Union attempted to wipe itself clean of religion, the capitalist countries, following the Bourgeois model of religious containment and/or marginalization, remained populated by religious believers, albeit to varying degrees in various states (Habermas 2009, 62–66). Although all secular states inoculate themselves against direct influence of religious institutions, the family, the very basis of Hegel's tripartite conception of society, remained engrossed in religion and therefore continued to have a direct influence in the identity-formation in large portions of the democratic states' citizenry. So too was civil society influenced by the continual existence of religion and religious institutions. Today, "post-secularity," as Jürgen Habermas describes the condition of modern democratic societies, is a condition wherein states are wholly secular in their polity but are still informed by religious members of their population, making religion a factor that cannot be ignored in democratic discourse and deliberations (ibid).

What becomes of this condition is thus: on the one hand, secular democratic societies, still rooted in "universal" Enlightenment ideals,

open themselves up to the possibility of creating a new kind of community, the republican *Willensgemeinschaft* (willed community), wherein the "demos" is no longer determined by the traditional "ethnos," as it was in the nationalist *volksgemeinschaft* (community of descent) that comprised the basis of the ethnos-bound "nation-states" (Habermas 1996, 494–495). As Jürgen Habermas argues, in the modern period, "each nation is now supposed to be granted the right to political self-determination. The intentional democratic community takes the place of the ethnic complex" (ibid., 494). Beginning with the French Revolution and later adopted by most Western states in some form, the meaning of the term "nation" was transformed from being defined by the individual's *biological* and/or *historical* embodiment of pre-political foundations to one defined by *politically* derived notions of "citizenship." In the latter form of community, citizens actualize their citizenship through the exercise of their rights via participation in democratic discourse, deliberations, and other constitutive activities (ibid., 495). In doing so, the *willed* community is created based on constitutional ideals, not an ethnic complex. Through the conscious appropriation of such constitutional ideals, an individual becomes an equal and full citizen in a nation wherein they may lack the full array of that nation's historical ethnos.

The intentional democratic community takes the place of the ethnic complex." Beginning with the French Revolution and later adopted by most Western states in some form, the meaning of the term "nation" was transformed from being defined by the individual's biological and/or historical embodiment of pre-political foundations to one defined by politically derived notions of "citizenship." In the latter form of community, citizens actualize their citizenship through the exercise of their rights via participation in democratic discourse, deliberations, and other constitutive activities.

This modern *willed* form of "nation" is devoid of traditional religious oaths and religious membership requirements; it is also devoid of ethnic determinations and constraints, uniform linguistic requirements, and the necessity of shared history. As such, the modern democratic "nation" is comprised of whom the demos *willed* to be "naturalized" into their nation. As Habermas reminds us, "in the melting pot of national consciousness, the ascriptive features of one's origin were transformed into just so many results of a conscious appropriation of tradition. *Ascribed nationality gave way to an achieved nationalism, that is, to a conscious product of one's own efforts*" (Habermas 1996, 495).[2]

While this approach to "nation" building was revolutionary, as it was rooted in the universalism of Enlightenment ideals, like all world-historical transformations, it was dialectical in nature. Along with its benevolent side, it also had a malevolent side that cast its shadow on the future of Europe: European "nations" became nations of non-Europeans, living in the uncertainties endemic to the post-secular condition, which many experienced as *Völkerchaos*.

2 Emphasis added.

In many ways, the notion of a "willed community" remained either too abstract, too utopian, or simply too destructive. For various groups, it attempted to negate that which shouldn't be negated: traditional identity. Additionally, the formal notion of the political "citizen" buttressed against the material reality of the still-existing ethnic identity, which was never wholly negated by the political adoption of the ideology of the willensgemeinschaft, especially not in the countryside, wherein traditional identity markers remain staunchly apparent. In reality, the cosmopolitan notion of the "willed community" was a political construct that rarely transformed the lifeworld of the common citizen, as it was a theoretical change imposed upon the members of the ethnos by their urban intellectual elites. While those elites found methods by which they could relinquish their own ethnic identities in favor of an ascribed citizenship, the masses overwhelmingly remained unaffected, or when affected, began to show hostility towards their new ethnically divorced national identity. For many, an ascribed identity was experienced as a colonized identity—a forced assimilation with other ethnic groups in an attempt to create a new synthetic—and seemingly false—identity, one that seemed only to appeal to the urban elites.

Due to the persistence of pre-political foundations as the source of national identity, ethnicity continued to be a primary source for identity formation in the post-Enlightenment West, a problem that would continue to plague those nations that attempted to realign their national identities on Enlightenment universalism. Indeed, the antagonism between "traditional identity" and the emergence of modern cosmopolitan forms of identity fueled the rise of European nationalism, fascism, modern anti-Semitism, which eventually led to World War II and the Shoah.

Crisis of the Non-Identical

Post-World War II, much of Europe had to be rebuilt. In an outburst of pathological and nationalistic Thanatos, it had all but destroyed itself. Nevertheless, with help of the United States' Marshall Plan, Western and parts of Central Europe would rebuild their societies in such ways that would affirm the reality that Hegel had already predicted in the 19th century: Europe was no longer at the forefront of history—it had become an exhausted civilization (Siebert 2020). Like so many empires that came before the European empires, Europe as a civilization had moved into retirement as the leadership of the world-historical process

moved on to the Slavic world and the United States (ibid). However, in order to rebuild the now-retired Europe, labor would have to be procured, and for that, many of the European states looked to their colonies and former colonies, as well as to other nations that possessed surplus humanity that were willing to *temporarily* relocate.

Many of those who emigrated to Europe to help rebuild the metropoles believed they were as much a part of their "parent-country" as those who were the sons and daughters of the metropoles' historical ethnic complex.[3] The sons and daughters of the colonies spoke the metropoles' language; they studied the metropoles' histories; they fought in the metropole's wars, etc. They too were French, Dutch, Belgian, Italian, British, or so they believed. As they would learn, it took more than their colonial sacrifices for the benefit of the metropoles to *be of* the metropoles. They were, and remained, in fact, *non-identical*—something "other" than the "authentic" European, and therefore subject to different treatment than the native European.

The Republican idea of a willensgemeinschaft, which wasn't as threatening to the integrity of European identity when Europe was still at the forefront of history, and still relatively homogenous, would be tested. Could the European states, with all their own history-bound particularities, as well as their growing social secularity, embrace believers from a non-Christian faith, of various ethnicities, languages, and cultural norms? Could they make a modern willensgemeinschaft nation out of the nations of the world? Or would those uneigentlich (inauthentic)—non-identical—"foreigners" remain perpetually anatopists: "those in the wrong place"?

With the influx of Muslims from Turkey, Lebanon, Morocco, India, and Pakistan, as well as numerous other Muslim countries, Europe experienced religious plurality for the first time since the early Middle Ages (Habermas 2009, 64–66). They were accustomed to the presence of Jews, but their presence remained marginalized, contained, and in the 20th century all but eliminated. Now, with the procurement of labor in the Muslim world and former colonies, the great "threat" to Christendom, Islam, was inside the Christendom's old house. Europe's *intra-faith schisms* between Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestant denominations were now compounded by the problem of *inter-faith plurality* (ibid). However, beginning in the 1960s, the demand to extend citizenship to the Islamic "temporary laborers," who in the meantime had settled in, raised families, educated their children, and buried their dead in European soil, began to take hold. The Republican idea of a *willensgemeinschaft*, which wasn't as threatening to the integrity of European identity when Europe was still at the forefront of history, and still relatively homogenous, would be tested. Could the European states, with all their own history-bound particularities, as well as their growing social secularity, embrace believers from a non-Christian faith, of various ethnicities, languages, and cultural norms? Could they make a modern *willens-*

3 Not all immigrants to Europe were from the colonies of European empires. Some immigrated to the West via "guest worker" programs, such was the case in Germany. Nevertheless, a sense of belonging to their adoptive country did not take long to develop for many of the guest workers, as they later pressed their case to state in Europe as opposed to returning to their country of origin.

gemeinschaft nation out of the nations of the world? Or would those *uneigentlich* (inauthentic)—non-identical—"foreigners" remain perpetually anatopists: "those in the wrong place"? In words that echoed Heidegger's philosophical anti-Semitism, the latter position assumed that *anatopists* lack the historical "enrootedness" that was necessary to be *eigentlich* (authentic Europeans) (Rockmore 2017, 161–166; Adorno 2003). Like the Jews before them, immigrants residing in Europe were often considered "worldless," belonging neither to the nations they came from nor to Europe. For the political Left and most Liberals, the ideals of the Enlightenment demanded the "inclusion of the other" in the post-nationalist constitutional states (Habermas 1998, 105–127). For those leery of the "worldless" others, it mattered not if "paper citizenship" was extended to them; they would always remain rootless and inauthentic: *ethnic anatopists* who are rightly subject to nationalist "adiaphorization" (Bauman 2016, 35).[4] For Liberals and the Left, diversity was a positive; it concretely actualized the otherwise abstract and formal ideals of the Enlightenment. For the Right, diversity meant the collapse of authenticity.

This division within the identity of Europe between the traditional *ethnos* as the basis of the community—the *Blut und Boden* (blood and soil) community—and the modern *willed* political community, continued to fester under the surface of Europe's assumed inclusivity, diversity, and tolerance. However, as the 20th century turned into the 21st century, historical catalysts began to agitate the subterranean cleavages once again within European societies, and the identity issues that plagued Europe in the 1930s and 1940s began to resurface in the public sphere.

Muslim Immigrants, Refugees, and the Return to Ethno--Nationalism

While the growth of the Muslim community in Europe was a constant source of irritation for traditionalists, nationalists, and conservatives, especially in the *Willensgemeinschaft* states in Western and Central Europe, the outbreak of the Syrian civil war and the consequent refugee crisis would be a catalyst for the rise of new forms of right-wing identity politics, one that would once again involve religion.

4 Zygmunt Bauman defines "adiaphorization" as the exemption of a class of people, and what is done to them, from the moral evaluation that is normatively applied to all others.

The world historical event of September 11th, 2001, had already shaken Europe's confidence in the eventual secularization of the world when the Syrian refugee crisis began in 2011 (Habermas 2009, 63–64). As secularization and capitalist globalization continued to encroach upon traditionally religious societies, especially in the Muslim world, religion seemed to find a new vitality in opposition to Westernization and Western foreign policy (ibid). Wahhabi Islam, that which was associated with Usama bin Laden, al-Qa'eda and other terrorist groups, had a "belief attitude" that was militaristic, aggrieved, and fueled with the desire to exact revenge (*Lex Talionis*) upon the Western states, especially the United States, Britain, and France (Habermas, Derrida and Borrodori 2003, 31–33). Within the already fragile context of post-9/11 Europe, wherein Muslims were viewed with suspicion, the massive influx of refugees from Syria, along with economic migrants from Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and other Muslim countries, fuel a nationalistic backlash. Many Europeans, not just the far-right, believed Europe was too accommodating to the outsiders, whose caravans-of-the-wretched appeared as "invasion forces." Their weapons were no longer swords and cannons, but rather their wombs.

Ethno-nationalists in all European states, who already bemoaned the establishment of pluralistic nature of the *Willensgemeinschaften*, took the opportunity of the perceived *Völkerchaos* to heighten their nativist appeal. Identitarian groups politically maximized the demographic uneasiness caused by the sudden influx of others, driving up violent attacks on all those deemed non-identical and anatopic. Regardless of whether they were newly arrived or had been there for generations, their ethnic differences made them a target. Nationalists also took aim at establishment politicians and political parties. The German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, was especially targeted for her overly welcoming policies on refugees. With the Holocaust ever present in German collective memory, and the keen recognition of Germany's unique responsibility to care for the marginalized, in September of 2015, Merkel stated, "The fundamental right to asylum for the politically persecuted knows no upper limit; that also goes for refugees who come to us from the hell of a civil war" (Die Welt 2015). Nationalists retorted that all European peoples have a "fundamental right to difference," i.e., each ethnos has the right to be a unique people; to be a people who are identical with their cultural inheritance within their own national space, and to enact measures that preserves their unique identities. Merkel's *Überfremdung* threatened to collapse the already fragile state of native European *ethno-*

pluralism, as it threatened to radically expand the "Americanization" of Europe.[5]

Nationalist intellectuals, including Alain de Benoist, Guillaume Faye, and Renaud Camus, as well as the Russian traditionalist, Alexander Dugin, coupled with the burgeoning nationalist political organizations such as PEGIDA in Germany, Lega Nord in Italy, Front National in France, and the Freedom Party in the Netherlands, etc., argued that these so-called "refugees" were an Islamic "Trojan Horse" in Europe. Like the Muslim immigrants before them, these refugees were a religiously aggressive invading army that (1) didn't respect the cultural norms of Europe, (2) would fail to integrate and/or assimilate, and thus (3) would accelerate Europe's identity collapse. As Europe's identity fades, in its place would come "Islamization," the process wherein post-secular European societies gradually normalize and adapt to Islamic norms, values, and traditions. Eventually, the former territories of Christendom would be absorbed within the broader *dār al-Islam*.[6] Muslims, the historical anti-identity of Christian Europe, were now seen as the physical "replacers" who came to "replace" Europeans in their own homelands (Camus 2018, 18–39). This "ethnic submersion," as the French author Renaud Camus calls demographic change, was the inevitable outcome of Europe's misguided immigration and refugee policies. Coupled with aggressive *Islamization* and *Africanization*, ethnic submersion was presented as the main threat to the liberal order of Europe.[7] The liberal *Willensgemeinschaften* were undermining their own existence with their own policies, many mandated by the European Union. The ultra-nationalists argued that without a strong identity, rooted in tradition, history, and language, that would act as a bulwark against the Islamization and

5 Associated with the *Nouvelle Droite* thinker Alain de Benoist, "ethnopluralism" is sometimes referred to as "ethno-differentialism."

6 It would surprise many of today's anti-Muslim fascists to find out that, according to Hitler's friend, architect, and Minister of Armaments, Albert Speer, Adolf Hitler himself believed that it would have been better had Islam conquered the whole of Europe when it was first expanding out of Arabia in the 7th and 8th century. Hitler believed Islam was an aggressive, expansionist, and therefore predatorial religion, which was better suited for the Germanic people than Christianity, which privileged "meekness." "Islamized Germans," Hitler believed, would have eventually been the leaders of the expansive Muslim Empire, since they were racially superior to the Arabs (Speer 1970, 114–115).

7 This position was voiced by the Norwegian terrorist, Anders Behring Breivik, in his manifesto, *2083: A European Declaration of Independence*, which he released to the public via the internet on the same day that he massacred seventy-seven people, mostly teenagers, in Oslo and Utøya Island, Norway.

Africanization threat, Europe would remain inherently colonizable by the world's wretched. Thus, it was argued by some ultra-nationalist voices that a "return" to a distinct and uncompromising identity, rooted in Europe's own cultural resources, was necessary to construct if Europeans were to triumph over the on-going process of ethnic submersion (Reno 2019, 135–162).

The Return to Christian Identity

Because the inherent universalism within the Enlightenment neutralizes the traditional, biological, and linguistic complex as a means of establishing a "nation," for nationalists, a march behind the "open society" of the Enlightenment had to occur. The ethnos that once determined membership in the demos had to be reestablished. Such a retrotopian move would bolster the particularities of European identity, thus foregoing a collapse into a discordant multiplicity of sub-nations pretending to be a singular nation.

An important element in the nationalists' attempts to repel Islamization is the attempt to "return" to a religious identity, one firmly rooted in the ethnic complex of the European past. While some, like French New Right theorist Alain de Benoist, argue for a reappropriation of pre-Christian European paganism, most religious identitarians focus on Christianity to reinvigorate a traditional European identity.[8] It is assumed that the cultural particularities of European Christianity, which distinguish European civilization from Islamic civilization, would afford them a powerful identity-platform through which they could resist the Muslim "invasion."

An important element in the nationalists' attempts to repel Islamization is the attempt to "return" to a religious identity, one firmly rooted in the ethnic complex of the European past. While some, like French New Right theorist Alain de Benoist, argue for a reappropriation of pre-Christian European paganism, most religious identitarians focus on Christianity to reinvigorate a traditional European identity. It is assumed that the cultural particularities of European Christianity, which distinguish European civilization from Islamic civilization, would afford them a powerful identity-platform through which they could resist the Muslim "invasion."

However, Christianity, especially in its most Greco-Roman form, i.e., Catholicism, is not the form of Christianity that is most attuned to nationalist goals; it is saturated with universalism, being that it is the "universal church" that embodies a globalist spirit that is hated by nationalists. On the other hand, mainstream Protestantism, although historically attached to nationalist sentiments, produced the very conditions from which the Enlightened "open society" was born. Additionally,

8 In his book, *On Being Pagan*, Alain de Benoist argues that modern forms of totalitarianism stem from Christian roots. In order for Christian conceptions of universal equality to be valid, they must invalidate human diversity and difference. As such, a return to a European pagan worldview, which included the respect of difference, is more appropriate for those fight against the amalgamation and eventual homogenization of citizens within the liberal democratic states (Benoist 2018).

mainline Protestant churches are struggling under the weight of secularism to survive. Protestantism, as Max Horkheimer commented, had sacrificed the "opposing principle of Christianity" to bourgeois "reality," which left Protestants all but indistinguishable from non-religious citizens (Horkheimer 1993, 211). In other words, modern Protestantism abandoned its "otherworldliness" in its accommodation to bourgeois society. Thus, it was drained of the very negativity towards the status quo that is needed by nationalists in their construction of a new "bulwark" religious identity. The Catholic Church is the Medieval Church, and the Medieval Church was the institution that bound Western and Central Europeans together, gave them a common identity, and repelled the Muslims. Protestantism fragmented that identity, and as a fragmented and compromised identity, it cannot serve as a vehicle for a *European-wide* nationalist religion; it can only serve as a localized resource within a particular nation's struggle against multiculturalism, etc.

Despite Catholicism's claim to universality, and its practice of inter-civilizational amalgamation, it remains the primary resource from which nationalists draw their religious material to construct their peculiar form of nationalist religion.[9] According to the Catholic identitarian Julien Langella (2020, 4–5),

> [Catholicism] is what makes us "identical" in the sense that we are depositories of the same collective identity… To be Catholic then is not only a faith, but also an identity nourished by multiple influences and produced by history, for it is men with their language, their country of origin and their own walk of life who built Christian culture.

What is important here for Langella is not that Catholicism is a global religion, which regards all members of the human family as equally bearing the likeness of God, but rather that it produced in most of Europe an over-arching singular identity, one that respected the national differences between the European peoples but nevertheless made them all "identical" to a single source of identity. Being identical, they could distinguish themselves as a civilization against the "others," especially the Muslims and Jews, as well as mobilize the European peninsula against the threat of the others if so needed, as it did in during the Crusades, Reconquista, and fight against the Ottoman Turks, etc. This resource had to be resurrected.

9 The major exception to this is in England, wherein the Anglican Church, which retains much of its Catholicity, serves as the source of "religious" material for nationalists.

Palingenetic Ultra-Nationalist Christianity

What nationalists create in the name of an imagined past-Christianity is what I call "palingenetic ultra-nationalist Christianity," a form of religion that is fully politicized and without any concern for the many other facets of traditional religion. It is a form of religious fundamentalism without theology, without morality, without eschatology: it is merely politics with a religious veneer.

In its substance, what is "palingenetic ultra-nationalist Christianity"? First, the concept of "palingenetic ultra-nationalism" is adapted from Roger Griffin's conception of fascism. For Griffin, fascism is "a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism" (Griffin 1993, 26). One of the key components that makes fascism powerful is that it promises an aggrieved population a convenient remedy from the horror and terror of the given condition. The descriptor "palingenetic," comprised of the words *palin*—"again"—and *genesis*—"birth" (or creation)—invokes a sense of "renewal," "resurrection," or "rejuvenation," a coming forth of the new from the ashes of the old (ibid., 32–36). It is a dialectical process wherein that which can be rescued and preserved from the old is made new again, and that which must be negated is left in the dustbin of history. Palingenetic myths attempt to explain the *cycles* of human and civilizational degeneration and regeneration, regression and progression, thus giving both an understanding of present decline and hope for a renewed future. Such cyclicality is imbedded in various spiritual and religious traditions. For example, it can be found in the Hindu myth of Kali Yuga, the Norse myth of Ragnarök, and Buddhist conceptions of *Samsara* (rebirth). Such cyclical concepts can be found in secular forms as well, such as William Strauss and Neil Howe's concept of the "Fourth Turning," the crisis theory of the Traditionalist René Guénon, the "Fourth Political Theory" of the Russian Traditionalist Alexander Dugin, the decadence/heroic cycles of the Italian über-fascist Julius Evola (Andersen 2018). Non-cyclical forms of palingenesis can be found in the Abrahamic traditions: the messianic time of Judaism, the resurrection of Christ as well as Christian Eschatology, and the Islamic tradition's expectation of the Mahdi. In these latter forms, the time-continuum is linear: palingenesis ends the time-continuum, and as a result, there is no more "decline" from which a people or civilization would once again have to transcend. Either way, the time continuum, whether cyclical or linear, ends with the longed-for renewal, which includes the purification and thus rejuvenation of a lost identity.

Second in Griffin's definition is his concept of "ultra-nationalism." Especially in a populist form, ultra-nationalism is a "generic term for political forces which… depend on »people power« as the basis of their legitimacy [and] which »go beyond,« and hence reject, anything compatible with liberal institutions or with the tradition of the Enlightenment humanism which underpins them" (ibid., 36–37). Nationalism, as a political construct, is a retreat behind the cosmopolitan, multicultural, democratic state, and a return to defining the nation by the shared pre-political foundations that exist with an "organic" community: the community of *Blut und Boden*. That community alone comprises the "nation," and from their collective consent (or submission), the populist leader rules the nation-state.

When brought together, palingenetic ultra-nationalism is a political and cultural attempt to restore, renew, and reinvigorate the *Volksgemeinschaft* of ages past, replacing the *Willensgemeinschaft* with a radically defined ethnostate—one predicated upon and determined exclusively by the pre-political foundations of shared ethnicity, shared language, shared history, and shared tradition: that which one is "born" into and is the natural/historical inheritor of.[10]

Religion provides two mobilizing factors within the palingenetic ultra-nationalist project. First, it is a carrier of much of an ethnos' history, language, and other important signifiers of cultural identity. Second, it can be mobilized as a force for national unity, solidarity, and cohesion. Before we examine the first mobilizing factor, it is important to thoroughly understand the second.

The roots of the word "religion" can be found in the compounding of two Latin words: "re" (again) and "ligare" (to bind). As such, religion is an interpretation of reality and orientation of action that, at its root, *binds people together* within a *particular socio-cultural group*. It gives them a sense of belonging and a sense of who they are. In other words, religion is a force that transforms an aggregate of individuals into a singular group with a strong sense of identity based around dogmas and rituals. However, identity, as a psychological need, is dialectical in nature, especially when religiously politicized: those who are identical are those who

10 Here, Heidegger's ontological concept of *Geworfenheit* (thrownness) is essential, as it denotes the arbitrary way in which Dasein (the individual "being there") has been "thrown" into existence within a matrix of particularities: ethnos, time, geography, family, nation-state, etc., wherein Dasein finds their cultural, linguistic, and historical inheritance that will socialize (*Bildung*) them into a member of the volk. Those members that become that which they were born into will become authentic (*Eigentlich*).

belong within the borders of the exclusive religious identity. Those who are non-identical remain outside of those borders. Identities, especially religious identities, are often iron-clad; no one is permitted entry unless they have been born within the community—which is something that does not proceed from the *will* but rather from *history*—or is "naturalized" into the identity.[11] As it is the case that religion constructs such iron barriers around its identical community, it inevitably produces the "other," i.e., the *positivity* of belonging creates the *negativity* of non-belonging. Thus, by strengthening the religious identity of the ethnos, palingenetic ultra-nationalists attempt to radically cut off the possibility of the "other" from becoming naturalized within the community. The stronger the religious identity becomes, the more the non-identity of the "others" is solidified.

Identities, especially religious identities, are often iron-clad; no one is permitted entry unless they have been born within the community—which is something that does not proceed from the will but rather from history—or is "naturalized" into the identity. As it is the case that religion constructs such iron barriers around its identical community, it inevitably produces the "other," i.e., the positivity of belonging creates the negativity of non-belonging. Thus, by strengthening the religious identity of the ethnos, palingenetic ultra-nationalists attempt to radically cut off the possibility of the "other" from becoming naturalized within the community. The stronger the religious identity becomes, the more the non-identity of the "others" is solidified.

In regards to the second mobilizing factor of religion, being the carrier of much of an ethnos' pre-modern history, cultural identity, linguistics, etc., if the religion and/or religious institutions that serve as the traditional/historical culture's protectors are perceived to be under threat by outside forces, mobilization of the aggrieved ethnos against such threats is possible, for the identity of the ethnos itself remains tied to those cultural signifiers, even if the signifiers are no longer actively believed in. For example, just because the "tombs and monument of God," as Nietzsche called the great basilicas of Europe, are no longer filled with believing Christians, it does not mean that the descendants of the once-believing Christians want to see those "tombs and monuments" transformed into mosques (Nietzsche 2008, 103–104). The identity of the basilicas as monuments to the Christian past of the now post-secular societies must be preserved, as preservation is seen as a means to assert the historical identity of the organic ethnos against the *Überfremdung* of the dysgenic present. Such "tombs and monuments" are concrete signifiers of the *historical* identity of the nation.

Palingenetic Appearance

In Europe, Christian signifiers, predominantly its most prominent images (the crucifix, saints, basilicas, and churches, etc.), once appropriated by ultra-nationalists, invoke the mere *appearance* of a religious age, not

11 While what can be called "naturalization" occurred in pre-modern societies, naturalization as a political process wherein the traditionally non-identical become an equal part of another society is a modern post-Enlightenment phenomenon.

the *substance* of the religion itself. The palingenetic ultra-nationalist does not make a conversion to Christianity's theological dogmas, its moral--practical teachings, or its comprehensive worldview and eschatology. The substance of the faith has little importance in the struggle against the "otherness" of the "invaders." Rather, Christianity in the hands of the ultra-nationalists is hollowed of its vital essence, which is already crippled in secular society. Like Emperor Constantine in the 4th century, when he reconciled the burgeoning Catholic Church with the Roman State, he drained Christianity of its *negativity*—its "otherworldliness," which served as the basis of its prophetic-negativity. Christianity no longer represented the "not-yet," the wholly other, the longing for the perfect justice and a reconciled world beyond the world of Golgotha (Byrd 2020, 116). Rather, it identified with and sanctioned the world--at-is with all the brutality, horror, and terror that was typical of the Roman Empire. Similarly, today, the cross is often paraded by ultra--nationalists alongside the flag of their secular nation, giving the impression that Christianity and the aggrieved ethnos are identical, as opposed to the cross representing an independent system of thought, interpretation of reality, and orientation of action that stands juxtaposed to the criminal history of any given individual, nation, or state. As an Abrahamic religion, and therefore of religion of prophetic critique, the inherent negativity of Christianity remains critical of the nation, its history, its current state, and its future goals. When preserving its negativity, it serves as the nation's grand inquisitor. This negativity of Christianity, its *essential interior*, is sacrificed by the ultra-nationalists, as they abandon the "otherworldliness" of the prophetic religion in their attempt to mobilize the *exterior identity* that religion produces, a form of "cultural Christianity" that is easily appropriated for nefarious purposes precisely because it has lost its ability to resist such functionalization. As a mere symbol, which no longer symbolizes its essential interior, Christianity's exterior identity can be enlisted into a nationalist struggle that in all cases would violate Christianity's own national-transcendent essential interior. Christianity's negativity, born out of the suffering of the slaughterbench of history, which would otherwise indict the ultra-nationalists, especially on the ground of creating a new idol, the *pure nation*, is discarded for a hollowed-out Christian aesthetics: the "whitened sepulcher" of Christo-nationalist identity politics, i.e., Christianity without Christianity.

This form of totally politicized religion has no legislative power over those who wield it; they do not subject themselves to its ethical demands. Its only power is what it signifies once it is thoroughly saturated with

identity politics, namely, a return to a state-of-being wherein the non-identical are threatened by the total annihilation by the prospect of a future pure ethnostate. As Adorno (1999, 362) states in his *Negative Dialectics*:

> Genocide is the absolute integration. It is on its way wherever men are leveled off—"polished off," as the German military called it—until one exterminates them literally, as deviations from the concept of their total nullity. Auschwitz confirmed the philosopheme of pure identity as death.

Christian signifiers are functionalized by the ultra-nationalists to instill fear in the "other." At its core, palingenetic ultra-nationalist Christianity is not meant to convert the masses to an Abrahamic faith, but rather to remind them that Auschwitz can happen again.

Double Falsity of Peripeteic Dialectics

Despite its potency as a political threat, palingenetic ultra-nationalist Christianity is predicated on a false dialectic, one that becomes obvious as one examines the logical structure of their attempts to "renew" an identity that has already been determinately negated (*Aufheben*). An attempt to impel history into a false return of the *status quo ante* is an attempt to reverse the dialect of history—to engage in what I call "peripeteic dialectics," or "dialectics in reverse." This form of dialectical thought attempts to determinately negate that which has already been determinately negated in the historical process. In other words, from a Hegelian and Marxian perspective, as history progresses forward in a monotonic and orthogenetic fashion, that which is negated through the historical process is lost to us, as it remains bound to the particular time, place, circumstance, and other specificities of the era from which it existed.[12] From that perspective, one cannot return to the European Middle Ages precisely because the particularities of those ages have been

12 I use the terms "monotonic" and "orthogenetic" to denote the Hegelian/Marxist idea of an unchanging and progressive trajectory within the dialectic of history, that history does not reverse course and de-negate that which has already been negated. For nationalists, firmly affixed to the rightness of former times, such a "monotonic" and "orthogenetic" conception of history is appalling, for it implies that that which they value, the idealized past, cannot be retrieved and actualized in the future, thus barring them from the future they wish to realize. As such, the Hegelian/Marxist "monotonic" view of the dialectics of history is rejected by nationalists for peripeteic dialectics.

negated, not abstractly, but rather determinately. In other words, that which was generally beneficial, and therefore preserved within the dialectic of history, is still with us, even in the modern period. However, that which proved insufficient, unsubstantiated, outdated, and/or untrue, has been left behind in the ditch of history. Nevertheless, among nationalists, there is a longing to "return" to a time wherein that which has been negated determined the overall conditions of European society. This would involve the de-negation and eventual restitution of that which has already been negated through the orthogenetic historical process. Peripeteic dialectics promises those who nostalgically long for a previous age the ability to reconstruct the world that they long for, especially the determined – and thus "authentic" or "identical"—identity it once produced. Such peripeteic dialectics promises that *regression* from the dysgenic contemporary is in reality *progression*. Thus, in the nationalists' opinion, setting history in reverse is preferable to continuing the monotonic dialectic of history that they believe is destroying what's left of Europe's organic identity. The "orthogenetic" assumption of Hegelian and Marxian dialectics is thus rejected by the nationalists, who see anything but "progress" in the forward moving history of Europe. To save European civilization, the actualization of the retrotopian ethnostate means the cancellation of the monotonic and orthogenetic dialectic of history in favor of a peripeteic dialectical "return."

Despite the overwhelming desire of palingenetic ultra-nationalist Christians to escape from the dysgenic present, their peripeteic dialectical politics embodies a double falsity. The first element is based in a *delusion* and the second element is based in a *lie*.

First, peripeteic dialectics fails to return contemporary society to a past age in the totality of its particularities; the present age cannot recover the spirit—the essence—of a former age. Such a spirit is determined precisely by the sum of particularities of that former age, not merely through the continual existence of an ethnos. The ethnos and the age interpenetrate each other and co-determine the constitutional being of each other. As history moves, the ever-renewing ethnos continues its evolution with the changing spirit of the age, specifically through the process of determinate negation. Even if the historical ethnos still exists in the present moment, the phase of history from which it passed cannot be reconstructed and/or resurrected; it remains a phantom—somehow present but unattainable. Attempts to recapture the past merely produces "imagined" ages, which are wholly dependent on the present from which they proceed, thus making the imagined past a mere *reflection* of the present because it is based in the assumed *needs*

of the present. The organicity of such a past age has already been lost to the time continuum, thus making all "imagined" visions of such an age false. As such, peripeteic dialectics inevitably ends in a failed anachronism: the false appropriation of entities, either physical, spiritual, or intellectual, that belong to a different age, merely appropriated for psychological and/or political purposes.

The dialectic of history inherently drains the significance of entities as the age from which those entities find interlocutors pass by. For example, the crucifix had a certain power within Medieval Europe that has henceforth evaporated due to positivistic sciences, secularity, instrumental reason, etc. The reverence, awe, and *mysterium tremendum* that it once provoked in an earlier and more religious age has been determinately negated.[13] While not entirely destroyed, as residues of that age remain preserved with us, predominately in the Catholic Church and historical memory, the historical relevance of that symbol is a mere shadow of its former self, i.e., it does not provoke the kind of immediate passions that it once did, but rather finds significance merely in nostalgia. To pretend that it invokes a passion on the level of the Medieval world, betrays its false reproducibility. Its meaning has changed because the hermeneutics of the crucifix has been determined by the age—from the religious to the secular. Additionally, to those outside of the religious community, the crucifix is merely a signifier for Catholicism; it does not signify a metaphysical reality that they must stand in awe of. Therefore, to enlist the crucifix as a sign of a former time that is assumed to be reproduceable in the present is a facile threat—one that demonstrates the falsity of the nationalists' peripeteic dialectics.

The second falsity of nationalist peripeteic dialectics is born of the lie of religious return. Although some theorists, like the Russian Traditionalist Alexander Dugin, believe in the "reversibility of time" and that a nation-state can reclaim its former self and actualize it in the present, nationalists, especially in Western and Central Europe, have no actual interest in doing so (Dugin 2012, 67–70). Despite the "restoration of Christendom" rhetoric, which they presume would serve as a bulwark against "cultural Marxism," multiculturalism, and particularity Islam, their attempt to resuscitate merely the exteriority of Christian symbols, and not their substantive meaning, for political purposes, betrays the

13 Adorno made a similar observation in his *Minima Moralia*, saying, "the existence of bread factories, turning the prayer that we be given our daily bread into a mere metaphor and an avowal of desperation, argues more strongly against the possibility of Christianity than all the enlightened critiques of the life of Jesus" (Adorno 2005b, 110).

fact that they are not interested in a substantive conversion to the moral universe that proceeds from the theological dogmas of the faith itself. As demonstrated earlier, the *appearance* of a revitalized Christian identity and not a *substantive* revival of a Christian identity demonstrates second falsity of peripeteic dialectics. There is no sincere attempt to de-negate that which has already been negated through the march of history. Rather, they merely attempt to counterfeit the signs and symbols of an earlier religious age as a means to invoke, strengthen, and weaponize an already negated identity for contemporary political purposes, precisely because the present identity does not have adequate resources necessary to impede the monotonic dialectic of history. In other words, nationalists want a convincing yet false *appearance of religious identity*, not an *emergence of religious faith*. The latter, if identical to dogmas and religious moral systems, would undermine of the nationalist sentiment with its talk of universal brotherhood, equality of all, the *Imago Dei* (all mankind as being made in the image of God), and universal morality—especially the preference for the poor, the outcast, the sick, the hungry, the refugee, and the outsider.

What is true, at least from the perspective of the Frankfurt School, is that religion can still be a resource for today's society, especially its moral conundrums, as the resources of secular thought appear to be nearly exhausted due to the increasing pathology of reason (Habermas 2009). But religion, due to its history, is too ugly to appear in public, as Walter Benjamin once claimed (Benjamin 2007, 253). If religious semantics and semiotics are to survive secular modernity, they too will have to migrate into the world of the profane (Adorno 2005a, 136). This, of course, entails a *determinate negation* of religion wherein those emancipatory elements of religion are "enlisted" into struggle for a more reconciled future society, the secular equivalent to the paradisical visions of society forwarded by the Abrahamic faiths (Benjamin 2007, 253). Peripeteic dialectics, or the reversal of time in an attempt to reconstruct a past religious age, wherein the secular contours of modernity are themselves negated, is an anachronistic false hope. The age of explicit religiosity in the West is forever gone. However, the reality of the non-reproducibility of the past will not stop nationalists from using such ideological claims to the motivate supporters in their struggle against the Willensgemeinschaften states. Indeed, as alienation within the cosmopolitan post-secular societies increases, so too will the attractiveness of peripeteic dialectics and their promises to turn back the hands of time.

Conclusion

As argued, the modern identity crisis of Europe is an old story, one that began with the Protestant Reformation and has been given new life due to the current influx of immigrants and refugees. Just as welcoming as the heirs of the Enlightenment are towards the "others," the anti-Enlightenment nationalists are just as unwelcoming, seeing the "invasion" of the "others" as another nail in the coffin of Europe's organic identity. Nevertheless, their call for a "return" to a pre-political based religious identity as a means of resisting the dysgenic present proves to be untrue, delusional, and ultimately ineffective, precisely because the politically functionalized yet already determinately negated religious tradition speaks without the power and legitimacy it once had. The post-secular society, although not universally hostile to religion, remains agnostic towards it. Thus, the museum societies of Western and Central Europe—a civilization no longer at the forefront of the world-historical process—cannot return to its *völkisch* religious past as a means of preventing its modern democratic future. The bad anachronism that is produced by palingenetic ultra-nationalist Christianity only reveals the bankruptcy of contemporary European nationalism, that it cannot adequately address the present conditions with its own resources but must return to the Middle Ages to acquire the tools to reassert an organic European identity, only to find out that those tools are outdated and therefore no longer adequate to the task at hand.

References

Adorno, Theodor W. 1999. *Negative Dialectics*. Translated by E.B. Ashton. New York: Continuum.

———. 2003. *The Jargon of Authenticity.* Translated by Knut Tarnowski and Frederic Will. New York: Routledge.

———. 2005a. *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*. Translated by Henry W. Pickford. New York: Columbia University Press.

———. 2005b. *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life*. Translated by E.F.N. Jephcott. New York: Verso.

Andersen, Joakim. 2018. *Rising from the Ruins: The Right of the 21st Century*. Translated by Gustav Hörngren. London: Arktos Media Ltd.

Bauman, Zygmunt. 2016. *Strangers at Our Door.* Malden: Polity Press.

Benjamin, Walter. 2007. *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, edited by Hannah Arendt. Translated by Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books.

Benoist, Alain de. 2018. *On Being Pagan*. Translated by Arcana Europa Media. North Augusta: Arcana Europa Media.

Byrd, Dustin J. 2020. *The Frankfurt School and the Dialectics of Religion: Translating Critical Faith into Critical Theory*. Kalamazoo: Ekpyrosis Press.

Camus, Renaud. 2018. *You Will not Replace Us!* Plieux: Chez l'auteur.

Die Welt, "Four EU states refuse migrant quotas amid 'biggest challenge' in Union's History." September 11, 2015. https://www.dw.com/en/four-eu-states-refuse-migrant-quotas-amid-biggest-challenge-in-unions-history/a-18708760.

Dugin, Alexander. 2012. *The Fourth Political Theory*, edited by John B. Morgan. Translated by Mark Sleboda and Michael Millerman. London: Arktos Media Ltd.

Froese, Paul. 2008. *The Plot to Kill God: Findings from the Soviet Experiment in Secularization*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Griffin, Roger. 1993. *The Nature of Fascism*. New York: Routledge.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1996. *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*. Translated by William Rehg. Cambridge: MIT Press.

———. 1998. "The European Nation-State: On the Past and Future of Sovereignty and Citizenship." In *The Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theory*, edited by Ciaran Cronin and Pablo De Greiff. Cambridge: MIT Press.

———, Jacques Derrida, and Giovanni Borradori. 2003. *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

———. 2009. *Europe: The Faltering Project*. Translated by Ciaran Cronin. Malden: Polity Press.

Horkheimer, Max. 1993. "On the Problem of Truth." In *Between Philosophy and Social Science: Selected Early Writings*. Translated by G. Frederick Hunter et al. Cambridge: MIT Press.

———, and Theodor W. Adorno. 2002. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, edited by Gunzelin Schmid Noerr. Translated by Edmund Jephcott. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Langella, Julian. 2020. *Identitarian and Catholic: From Protest to Reconquest*. Translated by Jason Rogers. London: Arktos Media Ltd.

Marx, Karl. 1978. "Contributions to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right." In *The Marx-Engels Reader*, edited by Robert C. Tucker.

New York: W.W. Norton.
Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2008. *The Gay Science*. Translated by Thomas Common. New York: Barnes & Noble.
Reno, Russell R. 2019. *Return of the Strong Gods: Nationalism, Populism, and the Future of the West*. Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing.
Rockmore, Tom. 2017. "Heidegger after Trawny: Philosophy or Worldview." In *Heidegger's Black Notebooks: Responses to Anti-Semitism*, edited by Andrew J. Mitchell and Peter Trawny. New York: Columbia University Press.
Siebert, Rudolf J. 2020. "End or Continuation of World History: The European, Slavic, and American World – A New Paradigm." In *The Rest Write Back: Discourse and Decolonization*, edited by Esmaeil Zeiny. Chicago: Haymarket Books.
Speer, Albert. 1970. *Inside the Third Reich: Memoirs*. Translated by Richard and Clara Winston. New York: The MacMillan Company.
Vogel, Hans. 2021. *How Europe Became America*. London: Arktos Media Ltd.

DUSTIN J. BYRD, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor of Philosophy, Religion, and Arabic at Olivet College, in Michigan, USA. He is a specialist in the Frankfurt School, Critical Theory of Religion, Psychoanalytic Political Theory, and contemporary political Islamic thought. He is the author of numerous books, including *The Frankfurt School and the Dialects of Religion: Translating Critical Faith into Critical Theory* (Ekpyrosis Press, 2020), *Unfashionable Objections to Islamophobic Cartoons: L'Affaire Charlie Hebdo* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), and *Islam in a Post-Secular Society: Religion, Secularity, and the Antagonism of Recalcitrant Faith* (Brill, 2016). He has also co-edited books on Malcolm X, Ali Shariati, Frantz Fanon, and Rudolf J. Siebert (Brill). He is the editor-in-chief of *Islamic Perspective Journal* and the founder and editor-in-chief of Ekpyrosis Press. Information about Dr. Byrd can be found at www.dustinjbyrd.org.

Address:
Olivet College
320 S. Main Street
Olivet, Michigan – United States
email: DByrd@Olivetcollege.edu

Citation:
Byrd, Dustin. 2021. "Palingenetic Ultra-Nationalist Christianity: History, Identity, and the Falsity of Peripeteic Dialectics." *Praktyka Teoretyczna* 42(4): 39–64.
DOI: 10.14746/prt2021.4.2

Autor: Dustin J. Byrd
Tytuł: Palingenetyczne ultranacjonalistyczne chrześcijaństwo: historia, tożsamość i fałszywość dialektyki perypeteicznej
Abstrakt: Niedawna fala europejskiego nacjonalizmu jest częściowo próbą rozwiązania trwającego kryzysu tożsamości, który rozpoczął się wraz z rewolucją burżuazyjną, wyrażającą się poprzez pozytywistyczny scjentyzm i agresywną sekularyzację, a której kulminacją był powojenny „liberalny konsensus": demokracja przedstawicielska i kapitalizm wolnorynkowy jako „koniec historii". Ze względu na potrzeby kapitalizmu po II wojnie światowej, w połączeniu z liberalizacją i amerykanizacją społeczeństw europejskich, w Europie rośnie obecność elementów „nie-tożsamościowych", która jako taka ponownie poddaje analizie samą geografię tego, co oznacza być Europejczykiem. W tym eseju zgłębiam historyczny kontekst aktualnych zmagań o tożsamość, z którymi borykają się Europejczycy. Z perspektywy teorii krytycznej kwestionuję ideę, że chrześcijaństwo lub wiek chrześcijański może zostać

wskrzeszony przez ultranacjonalistów w ich próbach zwalczania kosmopolityzmu zachodniej nowoczesności. Co więcej, pokazuję, jak takie próby powrotu do wyidealizowanej tożsamości chrześcijańskiej są zakorzenione w fałszywej możliwości: dialektyce perypeteicznej, czyli „dialektyce na opak".
Słowa kluczowe: *Volksgemeinschaft*, *Willensgemeinschaft*, chrześcijaństwo, dialektyka perypeteiczna, islamizacja, dialektyka historii, nacjonalizm, imigracja

PATRYCJA PICHNICKA-TRIVEDI (ORCID: 0000-0002-9043-6451)

Populistic Rhetoric: Structures Over Senses

This article makes a comparative study of American and Polish rightist populisms and their ways of operating using structural analysis of their discourses as a main tool of examination. It aims to prove that those are indeed structural similarities that are responsible for the success of populisms in diverse environments. While examining examples of populist rhetorics and noticing the surprising efficacy of similar discourse in different political and social conditions, I expose internal structure of populism(s). I state that populism(s) is constructed mostly by and on empty signifiers. Those signifiers can then be matched in broader structures, of which the most fundamental one is the opposition: "We"—"Them". Such mythological structures are flexible enough so that any subject or object can be inscribed into them. They are also flexible enough to transgress the borders of one domain and to transgress state borders: to "wander" around the global world.

Keywords: populism, structure, discourse, empty signifier

Introduction

In recent years, we have observed a sudden growth of populist rhetoric in public space and the great success of populist politics and populist politicians all over the world. It is important to discover reasons for this popularity as well as to analyse how populism operates. As extraordinary as it can seem, although most scientists agree about the triumph of populism in contemporary democracies, there is no clear definition of populism.[1] Mostly, this is due to the confusion engendered by the fact that there is no classical program of populism such as it is in conservative, liberal, socialist, anarchist movements. Thus, for some commentators, populism seems a form of politics (taken by very diverse formations) rather than a political orientation itself. In this article, I will prove that, at least in the case of populism, the form, or rather the structure, is *the ideology*. I agree here with Margaret Canovan: "Clarification can, I believe, be achieved if we shift our attention from the ideology and policy content of populist movements and concentrate instead on structural considerations. (…) structural feature (…) dictates populism's characteristic legitimating framework, political style and mood" (Canovan 1981, 3); or Benjamin Moffit who affirms "taking stylistic characteristics seriously" (Moffit 2019, 1397). For him, political style embraces discourse, rhetoric and aesthetics joined together by performance. When Ruth Wodak writes about "content" of rightist populisms, which differentiates them from other ideologies (Wodak 2015, 1), she means affective (and structural) content, not the content of senses, logics or program: she means the content of fear as fundamental for populism. It is important to note here that structure is not reduced to a form: it is indeed dangerous to think of populism as purely formal (ibid., 3). Populism contains both form and content, only its content is rather structural than significant (in a sense of referring to any Real outside of populist discourse space).

Populism is the ideology of structures over senses; it is pure rhetoric, but rhetoric is pure politics in this case. This becomes evident in the light of reports, both from the West and East Europe: Daniel Oesch analyses data from Austria, Belgium, France, Norway and Switzerland to show that the only common reasons for voting for Right Populist Parties are cultural ones, support for the role of "values" (economical reasons and alienation—distrust in other political leaders and institu-

1 This situation persists since Peter Wiles made his famous enumeration (Wiles 1969).

tions—are not that common; Oesch 2008) and so shows the report of Maciej Gdula (2017), who even points at the very discursive character of the support for RPP: Political identification erases real life experiences of voters and political discourse makes them see their own lives as variations of narrations of populist politics.

In this article, I am planning to make discursive analysis and present a comparative case study of central (American) and semi-peripheral (mostly Polish) populism. I will analyse populistic discourses in those countries in their social, political, cultural and economical environments, tracing the similarities and differences between them. I will be mostly interested in specific discursive structures of populism: their construction and ways of operating. My focus is on rightist populism, which I consider as "populism." Herbert Kitschelt defines it: "In the case of the new radical right, the winning formula is a combination of neo-liberal market policies" (as opposed to welfare state policies) and a "socially and politically authoritarian and xenophobic agenda" (Kitschelt 2002, 180). I consider so-called "leftist populism" as a variation of popularised socialist ideology.[2]

For my purposes, the most interesting theories regarding populism were made by Margaret Canovan, Paolo Cossarini, Benjamin Moffit and Nicolas Demertzis as well as Robert Matyja and Marcin Napiórkowski. I am also using the theory of ideology of Pierre Ansart (1977). For Ansart, ideology is composed of discourse, form and medium (material, virtual and institutional), broadcaster and recipient; it is not the content but the form which decides the meaning and efficiency (ibid., 15). For Ansart, ideology rather than the interest of particular groups, as Karl Marx wanted, is the key factor of all and each politics, and ideologies are rather symbolic rather than rational or practical. Ideology is

2 About the leftist populism and the differences (even oppositions) with rightist one, see: Chantal Mouffe (2008). Similar opinion is shared by Paulina Tambakiki (2019), Óskar Garcia Augustin (2019), Simon Tormey (2019), Marco d'Eramo (2013), Jason Glynos and Aurelien Mondon (2019). Mouffe proves that rightist populism has more in common with political liberalism than with leftist populism (Mouffe 2020). She quotes Peter Mair (2013) statement about liberal "ruling the void": liberal void and rightist populist emptiness (as in empty signifier) seem related, with the difference that liberal post-political void is deprived of emotions and populist empty signifiers are fulfilled with them. Mouffe blames liberalist system for the emergence of rightist populisms (and sees the only solution in leftist populisms). Panayota Gounari is even more severe: she writes that rightist populisms and fascisms are actually the product of capitalism, the real ruler of the world, who uses fascisms to sustain the domination of capital in the times of crisis, when usual bourgeois ways are no longer efficient (Gounari 2018).

efficient and functional because it has material consequences, but it is not practical in a sense that it realises material interests of its supporters.[3] Nicolas Demertzis formulates this a little differently, as for him, political orientations usually work in the name of interests of particular groups, and only populism is different as it operates in the name of passions and emotions, expressed through the symbolic ideology.[4] That is why populism is so successful, as emotions (thus, ideologies and identities built up on them) are most efficient, and mostly mobilising is the emotion of resentment, feeling of injustice, adequate or not (Demertzis 2006, 103–122).

I will also use the operational notion of the empty signifier. This was recently broadly exploited by Emmy Eklundh (2019) in her analysis of populism. She refers to Ernesto Laclau, who in his turn based on Lacanian conception of subject formation. According to this conception, subject is never fully constituted but always in the middle of being formed, always trying to realise itself through symbolic order (subjectification), through language. Laclau transposed this idea onto collective identities. Thus, no signifier has a value and content on its own; it is empty by itself, constantly being remade and re-signified. That is exactly why they can function as a unifying factor for a whole range of people

3 For Marx ideology functions precisely because it is a system that realises the interests of certain political groups (Marx 2001). For Ansart realisation of material interests of a political group is not a necessary condition of existence and efficiency of political ideology.

4 If all politics uses emotions, populism is specific: it operates in the name of affects of a political group. It does not only appeal to passions and emotions to serve particular group interests. It incites passions and emotions which sometimes even stand in opposition with material interests of a group, as report of Maciej Gdula seems to prove (Gdula 2017). Thus it seems that if theory of Marx, as mentioned above, can apply to most political ideologies, it does not apply well to populism: on the contrary Ansart's theory seems perfectly fit to analyse the phenomenon of populism.

In the view of Ansart, populism would be a political ideology par excellence, not something ontologically distinct form other political ideologies, but rather a perfect realisation of what political ideology indeed is. This opinion seems to be shared by such contemporary researchers as Ernest Laclau: "Populism is (…) a way of constructing the political" and "there is no political intervention that is not to some extent populist" (Laclau 2005, IX). Populism for Laclau is a spectrum on which range all political phenomenons who very often share and dispute the same empty signifiers.

In this article I do not claim to decide whatever difference between populism and other political ideologies is ontological or gradual, but I rather focus on the nature of this difference i.e. specific nature of populism that is almost purely discursive.

and represent a wide range of demands. There is a desire for fullness which cannot be achieved and creates false universals. Populist "people" are unifying yet highly symbolic constructs.

Eklundh admits that meaning, and thus social identities, are formed linguistically. Signifiers get their meaning with affective/emotional investment. She focuses mostly on the affective dimensions (therefore, Lacanian and Laclau's approach, with their focus on empty signifiers as expression of desire). I will, however, focus more on linguistic, structural dimension (therefore, a more Lévi-Straussian approach, close to the one used by Paolo Cossarini; 2019).[5] Another very interesting remark she made concerns the figure of the populist leader as a signifier of identity. I would say the leader is signifier of the signifier (identity itself is a signifier), creating a double mirroring.

In the first part of this article, I will briefly recapitulate some contexts and reasons of the rise of populisms in such different parts of the world as the USA and Poland. In the second part of this article, I am going to examine some examples of populist speech. I am going to focus on the surprising similarities between the language of both (Polish and American) populist political environments.[6] Finally, I will try to bring the light on reasons of the efficacy of the same discourse in different political and social conditions. I will search for this reason in the structure(s) of populist discourse(s) it(them)self(ves).

The analysis of particular enunciations will lead to broader discursive structures created by populism, of which the most important is semiotic division on "we" ("the people") and "the enemy." The last part of this article will be devoted to populistic strategies/techniques, which in the case of populism are per-formative. The characteristics that make populist rhetoric logically weak decide its political strength. Semiotic notions reflect basic human ways of thinking and basic emotional needs, like the need to alienate the unacceptable and purify oneself by defining

5 However Lacanian approach is linguistic and structural just like Levi-Strauss' approach, there are important differences between theories of those two researchers: while Lévi-Strauss is mostly (post)structuralist, Jacques Lacan's approach is strongly rooted in psychoanalysis (Lévi-Strauss refers to psychoanalysis frequently but rather as to an object of study than as to a methodological tool). (See: Simonis 2010. However author focuses on another aspect of the researchers' work, he resumes differences between them quite exhaustively).

6 In order to gather analytical material, I read newspapers, watched TV programs (newspapers and TV programs known for supporting populists as well as those known for sharpest critics of populists) but above all I followed social medias, choosing populists enunciations which had most fervent reactions (both supportive and/or critical).

clear boundaries between oneself and the rejected. Mythological notions are created and become empty signifiers in which any subject or object can be inscribed. Emotive discursive signifiers can transmit freely from one category onto another (e.g. from economics to racial issues) and from one subject to another (e.g. from Jewish to LGBTQ+ people) as well as from one place to another (e.g. from the USA to Poland). Notions are freely matched like pieces of puzzle. That is why in the populist discourse, different issues converge to create such surprising statements as: Black Jewish people will change our children into gays. The populist discourse does not operate on senses but on structures, which reproduce the internal structures of human psyche and basic mechanisms of society forming.

Mythological notions are created and become empty signifiers in which any subject or object can be inscribed.

This article purposely does not contain any predictions about the future of populism as populism and its development are unpredictable. Lack of final positive statements also depicts the very essence of populism, whose empty signifying rhetoric goes around an endless hermeneutic circle.

Conditions of Populisms

In the global order, countries are grouped in what Irvin C. Schick called archipelagos of dominance (Schick 1999).[7] Central/core (Western/North), semi-peripheral and peripheral (East/South) countries and regions (forming a kind of minority in the global world) are all organised in a network of mutual relations, either in a proto/quasi/postcolonial relations of imitation and/or submission, in relations of opression-resistance, or in relations of complicated mixtures of both. This forms what Arjun Appadurai called skeleton of the world in opposition to a trans-border cellular system (Appadurai 2006).

Nations category is not the only category of domination but also categories of race, ethnicity, gender, sex; they intersect with each other

7 Conception has some similarities with the Wallerstein's world system theory, the latter one being used to analyse marginal, peripheral and semi-peripheral populisms by Jeremiah Morelock and Felipe Ziotti Narita (2018). This is of course not the only work concerning populisms in non-core countries, eg. whole Special Issue of *Journal of Language and Politics*, edited by Ruth Wodak and Michał Krzyżanowski, has been dedicated to the subject of populisms in diverse countries of America and Europe (Wodak and Krzyżanowski 2017). However the question of systematic difference between Western core countries and other countries was not flaunted in there.

(Collins 1993), clash and compete. Even in the most powerful countries, there are still local minorities, oppressed, discriminated or marginalised groups. They compete with each other through categories (e.g. low class whites vs. marginalised races) inside them (e.g. black people vs. Hispanic people). The same rivalry happens in global relations (which leads eg. to hate and fear of local working class towards immigrant working class). Intersections also further complicate the relations of power and domination locally (who are dominating in relationships of black male and white woman?) as well as globally (who is in position of power: black American or white Ukrainian?). This raises not only the rivalry of groups but also the competition of systems of discrimination. A skeleton world-system competes with a cellular one. The latter one creates a new kind global, transnational minorities, such as Muslims, objects in marginalisation in many regions.[8] Again, this can be seen as part of a colonial symbolic influence of global powers on peripheral and semi-peripheral countries who imitate the hate and fears of the most powerful global actors.

Rivalry also concerns two general orientations, which Napiórkowski calls "turbo" and "soft patriotism" (Napiórkowski 2019). Tension between these two is even greater than tension between patriotism and non-patriotism; anyways, for turbo patriotism every other attitude is anti-patriotic. Soft patriotism is the patriotism of liberals and some leftists. It is open, inclusive, aiming for modernisation and targeting future (utopian orientation). In the West, it means focusing on the individual (liberal) or on the minorities (leftist) in internal as well as in global dimension. In non-Western countries, soft patriotism in openly pro-Western: in Poland's case, mostly pro-European. Polish soft patriotism constructs its West, seeing it as secular, tolerant, progressive, open for the Others; Polish soft patriots try to follow the example of such a West, preaching openness on internal and external Others (including immigrants from the least privileged countries). Soft patriots are critical towards their own country's history and social life, hunting down xenophobia, misogyny or homophobia.

In Western countries, emancipative politics and loss of privileges of gender or race brings frustration of those who used to have those privileges and who now complain about being discriminated on their turn. Also, many people who are racially or sexually privileged are indeed

8 In Poland there was a very interesting case of Appadurai's global minorities issues: relatively little amount of Muslims and relatively big Islamophobia. However, this also seems specifically Polish regarding the fact that there are almost no more Jews in Poland, but anti-semitism remains. See: Buchowski 2016.

structurally marginalised in the realm of class. Moreover, it does happen that they are discriminated by middle class soft patriots with the aid of accusations of misogyny. Whether those accusations are just or unjust, for some middle class and urban people, they serve mostly to highlight their superiority over lower classes or provincial people.[9] Populists use feelings of resentment and frustration. In non-Western countries like Poland, there is an additional factor in class relations: westernisation. Lower classes and provinces are generally less westernised than middle class and cities. The pro-Western orientation of middle classes can seem and sometimes indeed be a symbolic colonisation. A rightist populists exploits the feeling of marginalisation of lower classes on a country scale and of Poles on a global scale, using a turbo patriot stance. They transpose global marginalisation onto all internal relations claiming that Poles are marginalised in their own country. The ethnically dominating group is thus rhetorically constructed as discriminated. They claim all accusations of xenophobia, homophobia, anti-semitism and others are attacks on their countries (indeed, such accusations from the core countries happen to be not only an advocacy for the weakest, but also a tool of domination: showing off backwardness of non-Western countries). But they gladly use the same accusations to discriminate further Others (mostly Muslims, but also generally Africans or Asians, who are supposed to oppress their women); of course, populists do not see their own politics as including chauvinist ideas (Wodak 2015, 22).

It is worth noticing here the hidden relations between populism and capitalism and neo-liberalism (or neoliberal capitalism). Populism is not only, as Chantal Mouffe (2018; 2020) wanted a response to the liberalism (liberal capitalism), but also its result. Capitalism enables emergence of populism not only in a sense that populism is a reaction to liberal (capitalist) "lack of politics," an escape into the conservative dream about political solidarity of the nation. Capitalism also creates economical, material conditions for the development of populist parties. It creates class inequalities which can be used by populists: social anger can be incited and then projected from the object that caused it (capitalism) to objectified subjects (minority groups, migrants etc). But capitalism does even more for populism: it is its hidden core. Populists exploit capitalist inequalities, criticising them and perpetuating the capitalist system. They project the blame onto some groups (treacherous elites, immigrants, foreign forces, minority groups), but they never blame the

9 On how populism appeal to those who feel deprived and cheated, see Gounari 2018.

system itself. They also never tend to reform it: so-called social reforms (like the ones gladly flaunted by PiS in Poland) are rather a cosmetic move of social distribution instead of in-depth structural reformations of the economic system. On the contrary, populism enters into an alliance with capitalism, shockingly joining advocacy for "people" with cooperation with highest class; it is only the "treacherous" middle class who is the enemy. The most flagrant contemporary example of such a cooperation is, of course, the figure of Donald Trump as a populist leader.

Populistic turbo patriotism is a patriotism of conservative right built on the sensation of threat, be it real or imagined. It is exclusive, traditional, cherishing history and memory, oriented towards the past (retrotopia[10]). It affirms purity and strict borders between "us" and "Others"; it is obsessed with defined identity and focuses on community. Again, in the West there are internal "Others" (sexual, gender, race ones) and external ones (immigrants from semi-peripheral and peripheral countries). In semi-peripheral countries, things are more complex: apart from internal "Others" and immigrants from peripheral countries, there can be immigrants from core countries of the West. Turbo patriotism's attitude towards the West is complicated: there is a need to resist global hegemony but also an aspiration to be part of it, there is imitation and rejection. Here Napiórkowski's analysis needs to be completed: in fact, turbo patriots/populists in semi-peripheral countries such as Poland, construct two Wests, two figures, bad one and good one. There is "good" West: an inspiration, an ally, a leader on the path of conservatism. And there is "bad" West: West-enemy or West-victim of its own faults. "Good" West is rightist: it is exemplary (source of discursive munitions, as calls it Napiórkowski (2019, 134). "Bad" West is liberal and leftist: this is either the hegemonic one, imposing its rules and its political correctness, or the spoiled degenerated weak West, destroyed by enemies it had let in, in need of protection from its own mistakes. And sometimes the image of "bad" West contains both features. In the Polish nationalist imagination, these two symbolic West have their geopolitical *lieux*.

In fact, turbo patriots/populists in semi-peripheral countries such as Poland, construct two Wests, two figures, bad one and good one.

10 As Zygmunt Bauman wrote in his book *Retrotopia*, the distinctive division between "us" and "them," "Other(s)," is linked to nostalgia for the past: for in the past finding an "Other" was a main factor of social progress (progress is understood as building institutions containing more people): each time the term of "us" was widened (ex. from tribes/regions/villages to nations) it was due to finding a new, common Other. However this process reached its edge in the times of globalisation. Thus othering is a part of retrotopia (an anachronistic process) and retrotopia bases on othering.

The good one is the USA (or even Anglo-Saxon countries), whereas the bad one is European Union, especially Germany. Analogically, Poland is and is not West. In relation to the Good West, she is one, or aspires to be one, performing symbolically colonial Bhabian imitation. In relation to the bad West, either she is not Western or she is more Western that the degenerate old West, who has forgotten its "real" values, who needs to be protected from itself and protected by truly "Western" Poland.

The excess of populism is also the excess of ideology. As Pierre Ansar noticed, at the end of 20th century, many scientists announced the end of ideologies and the rise of an era of pure economism. However, people need ideologies, and pure economism can be highly frustrating, especially for less privileged individuals, social groups and whole countries that are in relationships of dependency towards global capitalistic powers (states and corporations).[11] Those frustrations are used by populism(s), whose relationships with capitalism remain obscure: rightist populists support the system, but they gain popularity on exploiting and re-directing the feelings of resentment caused by capitalist inequalities.

In Eastern European countries, after decommunization, the idea of so-called non-ideological liberal economism and progressivism was linked to westernisation. It failed because of the weakness of liberal democracy itself (Krastev and Holmes 2019) and because of the specificity of transformation. Initial enthusiasm for the liberal market and democracy was finally replaced by deception with inequities and with etatism, which survived the fall of communism. The state as institution is weak. There is no state theory. In fact, in most of post communist countries, the reformers thought it was enough to correct communist institutions. They neglected building the administrative core of the country, and in fact, they have left the previous system of ruling the state intact: clientelism, treating state administration and national companies as property of ruling party.

Poland has its nationalist populism for four types of reasons (Matyja 2018): global (paradoxically, nationalism, claiming national pride against liberal and leftist servile Western imitating is itself inspired by global, means mostly Western, movements[12]); specific for (semi) peripheral

11 See: Ansart 1977; Matyja 2018; Krastev and Holmes 2019.

12 For analysis of the impact of globalisation in general for populisms all around the world, see Fuchs and Klingemann 2019. If in non-western countries globalisation engenders fears of West and of further non-West-than-we-are, then West isn't free of fear either (as was mentioned in this article there is fear of all coming from non-West). Also, globalisation causes important challenges for

countries; specific for post communist countries; and finally specific for Poland only. The latter being mostly conditioned by Polish history, the long history of fighting for survival: a lack of what Matyja calls a political nation due to a historical lack of state (the only existing nation in Poland is a cultural one, a community of one culture, of one language or even of one ethnicity), obsession of independence, as Napiórkowski calls it, or romantic paradigm that doesn't want to die, as Maria Janion described it (Janion 2000).

Populist Discourse

Populists are reputed to make unrealistic promises, summed up by this demiurge statement: "Only I/we [the party] can do this" (Snyder 2017, 68). But there are far more techniques they use. Another mostly associated with populism is adulation of recipients. This, however, doesn't come to simple cajoling. Usually, it is based on references to their identity—not to the real strength or prestige of the country or the nation, but to the sensation of power and importance. That is why the statement about "rising from the knees" became one of the key factors of success of the Polish ruling party.

The identity of the target group is built in opposition to others. The identities are built on general levels: "Semitic element," "Muslim element," and "Teutonic element." They are even further generalised in identities "us"—"not us" (like "Poland"—"not Poland"; Napiórkowski 2019, 258), where the latter can be every- and anyone: German, Russian, Jew, Ukrainian, immigrant-Muslim-terrorist, (neo)Marxist, Feminist, LGBT person, member of degenerate elites - traitor who serves enemy). "We" are the good element; "We" represent the realm of order, hierarchy, tradition, "normalcy," while outside "us" there is chaos, monstrosity, degeneration. "Non us" are othered not only in a way described by the classical book of Edward Said (1978) but in a way that evokes Julia Kristeva's conception of abject (Kristeva 1980), for populism seems to be obsessed with the image of the dangerous Other: within this obsession a passionate hatred neighbours a strange fasciation, creating a mixture of repulsion and libidinous obsession.

Such a construction of Other is also necessary to construct the figure of a hero and the image of heroic struggle. "We" need to protect ourse-

democracy (Fuchs and Klingemann 2019).

lves (and "ours": families, women, lands…)[13] from "invasion," "flood" (Napiórkowski 2019, 37, 202, 206, 212, 217). Fear (inducing the felt necessity of defence) is central to populism (Wodak 2015). That is why favourite rhetorical figures are those of armour, fortresses, and walls. Finally, the figure of the knight/hussar in armour, protecting Poland from the Bolshevik/LGBT invasion was used on posters of the Independence March. Wall was one of the beloved fantasies of Donald Trump: building a wall on the Mexican border, dreaming about putting crocodiles there… (Dunn 2019). The image of a wall, a rampart, is historically one of Polish nationalists' favourite ones.[14] However, Napiórkowski shows that even an image of an umbrella can be used (an umbrella protecting Polish families from LGBT and gender propaganda): every artefact that is hard, stiff and protective.

Those perceptions of reality in categories of general elements are linked to a populistic view on history in terms of historical analogies: thus, surprising analogies between Leonidas-Sobieski-Piłsudski, Persians--Huns-bolsheviks-nazis-feminists/LGBT-immigrants etc. (Napiórkowski 2019, 239). The vision of history is a vision of constant fighting of good (our country) against evil (the enemies), and history becomes eschatology, as all historical references give to actual events clear moral meaning. In this fight, "We" have always been heroes or noble victims,[15] which guarantees us the right to eternal gratitude, recognition or recompense from the rest of world and monopoly for being morally right.

Knowledge of this mythology is perfectly known by populists: their diagnosis is always right because they create and perform the world rather than simply describing it. With a simple phrase—"Those who are not standing at the side of Poles, but at the side of those, who are not Poles"—Jarosław Kaczyński (2018), leader of PiS, the ruling party in Poland, incites pride, reminds us about historical roots and traces the shadow of an enemy, another reincarnation of the eternal foe. This permits him to make a paradoxical and irrational association between Germans taking revenge and going back for lands in Mazury and judges who protest against the reform of courts. He makes a sharp and

13 "Normalcy" is usually male, heterosexual and white (and in countries of colour, in South Asia, South America, Africa: fair-skinned) and has some religion (like Christianity in the USA, even more exclusively catholic Christianity in Poland).

14 In the moment of publishing of this article the vision of wall built on the border (this time a Polish-Belarussian border) is closer to the realisation than ever.

15 About the status of victim as a kind of capital for revindications, see Chaumont 2017.

clear yet undefined division between "us" and "them," so that every recipient can identify with the good ones (Poles) if only they[16] support PiS and inscribes himself into the symbolic domain: which is easy as there are no specific conditions or definitions. The statement unites and mobilises, does not irritate with clarifications and does not permit to disagree. It is a perfect example of an empty signifier: deprived of sense, yet meaningful. It raises strong emotions which are used to induce (or amplify) the feeling of crisis and/or threat. Populism aims to induce crisis through passionate dramatization and performance (Moffit 2019, 1345).

The basic populist structure is opposition between "people" and "not people," which contains the (opponent) elite, minorities, opponents and/or other groups. "First, they attempt to create a homogeneous, essentially undifferentiated community which deliberately excludes those not belonging, the other" (Deiwiks 2009, 2–3). Ruth Wodak notices that "people" in populism (through reference to its etymology and the Latin word *populus*) designs the community as a whole, as one entity, not as a group of individuals (Wodak 2015, 8). Populism usually proposes a scapegoat(s): although populism is an anti-elitist movement, usually violence is catalysed towards the weak minorities, be it immigrants (USA, Poland), LGBT (Poland), women ("gender ideology" fear in Poland, misogynous behavior of Trump), other races or religions. In 2015, populists focused on immigration issues, mostly in connection with Islamophobia (Forchtner, Krzyżanowski and Wodak 2013) and refugee crisis, but also spreading the reluctance of other types of migrations and immigrants (Mexicans in the USA, Ukrainians in Poland; Krzyżanowska and Krzyżanowski 2018). In fact, the notion of "people" and "the other" are very fluent and undefined. "»People« can refer to the whole population of a country but also to a fraction of it, those individuals with a particular nationality or culture" (Deiwiks 2009, 2). It is discursively constructed by every populist movement and then performed in every speech: it is being constructed and reconstructed even within one populist movement. "People" is in fact not only the main subject of populism (as populists loudly claim), but also an object of continuous negotiations and dispute about the right to represent it

16 In my article I use neutral "they" to denote 3rd person singular, except in few cases, notably why referring to a populist leader and "Little Man ideology." In both maleness is a conjectural feature of the denoted person [sometimes despite the actual gender of the leader, which can be explained by Ernst Kantorowicz theory of symbolic body (Kantorowicz 2016); however not in the case of Poland or the USA, where leaders are males].

(thus, the right to govern over it) as well as an audience of political performance.

The creation of "people" happens through ideological integration: the individual internalises and reproduces ideology. Ansart enumerates three elements: "make believe," "make love," "make act" (Ansart 1977, 211–220). "Make believe" is more than to make individuals surrender to an imposed sense, it is to make them internalise this sense and then reproduce it and conduct themselves accordingly. Ideology satisfies the basic human needs of identity and social connections. "Make believe" is doubled by "make love." Ideology proclaims values that are worthy of love, respect and effort tells what is wrong and what is right, making the subject's world simpler and thus controllable. The individual also finds in the ideology the way of expression of their own hatred and injuries, and projects their own libido onto their group.[17] Ideologies "transpose the everyday banality into the dramatic grandeur (…) noblesse of the tragedy where the heroes confront" (ibid., 216). A subject, by embracing ideology, embraces idealised identification and magnifies themselvesves Thus, Adorno wrote about the important narcissistic component of ideological identification (Adorno 1981).

This way, through internalisation, ideology controls the subject and enters all sectors of private and social life. Maciej Gdula, analysing motivations of right populist supporters, noticed a very interesting fact: political narration erases real biography. Among PiS supporters, even people who managed really well in their lives complain about poverty, social injustice and the bad life of the Polish nation during the previous liberal government, letting their own personal experience be marginalised by their political identification (Gdula 2017, 37). The feeling of community, feeling of power, dignity and importance are the main reasons for support towards PiS (ibid.).

Those feelings are confirmed in moments of collective exaltations, participation and sharing of affects: massive chanting, singing. Ansart points out that the sense is less important than affective communion. Such moments are introduced by a leader who also assures communion by turning aggressive impulses outside the group, onto external objects. "Make believe" and "make love" join to create "make act." Goals are described and one common will is created—it exists by the act of being

17 On the libidinal aspect of ideological mass formation and the stages of ideological identification through libidinal bond, see also Adorno 1981. However, although Adorno wrote about the fascist movement, fascist ideology and fascist leaders, his remarks apply as well to ideological formation and identification in general (and populistic identification especially).

proclaimed. Ideology becomes a force of production in every sense (production of power, economical production), but it can also become legitimised violence. Every subject of the group feels like a depositary of the justice and law, supporter of the good, active and extremely mobilised, representing universal truth and morality. Opposition is seen as irrational, harmful, even sacrilege. For Theodor Adorno, it has again a libidinal, narcissistic dimension: the followers magnify themselves through othering the non-followers and the different.

Anti-elitism—regardless of the fact that by taking part in political life and competing for state power, they do aspire to create their own elites—usually takes the form of what Niels Bjerre-Poulsen calls "the worship of the Little Man," of his quiet heroism, his common sense and his uncorrupted nature. To politicians, the concept has the obvious advantage that it doesn't require any class definition. The "Little Man" can be a small manufacturer as well as a worker. This figure, such as the communal figure of "the people," remains vague. He is only defined in his antagonism towards the elite. In the same manner that the concept of "the Little Man" can unite supporters in their antagonism towards the elite, it can also legitimise the populist leader who obviously is a "great Little Man" himself. Theodor Adorno explained this auto-creation as a flattering of supporters narcissistic libido (Adorno 1981): a leader is a superman and an ordinary man together. Therefore, the narcissistic aspirations of supporters can be projected onto him (because he seems so similar to ordinary men), and in his person they are accomplished. Thus, Donald Trump poses for an ordinary American who succeeded, flattering ambitions of the "Little Man" he represents. As a spokesman for all "Little Men," his political leadership almost achieves the dimensions of a direct democracy (Bjerre-Poulsen 1986, 32). The "Little Man" image also helps to show the populist leader as an outsider, a non-elite person—a rebel.

Although (or rather because?) rightist populism feeds on inequities and judges them quite well, it does not propose to really reform a liberal economical system. Rather than changing the realm of the Real, populists prefer to change the realm of the Symbolic (Demertzis 2006). They "manage real problems with symbolic means": pride and right to expression, "they create symbolic space in which the unsatisfied have the right to express themselves but cannot change their condition" (Napiórkowski 2019, 48). The image of a castle surrounded by enemies also drives attention away from reforms (ibid., 217). Every frustration is catalysed towards the enemy—in fantasies about war or in real violence, usually towards minorities. That is why populists attack political correctness. That is also what finally erases class differences: both reports

of Daniel Oesch and Maciej Gdula show that the support for right populists is not reduced to lower classes, but exists in major parts of middle class, on the cultural, usually national basis.

However, despite the actual embracement of populist ideologies by the middle class people, the middle class city-resident (best represented by populist discourse in the figure of the hipster) remains the symbolic enemy. It is a target of populist reluctance while upper class and even millionaires (Donald Trump) can become populist leaders. This is fundamental difference between Left and Populist Right: although both denounce inequities, Left places conflict between the richest and the big corporations on the one side, and the rest of the population on the other and blames capitalism as a system. Populistic Right places conflict between the middle class (easier reachable enemy) on the one side and the working class on the other, and sees big capitalism as the ally of the working class in the fight with liberal institutions that promote "false" victims of "non-existing" discrimination at the expense of the "normal" people (Napiórkowski 2019, 147–148). Trump is "normal people" far more than any working class supporter of the Left; he is what every "normal people" would be, if not for state protection of "false" unprivileged (ibid., 149). The same goes for Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, former president of one of the greatest banks. Populism at the same time builds bridges over class differences thanks to the idea of national (ethnic) unanimity, but it also exploits them to redirect animosities towards those of middle and upper class who are culturally, ideologically different.

Perhaps this unexpected alliance between the upper and working classes is due to retrospective tendencies of rightist populisms: middle class is a product of modernity. This can be best observed in non-Western countries such as India,[18] in which old social structure (caste) and modern social structure (class) intersect and not always meet. Few of the old elite (upper castes) have lost their position due to economical changes induced by liberal (global) capitalism. Those changes have not been particularly beneficial for the lowest castes either, those who didn't have enough social, educational and cultural capital to use. However, the new middle

18 India has become my second motherland since the time of marriage. However I do not claim any competence yet in the matters of India and my few notes have character of rather loose observations. I owe them to my husband, Bhavin Trivedi, with whom I always disagreed, to my friend and scholar Shreemoyee Chattopadhyay, with whom I mostly agreed and to most inspiring meeting with Natalia Bloch during PhD Candidate Summer School "Migracje przymusowe – interwencje antropologiczne", Instytut Etnologii i Antropologii Kulturowej, Warszawa, September–October 2019.

class has risen. Indian nationalism somehow re-groups upper and lower classes, upper and lower castes against liberals of middle class. In Poland, the revolution which declassed old aristocracy and noblesse took place many years ago, after the Second World War, but, as written by Andrzej Leder, it was slept over (Leder 2014), not noticed in the symbolic national imagery. Thus, the nationalistic image operates with representations of noblesse, presenting populists and their supporters (even those from working class) as heirs of knights and noblemen, while liberalism is seen as the ideology of middle class, materialistic un-romantic *bourjois*.

One of the key resources to create a populistic world is vocabulary: its use and its creation. Vocabulary changes the world and imposes the frame of discourse over everyone on the political scene; it forces populists' opponents to speak populists' language, a domain in which they always win (Lakoff 2004). In Poland, it means constant arguments about which party's members (PiS or opposition PO) were more involved (considered compromised) in the communist past. Populistic vocabulary is coherent and convincing even if illogical: words refer to each other, and their primary lack of significance is unnoticed (Napiórkowski 2019, 57). Also thanks to such démarches as "plaiting" or repetition. The first one

> Permits to speak very fluently, making enunciations which seem very coherent and dense. The secret lies in consequent use of few carefully selected and frequently repeated notions and (…) simple trick consisting on beginning each sentence with a key word with which previous sentence ended. (ibid., 59)

The later one happens not only within one speech, but within total discourse, and as noticed by Timothy Snyder (2017, 65–71), serves many purposes. It makes believable what is false, gives opponents Homeric epithets ("Hillary Swindler," "Ted Liar" in Trump's politics, "Tusk Traitor" in PiS rhetorics), and helps to draw attention away from populists' own incompetence.

Napiórkowski particularly analyses the invention/use of two words: oikophobia and antipolonism. The first notion was introduced by Roger Scruton (1993; example of the use of "good" West rhetorical munition) to describe the phenomenon in Great Britain and the USA. Scruton stated that multicultural politics lead white majority members to restrict the rights of their own groups; speaking in populistic terms: to hate their own. The adaptation of the notion of "oikophobia" is very interesting: it symbolically associates Poles with Western (of course, conservative) majorities, although, in reality, Polish immigrants in the West can

instead be regarded as one of discriminated minorities who do need protection of multicultural politics. Oikophobia is a term used by Polish nationalists to describe those who "hate their own country." However few of the nationalistic allegations are justified, in nationalistic agenda, the notion of oikophobia serves mostly to hide xenophobia, nationalism or even fascism, to reverse every accusation of intolerance and to make the accused one a victim of oikophobic attack. "Antipolonism" is used in the same goal.

Both notions permit populists to present majority as marginalised, discriminated and in need of emancipation and to present themselves as rebels against the system, fighting for this emancipation (independently form the fact that populists legitimise themselves by this system, claiming to represent democratic will of people (Canovan 1999, 15). Ruth Wodak writes about the strategy of victim-perpetrator reversal (Wodak 2015): populists show majority as attacked by minorities (and elites who support minorities instead of their "own") and populist leaders show themselves as being representative victims of such attacks, suffering attacks in the name of "people" and truth. They use strategy of denial: they deny any discriminative attitudes from their part and present those accusations as an aggression of which they are victims.

Rightists somehow stole leftists' optics and strategies. They are now using alternative and vernacular medias; they have turned mediatisation of politics for their benefit.[19] They have taken leftist discursive structures and philosophical insights. They use the post-modern view that there are many truths to lance their own truth, as opposed to "official" truth. At the same time, they declare that there is only one truth: the populistic one (Thomlinson 2018; Kokutani 2018). It is worth noting that the face of populistic truth is changing according to circumstances (Bryant 2019).

One of the most widely spread populistic strategies is to present "alternative facts" (frequently being just lies or conspiracy theories) and claim that opposite media show "fake news." As pointed out by Fernando Vallespin and Máriam M. Bascuñán (2019, 3931–4471) populists create a world in which reality is irrelevant. This results in the loss of trust in experts. Populists present every question as simple and every complicated expertise as a tool of fooling or dominating "normal" people; "they denounce backroom deals, shady compromises, complicated procedures, secret treaties, and technicalities that only experts can understand"

19 About the role of new media in the rise of populism writes e.g. Paolo Cossarini (2019) or Fernando Vallespin and Máriam M. Bascuñán (2019).

(Canovan 1999, 16). Populists reject expert knowledge in the name of "common sense" or of knowledge, frequently pseudo-science, which is supposed to be science on "our" side. Timothy Snyder notices that lack of reality and magical thinking paradoxically leads to closer contact with the recipient (Snyder 2017, 67). None of this means that populists tell only falsehoods. As wrote Pierre Ansart, to be successful, ideology has to match with the experience of its target group, refer to their situation, interest, perceived threats. It will totalise and correct this experience, underline some and hide some other aspects (Ansart 1977, 81, 181). Ideological truth is composed of three elements: definition of the group, explanation of its situation and expression of its goals (ibid., 188). It is performative: the community truth is expressed and created while being expressed.

Populists pride themselves in directness. "Bad manners" against "good manners" are supposed to prove passion and sincerity. Populists use slang, swearing, being overly demonstrative and "colourful," even offensiveness towards opponents. Populists flaunt disregard for others and "studied ignorance of that which does not interest him" (Moffit 2019, 1371), all this in opposition to "high" behavior of rigidness, rationality, composure, technocratic language. Populists claim to tell what everyone—the "silent minority"—thinks. This again permits populist leaders to position themselves out of the elite (the more criticised they get, the more distanced they appear) and to appear more "authentic" (ibid., 1368–1565).

Populists usually claim to restore a great past. Paul Taggart explains populism with the reference to the heartland which "represents an idealised conception of the community" and a "[retrospective] construction of an ideal world" (Taggart 2002, 67). This past, as Timothy Snyder shows, leads to a (mythical) eternity of a great nation, constantly threatened by the enemy. Similar reflections were developed by Marcin Napiórkowski. He writes about retrotopia, nostalgia for the past, "political philosophy recognising primacy of celebration and re-actualisation of history over the march to the future" (Napiórkowski 2019, 231). It's a fantasy about "returning of the past which will save us from suffering, dangers and choices of the present," a fantasy born from the fear of future in times of fast progress. "With all its defects, past is however a domain of stability and control" (ibid., 234). Retrotopia is a populistic promise of plain security (ibid., 235). When new liberal ideology transmitted the utopia from the realm of social to the realm of personal, putting the whole frightening responsibility for their life on the individual and depriving them from the sense of belonging to a group, con-

servative populisms repair those damages with the idea of retrotopia (Bauman 2017). Moreover, retrotopia creates an image of an idealised past: heroic, ordered and full of traditional values, a world which was difficult, but in which everything was simpler, and good and evil were clearly distinct and easy to recognise (Napiórkowski 2019, 252).

Snyder notices a very interesting fact: one of the favourite times of all populists, whatever in the USA, the UK, France, Russia, Poland or Hungary, were 1930s, which in the rightist optics, were times of great national politics (and indeed it was a time known for the rise of fascisms in rather multinational countries of the era; Snyder 2017, 124–126). The 1930s were also a decade of the leader's cult blooming. The leader's cult is, of course, a dreamt phenomenon for every political leader, but in many populisms, it is a part of political program and political ideology. This happens because of the importance of structures, and particularly of structural element called the empty signifier, within populism.

Empty Signifiers and Wandering Structures (Instead of Conclusion)

Crucial discursive phenomenon in populism is an empty signifier: it is more than a technique or a strategy. It is, as observed by Paolo Cassarini (2019, 3280–3599), the nodal point around which political actors attempt to dominate the field of discursivity and establish hegemonic political views. It is a *lieu* in Pierre Nora's sense. In discursive theory, an empty signifier is also known as a floating signifier. It is a signifier without a referent in semiotics, a word that points to no actual object and has no agreed meaning. It has central political value and becomes the means of political articulation. Empty signifiers, such as "nation," "people," "struggle," "triumph," make legal resistance almost impossible (Snyder 2017, 60): they impose themselves on the populists' opponents and usually lead to compromising all the oppositions as betrayals of those great notions.

The notion of "people," consisting of the center, the very core of populism, is an empty signifier itself. Cossarini draws from Laclau the idea of "the people" as an empty signifier, ready to be filled according to needs or demands.

Emily Eklundh (2019) defines the figure of the populist leader as a signifier of identity (this can be said for any significant political leader with strong ideology, but it applies particularly to populist leaders). The leader becomes an empty signifier, expressing desires and emotions of

its supporters. They identify with him, projecting onto him their personal (sometimes very diverse) desires and passions. As wrote Sergio Benvenuto (2012) in his critical reading of Ernesto Laclau's *On Populist Reason*, the leader is important by who he is: he can embrace a whole range of meanings and signify a whole range of things for a whole range of people. The leader is not only a representative of a political group, of his supporters, but also a representation: an empty signifier of their identity. Thus, if identity, per Lacan and Laclau, is itself an empty, never constituted, signifier, a leader, especially a populist leader, who becomes a signifier of the signifier, creates a double mirroring of representation (or maybe Baudrillard's simulacrum) and (empty) signification. Therefore, a leader—as a second empty signifier next to "people"—becomes the central figure of populism.[20]

Thus, if identity, per Lacan and Laclau, is itself an empty, never constituted, signifier, a leader, especially a populist leader, who becomes a signifier of the signifier, creates a double mirroring of representation (or maybe Baudrillard's simulacrum) and (empty) signification. (...) Empty signifiers can be used as pieces of puzzles and quite arbitrarily matched into combinations to create (empty) signifying structures.

Empty signifiers can be used as pieces of puzzles and quite arbitrarily matched into combinations to create (empty) signifying structures. The most popular structure is the opposition "we"—"others/enemy," which can be constructed, reconstructed, re-signified over and over again. Empty signifiers can cross and re-cross the border of one domain (e.g. link economics subjects, like capitalists, with racial ones, like Jews; or gender ones, like women, with national ones, like Germans; the latter one happened during "women strikes" in Poland). In that way, non-related objects can be joined together, so that Germany, Jews, LGBT converge in one figure of a threat. On the opposite side, notions considered positive are also linked together, even if they are non-related. This is particularly true for the figure of the populist leader who embraces symbolic realm of positivity, frequently in paradox opposition to his material human reality. Therefore, a millionaire becomes a simple man, a male misogynic leader a protector (if not embodiment) of femininity (of "true femininity," understood as pureness, gentleness, motherhood; both Trump and Kaczyński are known for supporting "pro-life" movements and "traditional families").

General structures have a tendency to wander around the world, or perhaps to be produced in the West and spread around the world, thanks

20 For more specific, personal, "material" characteristics of populist reader see still valid, and indeed prophetical, texts of Theodor Adorno (1981) or Leo Löwenthal and Norbert Guterman (1949), written in 40s and 50s. Although some thesis (like Adorno's chauvinistic repetition of Hitler's statement about feminine (or crypto-homosexual) character of masses—as if the political mass leader was conjecturally male—can seem controversial or obsolete nowadays, most of the remarks remain surprisingly up-to-date and the works are being returned to: see Gordon 2017.

to the system of global domination. In the peripheral countries, they are re-adapted and used in local context, but they still remain recognisable. It seems that the "clash of ideologies" observed by Arjun Appadurai when he was describing the phenomenon of global minorities, especially global Islamophobia, has even broader dimensions: like free neutrons, free empty signifier structures circulate in the global world, intercepted, adapted, fulfilled with affective meaning and released again into the global communicative space.

Conclusion

Populism has grown in strength in recent years in many countries, both core and semi-peripheral or peripheral. It had diverse conditions of development and, thus, different faces in particular situations and environments, but it had a similar structure and similar character—a character in which structure dominates over sense. In this article, I analysed discursive samples of populisms from the USA and from Poland to discover basic populist structure: structure of fear (Wodak 2015), division onto "we" and "Other(s)." I used the theory of ideology of Pierre Ansart and the structuralist category of empty signifier to expose operationalist modes of populism. I claim that an empty signifier is a crucial discursive phenomenon in populism, its nodal point. The notion of "people," yet another empty signifier, is fundamental for populism, and so is the figure of a populist leader [who is a double (empty) signifier: he is a signifier of group identity, which is an (empty) signifier itself].

They have a tendency to wander around the world: empty signifier structures circulate in the global world, intercepted, adapted, fulfilled with affective meaning and released again into the global communicative space.

Empty signifiers can be used as pieces of puzzles and are quite arbitrarily matched into combinations to create (empty) signifying structures. They cross and re-cross diverse domains and geopolitical borders. They have a tendency to wander around the world: empty signifier structures circulate in the global world, intercepted, adapted, fulfilled with affective meaning and released again into the global communicative space. They can indeed go around in an endless hermeneutic circle. They will always be present in the global discursive space, ready to be taken by, ready to fuel and to constitute yet another emerging populist movement.

References

Adorno, Theodor. 1981. "Freudian Theory and the Pattern of Fascist Propaganda." In *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, edited by Theodor Adorno and Jay M. Bernstein. London: Routledge.

Ansart, Pierre. 1977. *Idéologies, conflits et pouvoir*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Appadurai, Arjun. 2006. *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Augustin, Óscar Garcia. 2019. "Emotions and the Left in Denmark: Towards Left-Wing and Mainstream Populism." In *Populism and Passions: Democratic Legitimacy after Austerity*, edited by Paolo Cossarini and Fernando Vallespin. New York: Routledge.

Bauman, Zygmunt. 2017. *Retrotopia*. London: Polity Press.

Benvenuto, Sergio. 2012. "On Populist Reason by Ernesto Laclau." https://www.researchgate.net/publication/291092189_On_Populist_Reason_by_Ernesto_Laclau.

Betz, Hans-Georg. 2002. "Conditions Favoring the Success and Failure of Radical Right-Wing Populist Parties in Contemporary Democracies." In *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*, edited by Yves Mény and Yves Surel. New York: Palgrave.

Bhabha, Homi K. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.

Bjerre-Poulsen, Niels. 1986. "Populism: A Brief Introduction to a Baffling Notion." *American Studies in Scandinavia* 18(1): 27–36. https://doi.org/10.22439/asca.v18i1.1190

Bryant, Nick. 2019. "How Will History Judge President Trump?" *BBC News*, January 17. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-46895634.

Buchowski, Michał. 2016. "Making Anthropology Matter in the Heyday of Islamophobia and the 'Refugee Crisis': The Case of Poland." *Český lid: Etnologický časopis* 103(1): 51–67. https://doi.org/10.21104/CL.2016.1.03.

Canovan, Margaret. 1981. *Populism*. London: Junction Books.

———. 1999. "Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy." *Political Studies* 47(1): 2–16. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.00184.

Chaumont, Jean-Michel. 2017. *La concurrence des victimes: Génocide, identité, reconnaissance*. Paris: La Découverte.

Chimombo, Moira P.F., and Robert L. Roseberry. 1998. *The Power of Discourse: An Introduction to Discourse Analysis*. London: Routledge.

Collins, Patricia Hill. 1993. "Toward a New Vision: Race, Class, and

Gender as Categories of Analysis and Connection." *Race, Sex & Class* 1(1): 25–45.

Cossarini, Paolo. 2019. "Filling the Vaccum? Passion, 'The People,' and Affective Communities." In *Populism and Passions: Democratic Legitimacy after Austerity*, edited by Paolo Cossarini and Fernando Vallespin. New York: Routledge.

Deiwiks, Christa. 2009. "Populism." *Living Reviews in Democracy*. https://ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/cis-dam/CIS_DAM_2015/WorkingPapers/Living_Reviews_Democracy/Deiwiks.PDF.

Demertzis, Nicolas. 2006. "Emotions and Populism." In *Emotion, Politics and Society*, edited by Simon Clarke, Paul Hoggett and Simon Thompson. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

D'Eramo, Marco. 2013. "Populism and the New Oligarchy." Translated by Gregory Elliott. **New Left Review** 82: 5–28.

Dunn, Elisabeth. 2019. *Predatory Humanitarianism: Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and the Manhunt. Reflection on migration on the US-Mexico border*. Lecture in IEiAK UW, Warszawa, October 26.

Eklundh, Emmy. 2019. "Our Damned Weakeness: Tensjions Between Reason and Emotions in Podemos." In *Populism and Passions: Democratic Legitimacy after Austerity*, edited by Paolo Cossarini and Fernando Vallespin. New York: Routledge.

Forchtner, Bernhard, Michał Krzyżanowski, and Ruth Wodak. 2013. "Mediatization, Right-Wing Populism and Political Campaigning: The Case of the Austrian Freedom Party." In *Media Talk and Political Elections in Europe and America*, edited by Mats Ekström and Andrew Tolson. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Fuchs, Dieter, and Hans-Dieter Klingemann. 2019. "Globalization, Populism and Legitimacy in Contemporary Democracy." In *Democracy under Threat: A Crisis of Legitimacy?*, edited by Ursula van Beek. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gdula, Maciej. 2017. *Dobra zmiana w miastku. Neoautorytaryzm w Polskiej Polityce z Perspektywy Małego Miasta*. With collaboration of Katarzyna Dębska and Kamil Trepka. Warszawa: Instytut Studiów Zaawansowanych.

Glynos, Jason, and Aurelien Mondon. 2019. "The Political Logic of Populist Hype: The Case of Right-Wing Populism's 'Meteoric Rise' and Its Relation to the Status Quo." In *Populism and Passions: Democratic Legitimacy after Austerity*, edited by Paolo Cossarini and Fernando Vallespin. New York: Routledge.

Gordon, Peter E. 2017. "The Authoritarian Personality Revisited:

Reading Adorno in the Age of Trump." *Boundary 2* 44(2): 31–56. https://doi.org/10.1215/01903659-3826618.
Gounari, Panayota. 2018. "Authoritarianism, Discourse and Social Media: Trump as the 'American Agitator.'" In *Critical Theory and Authoritarian Populism*, edited by Jeremiah Morelock, 207–227. London: University of Westminster Press.
Janion, Maria. 2000. *Czy będziesz wiedział, co przeżyłeś*. Gdańsk: Sic!
Kaczyński, Jarosław. 2018. *Enunciation during electoral convent in Olsztyn*. September 21. youtube.com, bit.ly/2Jo8xv4.
Kantorowicz, Ernst. 2016. *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Kitschelt, Herbert. 2002. "Popular Dissatisfaction with Democracy: Populism and Party Systems." In *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*, edited by Yves Mény and Yves Surel. New York: Palgrave.
Kokutani, Michiko. 2018. "The Death of Truth: How We Gave Up on Facts and Ended Up with Trump." *The Guardian*, June 14. https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/jul/14/the-death-of-truth-how-we-gave-up-on-facts-and-ended-up-with-trump.
Krastev, Ivan, and Stephen Holmes. 2019. *The Light that Failed: A Reckoning*. London: Penguin Books.
Kristeva, Julia. 1980. *Pouvoirs de l'horreur: Essai sur l'abjection*. Paris: Le Seuil.
Krzyżanowska, Natalia, and Michał Krzyżanowski. 2018. "'Crisis' and Migration in Poland: Discursive Shifts, Anti-Pluralism and the Politicisation of Exclusion." *Sociology* 52(3): 612–618. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038518757952.
Laclau, Ernesto. 2005. *On Populist Reason*. New York: Verso.
Lakoff, George. 2004. *Don't Think of An Elephant! Know Your Values and Frame the Debate*. Carlton North: Scribe Publications.
Leder, Andrzej. 2014. *Prześniona rewolucja*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej.
Mair, Peter. 2013. *Ruling the Void: The Hollowing-out of Western Democracy*. London: Verso.
Marx, Karl, and Frederick Engels. 2001. *The German Ideology Part One, with Selections from Parts Two and Three, together with Marx's "Introduction to a Critique of Political Economy"*, edited by C.J. Arthur. New York: International Publishers.
Matyja, Rafał. 2018. *Wyjście awaryjne: O zmianie wyobraźni politycznej*. Kraków: Karakter.
Moffitt, Benjamin. 2019. "Populism versus Technocracy: Performance, Passions, and Aesthetics." In *Populism and Passions: Democratic Legi-*

timacy after Austerity, edited by Paolo Cossarini and Fernando Vallespin. New York: Routledge.

Mouffe, Chantal. 2018. *For a Left Populism*. London: Verso.

———. 2020. "The Controversy over Left-Wing Populism." *Le Monde Diplomatique*, May. https://mondediplo.com/2020/05/14populism.

Napiórkowski, Marcin. 2014. *Władza wyobraźni*. Warszawa: WUW.

———. 2019. *Turbopatriotyzm*. Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo Czarne.

Oesch, Daniel. 2008. "Explaining Workers' Support for Right-Wing Populist Parties in Western Europe: Evidence from Austria, Belgium, France, Norway, and Switzerland." *International Political Science Review* 29(3): 349–373. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512107088390.

Richardson, John E. 2007. *Analysing Newspapers: An Approach from Critical Discourse Analysis*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Said, Edward. 1978. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Schick, Irvin C. 1999. T*he Erotic Margin: Sexuality and Spatiality in Alteristic Discourse*. New York: Verso.

Scruton, Roger. 1993. "Oikophobia." *Journal of Education* 175(2): 93–98. https://doi.org/10.1177/002205749317500207.

Simonis, Yvan. 2010. "A Way of Comparing Levi-Strauss and Lacan." *Konturen* 3(1): 149–161. http://dx.doi.org/10.5399/uo/konturen.3.1.1406.

Snyder, Timothy. 2017. *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century*. New York: The Duggan Books.

Taggart, Paul. 2002. „Populism and the Pathology of Representative Politics." In *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*, edited by Yves Mény and Yves Surel. New York: Palgrave.

Tambakaki, Paulina. 2019. "Populism and the Use of Tropes." In *Populism and Passions: Democratic Legitimacy after Austerity*, edited by Paolo Cossarini and Fernando Vallespin. New York: Routledge.

Thomlinson, Harvey. 2018. "After Burroughs and Beckett: Opening up Experimental Fiction Beyond Old White Men." *The Guardian*, October 8.

Tormey, Simon. 2019. "Passion, Excess, and Fear of the Mob: Populism as Ideology." In *Populism and Passions: Democratic Legitimacy after Austerity*, edited by Paolo Cossarini and Fernando Vallespin. New York: Routledge.

Vallespin, Fernando, and Máriam M. Bascuñán. 2019. "Populism and the Restructuring of the Public Sphere." In *Populism and Passions: Democratic Legitimacy after Austerity*, edited by Paolo Cossarini and Fernando Vallespin. New York: Rutledge.

Van Dijk, Teun A. 1993. *Elite Discourse and Racism*. Newbury Park: Sage.

Weyland, Kurt. 1999. "Neoliberal Populism in Latin America and Eastern Europe." *Comparative Politics* 31(4): 379–401.

Wiles, Peter. 1969. "Syndrome, Not a Doctrine: Some Elementary Theses on populism." In *Populism: Its Meaning and National Characteristics*, edited by Ghiţa Ionescu and Ernest Gellner. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

Wodak, Ruth. 2015. *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean*. London: Sage.

———, and Michał Krzyżanowski, eds. 2017. *Journal of Language and Politics* 16(4).

PATRYCJA PICHNICKA-TRIVEDI – is a Ph.D. Candidate at the University of Warsaw (Poland). She holds a Master's Degree in Cultural Studies with *Summa Cum Laude*. She is also a graduate of Kolegium MISH, Bachelor of History of Art. Last year, she was chosen as a finalist in the Professor Jerzy Buzek competition for Scientific Debut 2019. She is writing a thesis on the representations of Otherness in popular culture. She is interested in intersectional studies, biomedical anthropology, posthuman studies and postcolonial studies.

Address:
University of Warsaw
Institute of Polish Culture
Krakowskie Przedmieście St, 26/28
00-927 Warsaw – Poland
email: patrycjapichnicka@uw.edu.pl

Citation:
Pichnicka-Trivedi, Patrycja. 2021. "Populistic Rhetoric: Structures Over Senses." *Praktyka Teoretyczna* 42(4): 65–92.
DOI: 10.14746/prt2021.4.3

Autor: Patrycja Pichnicka-Trivedi
Tytuł: Retoryka populizmu: struktura ponad sensem
Abstrakt: Artykuł stanowi porównawcze studium polskiego i amerykańskiego prawicowego populizmu oraz sposobów ich funkcjonowania. Studium wykorzystuje analizę strukturalną jako główne narzędzie badawcze. Jego celem jest wykazanie, że w istocie to właśnie strukturalne podobieństwo odpowiada za sukces populizmów w różnych środowiskach. Badając przykłady populistycznej retoryki i zauważając zaskakującą skuteczność podobnych dyskursów w różnych politycznych i społecznych warunkach, eksponuję wewnętrzną strukturę populizmu(ów). Zauważam, że populizm(y) zbudowany(e) jest(są) przede wszystkim z pustych znaczących. Te znaczące mogą być następnie łączone w większe struktury. Wśród nich fundamentalna dla populizmu jest przede wszystkim struktura opozycji: "my"—"oni". Takie mityczne struktury są wystarczająco elastyczne, by móc w nie wpisać dowolny podmiot lub przedmiot. Są też wystarczająco elastyczne, by przekraczać granice dziedzin i granice geopolityczne, by „wędrować" po globalnym świecie.
Słowa kluczowe: populizm, struktura, dyskurs, puste znaczące

SAMIR GANDESHA (ORCID: 0000-0002-5100-8331)

The Market Lives on Death: The Endocolonizing Logic of the Fascist Moment[1]

This article poses the question of whether what we are witnessing today can be properly described as "fascistic." It argues that it can if we understand fascism as an attack on liberal-democracy resulting from the now chronic (rather than acute) crisis of capitalism. Like the fascism of the twentieth century, this entails an endocolonizing logic that nonetheless relinquishes its claim on a future increasingly imperilled by the nature of the Covid-19 pandemic in the context of the impending climate emergency.

Keywords: endocolonialism, fascism, populism, democracy, crisis, spectacle

1 This article is based on the Introduction to my edited volume *Spectres of Fascism: Historical, Theoretical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Gandesha 2020a) and well as short pieces previously published in *openDemocracy*. I wish to thank editors Felipe Ziotti Narita and Jeremiah Morelock for the invitation to contribute the piece as well as to three anonymous referees for their very helpful comments on an earlier draft.

It seems that fascism has returned. Nevertheless, be careful when using the word "fascism." The term is often used so indiscriminately—especially by the Left—to vilify one's political opponents that it is in continual danger of losing all meaning. In what sense, then, can we say that what we are witnessing throughout the globe is the re-emergence of fascism? Writing in the pages of the *New Left Review* two years ago, Dylan Riley (2018) argued trenchantly that if we compare 20th century fascism with contemporary authoritarians such as Trump across four axes—geo-political dynamics; the relation between class and nation; developments within civil society; and political parties—there is no persuasive evidence that what we are confronted with today is anything approaching fascism. And, indeed, according to Slavoj Žižek's influential gloss on Walter Benjamin, the authoritarianism that we see around us today does not arise in response to what could reasonably be called a "failed revolution." Of course, there were the Arab Spring and the Occupy movements, but they did not come remotely close to challenging the domination of capital.

Under neoliberalism, crisis is no longer to be regarded as discrete and cyclical but rather as continuous and enduring. It is not an event but a syndrome or a condition; to use a medical metaphor, crisis is no longer "acute" but "chronic." This means, of course, that fascism is always something of a haunting presence within a neoliberalism that is, one could say, co-extensive with a deep and abiding fissure within the social order.

However, as Samir Amin (2014) has perceptively argued, fascism does not have to entirely conform to the 20th century mould and may be simply understood as being comprised of two essential elements. The first is that it is the response to the crisis of capitalism. The second is that it constitutes a categorical rejection of "democracy" by way of an appeal to collective identities—often condensed in the figure of a "strong" leader—tied to a notion of the "people."

Yet, two refinements ought to be made to Amin's definition. The first such refinement is that the very notion of crisis needs to be rethought. Under neoliberalism, crisis is no longer to be regarded as discrete and cyclical but rather as continuous and enduring. It is not an event but a syndrome or a condition; to use a medical metaphor, crisis is no longer "acute" but "chronic." This means, of course, that fascism is always something of a haunting presence within a neoliberalism that is, one could say, co-extensive with a deep and abiding fissure within the social order. Once precisely touted as the antidote to authoritarianism (Hayek 2007; Foucault 2010), neoliberalism deepens and exacerbates authoritarian tendencies that are coextensive with capitalism itself. That, at the end of the day, capitalism, now faced with crushing inequalities (see Piketty's flawed but nonetheless useful *Capital and Ideology*, 2020), will preserve itself by any means necessary. As Theodor W. Adorno once argued, the real threat of fascism comes from within not from outside of capitalist or liberal democracy.

The pandemic undoubtedly overdetermines neoliberalism's endemic crisis and the word crisis, it is important to remember, derives from

the Greek *krisis* (decision) and *krinein* (to decide) (Adorno 1998). In the original Greek, the word also means the turning point of a malady, that *decisive* point at which time the condition of the patient manifestly *improves* or *deteriorates*. In other words, if the crisis of our neoliberal social order—greatly over-determined and exacerbated by the Covd-19 pandemic—is chronic rather than acute, then it is a time at which the figure of the sovereign, the entity that *decides* on the exception (Carl Schmitt), comes to cast a particularly long and dark shadow over our times.

Over the past several years, if not decades, ghosts of fascism have, therefore, escaped their 20th century crypts and come to haunt our present. With the global Covid-19 pandemic, however, we face the prospect of our "Reichstag Fire" moment. This was an arson attack on the German legislature exactly four weeks after Adolf Hitler was sworn in as Chancellor, allegedly carried out by Marinus van der Lubbe, a Dutch Council Communist. The Nazis immediately claimed that the fire was the result of a communist plot, and it became the pretext for their seizure of power (*Machtergreifung*) and total co-ordination of the state (*Gleichschaltung*). Close to a dozen states, from Azerbaijan to Togo, have already used the pandemic to arrogate more power to themselves. Indeed, this development has been particularly visible in Washington, Budapest, and Delhi.

Donald J. Trump claimed "total authority" for the Oval Office in opposition to state governors who had sought to loosen lockdown measures earlier. While he quickly backtracked on this claim, he nonetheless called upon his supporters in blue states to resist lockdown measures and "liberate" themselves from the authority of Democratic governors in an effort to get the wheels of the economy turning again, and has closed the US's borders and suspended immigration for sixty days. The implicit identity of the health of the bodies of individual (white) Americans with that of the US body politic is clear.

Viktor Orbán, Hungary's president, having previously curtailed the autonomy of the courts, has indefinitely suspended the legislative branch of government, eliminating, in the process, the key liberal-democratic principle of institutional limits on executive authority—he now rules by decree. Orbán has consistently, over the years, attacked George Soros, whom he has taken as the metonym of the baleful "globalist," which is to say, Jewish, influence on Hungarian politics. Former Canadian Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, is one of Orbán's many admirers.

The RSS in India—the quasi-fascist Hindu nationalist (Hindutva) force behind Modi—has, in a classically fascistic move, characterized its

Islamic "enemy" as the abject carrier of the Covid-19 virus. The hashtags "CoronaJihad" and "BioJihad" have proliferated via Twitter, as Jason Stanley and Federico Finchelstein (2020) have recently indicated via Indian journalist Rana Ayyub, just as the Nazis used typhus as the pretext for excluding Jews, isolating them in ghettos and ultimately murdering them. The targeting of Muslims comes in the aftermath, of course, of the unconstitutional annexation of Kashmir and changes to the Citizenship Act that explicitly and unapologetically discriminate against this oppressed and reviled minority community.

The Covid-19 pandemic, less of a definite *event* than an amorphous *syndrome*, perhaps plays an analogous role to that of the Reichstag fire in consolidating sovereign power. As it has been widely observed, the pandemic brings into visibility the deep-seated precarity constitutive of the neo-liberal order—one that only the very wealthy can seemingly escape.

The second such refinement is that fascism is not a categorical rejection of democracy *per se* but rather a rejection of its *liberal* form. As Vladimir Putin recently mused, perhaps liberal democracy is obsolete (*Financial Times* 2019). Yet, like leaders of fascist movements of the 20th century, Putin makes an appeal of a certain sort to the idea of democracy (Rousseau's "general will as opposed to what he calls the "will of all", see Rousseau 1968). He does so by claiming to embody the will of the *demos* people or *Volk*, and this is what makes such claims especially dangerous today. There is, in other words, considerable overlap between 20th century fascism, on the one hand, and contemporary forms of right-wing or authoritarian populism—which are often correctly described as "neo-fascist" or post-fascist," as Enzo traverso recently indicated—on the other.

An important difference between 20th and 21st century forms of fascism is that while the former in Germany, under the pretext of the post-Reichstag Fire emergency, abolished the right of assembly, freedom of the press, and ultimately, elections by suspending the Weimar Constitution, right-populists today are committed, at least nominally and for the time being, to contesting elections, although they are quite happy to dispense with many of its corollaries such as the rule of law, respect for minority rights, the division of powers, etc. In fact, they are mobilizing divisions so effectively that they are winning elections and maintaining popular support for the time being, particularly in Hungary and India.

But under the current pandemic, such a commitment to elections might, of course, change rather abruptly. This may appear to be far-

-fetched or even alarmist; however, if we recall that, in the run-up to the mid-term elections in 2018, Trump tweeted thinly-veiled threats of violence were the G.O.P. to suffer setbacks at the polls, and prior to that was his invocation of the "Second Amendment people," it was not beyond the realm of the possible. In late April, 2020, Michigan protesters, whom Trump called "very good people," demonstrated little compunction about hauling their assault weapons to the legislature to intimidate bulletproof vest-clad lawmakers. This was, we now know in retrospect, a prelude to Trump's exhortation to his followers to storm Capitol Hill on January 6th, 2001.

The Republican Party's commitment to the basic features of liberal--democracy seem to be very much in question, as is evinced by engaging in gerrymandering and voter suppression. In contrast with its ostracization from the Republican Party in 2016 by the G.O.P.'s establishment, Trumpism has, today, fully captured the party's spirit. This was made clear by the ousting of Liz Cheney, daughter of former Vice President Dick Cheney, and third ranking Republican in the House of Representatives, who is one of the very few high-ranking Republican figures to challenge the mendacious Trumpian narrative that the election had been "stolen." Several conservative U.S. states are now in the process of enacting legislation that would further restrict voting rights and gerrymander electoral districts to favour Republican candidates (Cf. Gardner et al. 2021).

A vitally important difference between the fascism of the 20th century and that of the present century is how each of them conceive of time. To be sure, Hitler's dream of a "1000-year Reich" was spatially oriented, insofar as it was based on the securing of *Lebensraum* to the east for the German *Volk*. However, what was more important than *space* in Nazi thinking was *time*, insofar as fascism was, in its own perverse way, "utopian" and "revolutionary" oriented to a bright new future for the "Aryan race." In *Being and Time*, card-carrying member of the Nazi Party, Martin Heidegger (1962), elevated the temporal modality of the future over both the past and the present. *The future would be secured by retrieving the forgotten experiences at the origin of the Ancient Greek understanding of Being*.

Present-day fascism, in contrast, takes refuge exclusively in the past as such: in a supposedly "great" America before the Civil Rights Act (if not before the Civil War); in an authentic homeland of the Magyars in Hungary; and in a purified India for Hindus (Hindustan). *In other words, contemporary fascism makes little or no claim on the future in an era of its ecologically planned obsolescence.* In this, it is, as Aimé Césaire (1950) had

already pointed out in *Discourse on Colonialism*, a form of European colonialism applied to Europe itself—*endocolonialism*, as it were. End-colonialism, for Césaire as well as for Arendt and Traverso, entailed the application of colonial modes of domination by European states to other European states and nations. Today, as we have seen in the Greek case, its weapons are German banks rather than tanks. As I have written elsewhere (Gandesha 2020b), we see this as well in the willingness of that model of kumbaya "liberal multiculturalism"—the Canadian state—to deploy the logic of the exception to permit on-going large energy infrastructure projects (hydro, LNG, and bitumen) under conditions of a Covid-19 lockdown. Recalling the weaponization of disease in the earliest days of contact between Indigene and Colonizer, this puts already vulnerable Indigenous communities at serious risk of a health catastrophe.[2] The same logic can be discerned in the Modi Government's resource extraction agenda driving the war on India's tribal peoples (Adivasis) in Chhattisgarh, not to mention in Jair Bolsonaro's iron-fisted developmental programme in the Amazon basin.

Specters of fascism loom, then, as a response to the chronic financial and ecological crisis of capitalism. Fascism in the 20th century offered, in part, a solution to the economic slump via an acceleration of the extraction of absolute and relative surplus-value from living labor by smashing the revolutionary Left, independent trade unions, and other working-class institutions.

Specters of fascism loom, then, as a response to the chronic financial and ecological crisis of capitalism. Fascism in the 20th century offered, in part, a solution to the economic slump via an acceleration of the extraction of absolute and relative surplus-value from living labor by smashing the revolutionary Left, independent trade unions, and other working-class institutions. This was, indeed, the original meaning of Mussolini's (and Gentile's) idea of fascism based on the image of what was called, in Latin, *fasces*, a bundle of rods and protruding axe blade symbolizing the penal powers of the Roman state wielded by the magistrate. Fascism entailed, then, the binding together of the rods of the state, capital, and labour. It is perhaps telling that both the US and French Republics adopted and maintained this proto-fascistic Roman symbolism through the 18th and 19th centuries.

In contrast to its anti-human 20th century form, contemporary "post-human" fascism centres on a deepening of resource extraction on the very precipice of massive deskilling of labour, and widespread automation and employment of robotics, machine learning, and artificial intelligence to wit—the prospective obsolescence of humanity itself. Such a logic entails what, in *Critique of Black Reason*, Achille Mbembe (2017) calls the "becoming Black of the world," the creation of "abandoned subjects":

2 As the meme attacking the government's granting exceptions for extractive industries (so-called "essential services") from the Covid-19 health protocols reads: As the meme goes "Genocide is not an essential service!"

> There are no more workers as such. There are only laboring nomads. If yesterday's drama of the subject was exploitation by capital, the tragedy of the multitude today is that they are unable to be exploited at all. They are abandoned subjects, relegated to the role of a "superfluous humanity."

This superfluousness now becomes clear as governments, by omission or commission amidst the pandemic, put members of society deemed surplus as well as workers, particularly people of colour, at grave risk of contracting or even dying from the virus (a recent UCSF study conducted in San Francisco's Mission District showed that 95% of positive cases were Latinx). Of course, it could be argued that human labour has never appeared more "essential" than in this historical moment. Yet, states are also showing themselves quite willing to put essential workers at such an extreme risk as to even die *en masse* for want of PPE, for example. MTA conductor and writer, Sujatha Gidla (2020), reports her co-workers as saying "we are not essential, we are sacrificial" (*New York Times,* May 6).

In his depiction of the aftermath of catastrophe, possibly nuclear war, in *Endgame*, Samuel Beckett (1964) presents the destruction of nature as taking a specific spatial configuration in which the dialectic of time itself has seemingly come to a standstill. He shows, in coldly unsentimental though often humorously ribald terms, the obsolescence of human beings, reduced as they are to pure existence, and subordinated to the inscrutable machinations of geopolitical forces beyond their understanding and control. The necessary supplement to *Endgame*, according to Stanley Cavell (1969), is Kubric's Cold War masterpiece *Dr. Strangelove*.

Beckett depicts the parents of his anti-hero, Hamm, as literally reduced to a form of societal refuse, having been confined to garbage bins—perhaps signifying for us today, all-too painfully, the perilous state of nursing homes—warehouse-coffins for human beings poised somewhere between life and death, waiting for an end to the excruciating game of waiting. They wax nostalgic ("Ah, the good old days," sighs Nell) about the days when they were provided with sand rather than sawdust in their metallic cloisters, a signifier of happier times spent on the beach rather than of a nature that is now "corpsed." The catastrophe of the present and its relation to the recent past forms a continuum of the same unfolding disaster Walter Benjamin writes about in his final text "On the Concept of History" before his desperate flight from the Nazis and consequent suicide in Port Bou. Today, governments seem prepared to sacrifice the elderly, the infirm, poor, indigent, black and brown to the iron laws of the market. Republican Lieutenant Governor of Texas, Dan Patrick, recently suggested that grandparents might consider *sacrificing*

their health and lives for their grandchildren, which is to say, for the health of the economy. But this logic is nothing new. It was previously discernible in each press release from myriad corporate head offices of massive downsizings, producing an immediate, dramatic uptick in their share prices. The market lives on death.

If we take as our definition the classic account of fascism as that revolutionary mass movement comprised of an alliance between industrial capital and the petite bourgeoisie ranged against the working class and its political organizations, in the context of imperialist rivalries and discrete capitalist crises of overproduction, then it is far from clear that what we face today can be described as "fascism." After the defeat of organized labour, there is precious little resistance to dead labor's machinic extraction of surplus value from living. Such a defeat clears the way for redoubled colonization and endocolonization, racism, militarism, and, ultimately, war.

The endocolonizing logic of contemporary fascism becomes particularly manifest in the context of the contemporary cityscape. Here we can extrapolate the rationality of the post-colonial periphery in the dynamic of policing, which, of course now takes on new meaning, with the election of the Joe Biden and his Vice President former San Francisco DA Kamala Harris. If behind every fascism can be discerned a failed revolution, then it is possible to see the contours of the contemporary fascism moment not simply in the rise of the hard right turn of the Republican Party with Newt Gingrich and the Tea Party, but in Nixon's campaign against the protest movement, the Black Panther Party, in particular. Far from the Biden-Harris triumph as representing a decisive defeat of a quasi-fascistic Trumpism, what it does is reinforce the failure of the very revolution that Harris' parents sought to participate in. In this sense, Harris is the uncanny double of Angela Davis, whom another Bay Area prosecutor sought to execute on trumped up charges as was so well documented in Shola Lynch's moving 2012 film, *Free Angela and All Political Prisoners*. A glance at Ousmane Sembène's classic film *Borom Sarret* (The Wagoner) draws out, proleptically, some of the features of the endocolonial cityscape today. After a brief discussion of the film, I fast-forward to a viral YouTube video of African-American author and activist, Kimberley Jones', critique of the concept of the "looter" in the context of #BLM protests.

Policing the Post-Colony

Widely regarded as the first film made in Black Africa, *Borom Sarret* (The Wagoner) by Ousmane Sembène provides a profound glimpse

of immediate post-colonial reality.[3] Made in 1963 upon the auteur's return from learning his craft at the Gorkii Studios in Moscow, it portrays the unfolding of a day in the life of a cart driver in Dakar, Senegal. Its formal minimalism enables *Borom Sarret* to reveal several layers of complexity. In the economical space of approximately 18 minutes, it discloses the structural violence established and consolidated through colonial class and gender relationships that live on, uncannily, in the post-independence period. It is a vivid and crystalline cinematic depiction of what Frantz Fanon had called just two years earlier in *Wretched of the Earth*, the "pitfalls of national consciousness" and the way in which precisely such an imaginary served to mask the real, which is to say ruthlessly exploitative relationships among citizens of newly "liberated" states. It provokes suspicion of the now ubiquitous idea, at least in the global north, that the abstraction of racial identification alone could ever be an organizing principle of solidarity and therefore politics.

We follow the driver and are privy to his interior monologue, delivered by Sembène himself while he transports a series of passengers and materials to their various destinations. The cart driver considers the exertions of an unemployed man futile and irritating; he is coldly unsympathetic to his plight. He is accosted by a severely crippled yet reasonably affable beggar who asks for money but is even less solicitous and ignores him: "there are so many of them, they are like flies." Yet the driver is more than happy to pay the well-fed and well-dressed griot or folk singer who builds up the driver's ego ideal by his ingratiating and obsequious praise of the warrior-identity of his ancestors.

Then there's the solemn father whom the driver transports with the corpse of his infant child to the cemetery, only to be turned away because his papers are not in order; he is, we learn, a "foreigner." The artificial borders of the "nation-state" constructed ex nihilo by the colonial powers continue to enact their violence, unremittingly, on the most vulnerable. The driver carefully places the corpse of the child on the ground and drives way, leaving the bereft father to suffer alone.

The narrative begins to tighten with the approach of a well-dressed and apparently wealthy African man who wishes to be taken to the formerly French quarter of Dakar—the Plateau; here, cart drivers require special permits. The man is moving to the Plateau, he tells the driver. The camera pans in the direction of the former European quarter to reveal a shockingly different cityscape. As the soundtrack shifts from

3 This section draws upon Gandesha 2020c.

the syncopated rhythms and xalam (lute) of traditional Senegalese music to 18th century European classical music, the sand and rock give way to paved streets, the horse-drawn carts to orderly modern automobile traffic. In a few short miles, we traverse centuries.

As soon as the driver nervously enters the Plateau, he is immediately confronted by a scowling police officer who promptly issues him a fine and confiscates his cart. As he is writing the ticket, the officer steps on the wagoner's medal, most likely for the driver's service in the French army. Meanwhile, the wealthy passenger absconds in an awaiting car. In this single gesture, the continuity of the corruptions of Empire is laid bare. Racial solidarity is revealed for the myth that it is. The police are there to protect the wealthy Blacks from poor Blacks, whose labour power is nonetheless required for the production of wealth; the inclusion of the worker is premised on their spatial exclusion. They are what Jacques Rancière (2013) calls "the part that has no part."

The driver returns home with his horse, devastated and bewildered. His wife rises, matter-of-factly gives him their infant child to look after, promises that they would have food that evening, and leaves. According to the Director of NYU's Institute of Afro-American Affairs, Manthia Diawara, the common interpretation—consistent with themes in Sembène's other films—is that she is off to participate in sex work and this was not to be disparaged but accepted as a legitimate form of labour; sex workers were to be accepted as proletarians and neither stigmatized nor condemned, as they were, of course, by the imams.

Today in the midst of the global uprising, amidst the Covid19 pandemic, against anti-Black and anti-Indigenous state violence, and the related re-emergence of fascism, *Borom Sarrett* can be seen to be, in Walter Benjamin's terms, blasted out of the continuum of history and shot through with "now time" (Jetztzeit). Such "now time" crystallizes in at least three ways.

First, as alluded to above, the return of fascism provokes a reconsideration of Césaire's theory of endocolonialism—fascism as the application of techniques of domination perfected in Europe's African and Asian colonies to the European context itself. The fascist imaginary was anchored to German and Italian colonial projects in Africa and the US Republic's genocidal westward expansion.

Second, at the same time, however, the brutalities of policing cannot be reduced to "White supremacy" alone, but must also be situated in class and gender relationships. The role of the police is to protect private property, which is to say, the separation between the worker and the means of production. Separation from the means of production is the

condition for the possibility of exploitation as workers must sell their labour power which is rendered abstract, temporally quantifiable and measurable. Borom Sarrett makes this explicit insofar as the wagoner is literally deprived of his own means of production at the moment that his cart is confiscated. The abstract violence of this gesture forces his wife—both means of production and worker in one—into the nexus of the sex industry in order to engage in socially reproductive labour.

Third, the police also, of course, maintain the specifically *spatial* separation common to virtually all African cities, that between the natives' quarters or the "Medina," on the one hand, and the settlers' quarters the „Plateau," on the other, which, as Sembène shows us, is taken over by the post-colonial African bourgeoisie.

Today, in the West, but especially North America, we see the intimate ties between fascism on the one hand and an increasingly militarized police apparatus. Here, we see the brutal over-policing of Black people in US and Canadian inner cities and Indigenous peoples in their own territories, in particular. What Fanon calls the "well-built town" of the settler anticipates the White "gated community" fortified by increasingly privatized and militarized police forces which function, for all intents and purposes, like armies of occupation in the precincts of the poor and indigent. A society of separation; a society of the post-colonial spectacle. This becomes especially clear in Kimberly Jones's (2020) powerful analysis of looting entitled "How Can We Win?"

Today, in the West, but especially North America, we see the intimate ties between fascism on the one hand and an increasingly militarized police apparatus. Here, we see the brutal over-policing of Black people in US and Canadian inner cities and Indigenous peoples in their own territories, in particular.

The Consummation of Consumption[4]

Guy Debord's (1966) reflection on the Watts Uprising of 1965 stands in a certain relationship to the events of May 1968 and also, of course, to what happened in Minneapolis in the wake of the murder of George Floyd. What constitutes the axis is, I would suggest, that these are three examples of the "events" in the sense meant by Alain Badiou. For Badiou (2015), the event signifies a moment at which the impossible becomes possible, and the moments comprising this axis are three moments at which time capitalist society's own fantasy or dream about itself is profoundly disturbed.

Four aspects of Jones's analysis are especially noteworthy:

(1) Jones begins with an attack on the condemnatory response of wealthy Blacks to the uprising which is, to refer to Langston Hughes,

4 This section draws on Gandesha 2020d.

"Go Slow." Jones is clear that she is viewing things not from the perspective of Black people per se but from the perspective of *poor* Blacks. So, her focus isn't simply on the difference between Identities, that is, Black and White, but also the differences with them, ie. the differences within the Black community, which includes substantive class differences and conflicts within this community over the very meaning of the *event* itself. Here it is possible to argue, I think, that those middle-class Blacks who condemn the protestors, rioters and looters, and, in the process, offer an apology for an unjust and violent social order, like colonial and post-colonial elites, *identify with the aggressor* (Gandesha 2018) as a response to the traumatic material of history.

(2) Jones's discussion of the boardgame Monopoly as analogy for the failure of the social contract in the United States is powerful, and her invocation of Tulsa and Rosewood show the extent to which Black socio-economic and political gains have resulted in what Terry Smith calls a White backlash or Whitelash for short. Donald J Trump may be regarded as the personification of this in his rancorous attempt to systematically undo the legacy of the Obama White House, including and especially the Affordable Care Act, even if, at the end of the day, as critics like Cornel West and Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, among others, rightly point out that under Obama the socioeconomic conditions of Black Americans actually worsened to a greater extent than their White counterparts.

(3) Jones claims that the social contract is broken. Here I would challenge her claim somewhat with reference to Jamaican political theorist Charles Mills's (1999) concept of the *racial contract*. This is the idea that the contractarian tradition from Hobbes through Rawls is premised upon an unacknowledged exclusion of Black and Brown people and therefore a hidden yet no less consequential White Supremacy. One could say that this is the repressed content of political theory.

For example, the Lockean idea that North America was *terra nullius*—that the land was "nobody's"—lent legitimacy to the settler colonial project—which, by the way, was a project that consisted of little other than *looting* on a grand scale. So perhaps it's not a matter of the contract being broken at all but functioning as it should. The point is not that the liberal-democratic social contract ought to be adhered to by way of equal treatment under the law but fundamentally rewritten to move beyond the premises of liberal-democracy itself. Its deferred dreams are dreams deferred infinitely for Black and Indigenous peoples. Langston Hughes: "The prize is unattainable."

(4) The last and, in my view, most important claim worthy of note

is that her rejoinder to wealthy Blacks takes the form of a defence of the figure of the "looter," which she defetishizes by refusing a fixation on *what* it is they're doing, ie. egregiously smashing and grabbing commodities, but also *why* they are doing it. And this is an indictment of US capitalism, if not capitalism as a whole. Again, as Marx indicates with his concept of primitive accumulation in Chapter 26 of *Capital*, this is a system that is made possible by systematic looting (embodying the real primitivism that is then projected onto its victims):

> The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins, signaled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production.

If we turn to Guy Debord's article "The Decline and Fall of the Spectacle-Commodity Economy," from the Issue #10 of *Situationiste Internationale* published in March, 1966, it will be possible to draw out some of the radical implications of Jones's analysis.

Like Jones, Debord draws attention to the almost universal condemnation of the Watts Uprising. The Watts uprising began on August 11, 1965, when 21-year-old Marquette Frey, an African-American man, was pulled over by the police, and a tussle ensued leading to six days of civil unrest amidst accounts of police brutality. Debord singles out remarks by the head of the NAACP at the time Roy Wilkins, who argued that the riot "ought to be put down with all necessary force." Like Jones, Debord understands the uprising not in racial but in class terms, referring to MLK Jr's statement in a recent Paris lecture that Watts wasn't a "race" but a "class" riot. What drives the Blacks of Watts is proletarian consciousness, according to Debord, which means consciousness that they neither are masters of their own activities nor of their own lives.

The crux of Debord's analysis aims at an inversion of the characterization of looters as the embodiment of animalistic drives. He does so by deploying a concept that he would elaborate in his most famous book two years later, which, in fact, gave direction to the events of May, 1968, and this is the concept of the *spectacle*. According to Debord, the spectacle is capital accumulated to the point where it becomes an image. The spectacular society is the society that creates amidst real misery and deprivation the appearance or fantasy of affluence and abundance. (It is a systematic "turning of a blind eye" as Maxine put it.)

The spectacle represents a new level of the fetishism of the commodity form which is an object with a certain use value that satisfies determinate human needs but that is, nonetheless, produced in order to realize its exchange value or profit. For Debord, the looters, far from being animals, represented a human response to dehumanizing conditions, namely, the fact that capitalist society, characterized by generalized commodity production, is a society in which relations between things appear as relations between people and relations between people resemble relations between things.

By challenging the almost theological sanctity of the commodity, the looters re-establish human relationships grounded in gift and potlash economies. For Debord, the racist and colonial "hierarchy" of the society of the spectacle, people of colour, but particularly black people, are reduced to the status of things. Insofar as the looters directly circumvent the logic of exchange with the demand for use, which is to say, the satisfaction of needs, however false such needs may be, they resist such a status. He argues: "The flames of Watts *consummated* the system of consumption (…). Once it is no longer bought, the commodity lies open to criticism and alteration, whatever particular form it may take." Yet, such flames immediately call the police into action. The policeman is the active servant of the commodity, the person in complete submission to the commodity, whose job it is to ensure that a given product of human labor remains a commodity with the magical property of having to be paid for instead of becoming a mere refrigerator or rifle—a passive, inanimate object, subject to anyone who comes along to make use of it. In rejecting the humiliation of being subject to police, the blacks are at the same time rejecting the humiliation of being subject to commodities (Debord 1966). The social contract, to reiterate, is not broken but functions all too well for it is a contract geared to the maintenance of private property.

The possibility of cross-racial solidarity is of vital importance to grasp the particular and universal significance of the uprisings and in the process to make of it more than a "racial" event, for this is exactly what the far-right want. Rather, we must situate the uprisings that we're seeing within the larger context of a society in which inequalities are deepening; it is also important to place recent developments within in the context of a history of social struggles, from Watts in 1965 to Paris in 1968 to Minneapolis in 2020.

Returning to the question I started with—namely, the possibility of cross-racial solidarity—it is of vital importance to grasp the particular and universal significance of the uprisings and in the process to make of it more than a "racial" event, for this is exactly what the far-right want. Rather, we must situate the uprisings that we're seeing within the larger context of a society in which inequalities are deepening; it is also important to place recent developments within in the context of a history of social struggles, from Watts in 1965 to Paris in 1968 to Minneapolis in 2020. It is vitally important to understand extreme forms of police violence not as effects of a mystical, transhistorical White supremacy, but rather as a manifestation of a racism that flows from the vicissitudes

of a social order mediated by the commodity-spectacle, grounded in the sanctification of private property under deepening forms of socio-economic inequality that nonetheless hits Black and Indigenous communities especially hard. This social order is a historical one—an order that came into being and one from which it is possible for us to emancipate ourselves.

Conclusion

Contemporary fascism emerges from the phenomenon of accelerated global migration flows resulting from the economic, social, and political violence (new forms of primitive accumulation) attendant upon the global reconstitution of the relations of production. It responds to the increasing ontological insecurity of citizens of these states—inestimably bolstered now by the pandemic—whose fear is increasingly and effectively mobilized against myriad *strangers* turned into *enemies*. Such mobilization is based on the acute awareness that, under the late form of neoliberalism, the line between citizen and migrant, parvenu and pariah—in other words, "genuine" and "superfluous" humanity—is increasingly blurred. Capitalism has always embodied a sacrificial logic, and this lies at the heart of its authoritarian potential today. This logic deepens when workers, particularly white workers, hand in hand with the lower middle class, come to identify with rather than contest the power of the aggressor.

Yet, as dire as the situation may be, there are hopeful signs of growing labour militancy, as was recently demonstrated by striking workers at Amazon, Instacart, Shipt, and Whole Foods on May Day, who protested what they considered to be their employers' woefully inadequate responses to the pandemic. The global health emergency, moreover, has demonstrated that the integrity of societies cannot be indexed to the prosperity and well-being of its most affluent but most indigent members. It has decisively shown that healthcare cannot be tied to conditions of employment but must be understood, as Bernie Sanders repeated over and over again in his bid for the Democratic presidential nomination, as a basic human right. It has highlighted the nihilistic illusions of the "possessive individualism" on which shifting sands of the entire neoliberal order is based. It has seriously revived, with great urgency, the discussion of the admittedly fraught and contested idea of Universal Basic Income. The pandemic has doubtlessly, as I have argued, constituted an opening for a further authoritarian consolidation of power, but, at the same time, it has also opened space for imagining a very different kind of society.

Which path we take will be a matter of organizing, which is to say, *political engagement and struggle*.

References

Adorno, Theodor W. 1998. "Critique." In *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, edited by Theodor W. Adorno. Translated by Henry Pickford. New York: Columbia University Press.

Amin, Samir. 2014. "The Return of Fascism Within Contemporary Capitalism." *Monthly Review*, September 1. https://monthlyreview.org/2014/09/01/the-return-of-fascism-in-contemporary-capitalism/.

Badiou, Alain. 2015. *The Communist Hypothesis.* Translated by David Macey and Steve Corcoran. London: Verso.

Beckett, Samuel. 1964. *Endgame: a Play in One Act Followed by Act Without Words, A Mime for One Player*. London: Faber and Faber.

Cavell, Stanley. 1969. "Ending the Waiting Game: A Reading of Beckett's Endgame." In *Must We Mean What We Say: A book of Essays*, 115–162. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Césaire, Aimé. 1972. *Discourse on Colonialism*. Translated by Joan Pinkham. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Debord, Guy. 1966. "The Rise and Fall of the Spectacle-Commodity." Translated by Ken Knabb. *Internationale Situationniste* 10(2). https://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/decline.html.

Financial Times. 2019. "Vladimir Putin Says That Liberalism Has become Obsolete." *Financial Times*, June 27.

Finchelstein, Federico, and Jason Stanley. 2020. "The Fascist Politics of the Pandemic." *Project Syndicate*, May 4. https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/coronavirus-fuels-fascist-politics-by-federico-finchelstein-and-jason-stanley-2020-05.

Foucault, Michel. 2010. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979*, edited by Michel Senellart. Translated by Graham Burchell. New York: Picador.

Gandesha, Samir. 2018. "Identifying with the Aggressor: From the 'Authoritarian' to the 'Neo-Liberal' Personality." *Constellations* 25(1): 147–164.

———. 2020a. "Introduction." In *Spectres of Fascism: Historical, Theoretical and Contemporary Perspectives*, edited by Samir Gandesha. London: Pluto Press.

———. 2020b. "Canada's Battle Against First Nations Shows Slide into Authoritarianism." *Truthout*, February 1. https://truthout.org/artic-

les/canadas-battle-against-first-nations-shows-slide-toward-authoritarianism/.

———. 2020c. "Ousman Sembene and the Part that Has No Part." *OpenDemocracy*, July 3. https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/ousmane-sembène-and-the-part-that-has-no-part/.

———. 2020d. "The Consummation of Consumption, Parts 1 and 2." *OpenDemocracy*, October 2. https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/consummation-consumption-1/ and https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/consummation-consumption-2/.

Gardner, Amy, Kate Rabinowitz, and Harry Stevens. 2021. "How GOP-backed Voting Measures Could Create Hurdles for Tens of Millions of Voters." *Washington Post*, March 11.

Gidla, Sujatha. 2020. "We Are Not Essential, We Are Sacrificial." *New York Times*, May 6. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/05/opinion/coronavirus-nyc-subway.html.

Hayek, Friedrich. 2007. *The Road to Serfdom: Texts and Documents, edited by Bruce Caldwell*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Heidegger, Martin. 1962. *Being and Time*. Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. San Francisco: Harper and Row.

Jones, Kimberley. 2020. "How Can We Win?" YouTube, accessed June 9, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llci8MVh8J4.

Mbembe, Achille. 2017. *Critique of Black Reason*. Translated by Laurent Dubois. Durham: Duke University Press.

Mills, Charles. 1999. *The Racial Contract*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Piketty, Thomas. 2020. *Capital and Ideology*. Translated by Albert Goldhammer. Cambridge: Belknap Press.

Rancière, Jacques. 2013. *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*. Edited and translated by Gabriel Rockhill. London: Bloomsbury.

Riley, Dylan. 2018. "Editorial: What is Trump?" *New Left Review* 114: 5–31.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. 1968. *The Social Contract*. Translated by Maurice Cranston. London: Penguin.

Žižek, Slavoj. 2009. "The Palestinian Question: The Couple Symptom / Fetish Islamo-Fascism, Christo-Fascism, Zionism – Mieux Vaut un Désastre qu'un Désêtre." Lacan.com, accessed November 23, 2021, www.lacan.com/essays/?page_id=261.

SAMIR GANDESHA, Ph.D. – is a Professor of Humanities and Director of the Institute for the Humanities of Simon Fraser University (Canada). He is co-editor with Lars Rensmann of *Arendt and Adorno: Political and Philosophical Investigations* (Stanford, 2012) and co-editor with Johan Hartle of *Spell of Capital: Reification and Spectacle* (University of Amsterdam Press, 2017) and *Aesthetic Marx* (Bloomsbury Press, 2017), also with Johan Hartle. More recently, he edited *Spectres of Fascism: Historical, Theoretical and International Perspectives* (Pluto, 2020), which is presently being translated into Turkish and Portuguese, and co-edited (with Peyman Vahabzadeh) *Crossing Borders: Essays in Honour of Ian H. Angus, Beyond Phenomenology and Critique* (Arbeiter Ring, 2020).

Address:
Institute for the Humanities
Simon Fraser University
8888 University Drive, Burnaby – B.C.
Canada V5A 1S6
email: samir_gandesha@sfu.ca

Citation:
Gandesha, Samir. 2021. "The Market Lives on Death: The Endocolonizing Logic of the Fascist Moment." *Praktyka Teoretyczna* 42(4): 93–110.
DOI: 10.14746/prt2021.4.4

Autor: Samir Gandesha
Tytuł: Rynek żywi się śmiercią: Endokolonizacyjna logika momentu faszystowskiego
Abstrakt: Artykuł stawia pytanie o to, czy obserwowane obecnie procesy mogą być określone jako faszystowskie. Przedstawiona argumentacja wskazuje, że tak – jeśli rozumiemy faszyzm jako atak na liberalną demokrację, wynikający z chronicznego raczej (niż nagłego) kryzysu kapitalizmu. Tak jak w XX-wiecznym faszyzmie, obejmuje on kolonizację ciał, która jednak zrzeka się roszczeń do przyszłości w obliczu pandemii Covid-19 i w kontekście wyzwania klimatycznego.
Słowa kluczowe: endokolonializm, faszyzm, populizm, demokracja, kryzys, spektakl

KRYSTIAN SZADKOWSKI (ORCID: 0000-0002-7260-0457)
RICHARD HALL

Has the University Become Surplus to Requirements? Or Is Another University Possible?

This article contends that the University has become a place that has no socially-useful role beyond the reproduction of capital, such that it has become an anti-human project. The argument pivots around the bureaucratic university's desire for surplus, and its relationship to the everyday, academic reality of feeling surplus to requirements. In defining the contours of this contradiction, inside the normalisation of political economic crisis, we question whether there still exists space for an academic method or mode of subjectivation. We also critique the ability of the University in the global North to bring itself into relation with the epistemological sensibilities of the South and the East, which can treat other ways of seeing and praxis with dignity and respect. In grappling with the idea of surplus, and the everyday and structural ways in which its production is made manifest, we seek to ask whether another university is possible?

Keywords: university, crisis, Global East, hegemony, imagination

Introduction: The University at the End of *The End of History*

It is difficult to find a phrase that is used more frequently in discussions about the intersection of financial and epidemiological crises than the statement attributed to Jameson (1994, xii) that "it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism." This phrase was originally meant to expose the weakness of our imagination, within which the "future seems to be nothing but a monotonous repetition of what is already here." As a result, this can be read against the grain, as a call for the reintroduction of "historical time, and a history made by human beings" (Jameson 2003, 76). However, there has been a sense that rather than yearning for the *always-already* (Bloch 1995) or the *not-yet* (Amsler 2015; Gunn 1987) latent within the forms of capitalist reproduction, Jameson's invocation must focus upon the cynicism and fatalism of a *capitalist realist* position (Fisher 2003).

Moreover, fatalism is replicated inside the structures of the University that are morphed through the pressures of finance capital. These create pathological cultures of performivity, competition and managerialism, which are maintained by methodological practices that can be identified, sorted and ranked in relation to risk-management. These pathologies and methodologies catalyse overwork, self-harm and self-sacrifice that are habitual and compulsive (Hall and Bowles 2016). These are responses to hegemonic pressures that question whether the University is too fragile to cope with the future impacts of financial crisis and pandemic, and needs accelerated and agile re-engineering.

Thus, the World Bank report on *Global Waves of Debt* (Kose et al. 2019) and International Monetary Fund report *Debt Is Not Free* (Badia et al. 2020) highlight the vulnerability of sectors and economies that are over-leveraged, and in which profitability and investment is assumed under low interest rates with precarious or surplus employment. A separate World Bank Group report (2020, 7) on the pandemic shock and policy responses highlight the need to generalise "innovations and emergency processes, [so that] systems can adapt and scale up the more effective solutions." Regardless of economic or psychological scarring, turning "recovery into real growth" becomes yet another opportunity for capital to impose its shock doctrine of structural adjustment (Munevar 2020).

In these ways, the University is locked into colonial and patriarchal matrices of power (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Jewkes et al. 2015), whatever the claims for its inherent liberalism. It appears indelibly locked into the impossibilities of capitalist reproduction rather than

an egalitarian, communal reordering of the possibilities for life. These matrices, situated through the hegemony of knowledge production from the global North, ensure that the metabolic relations between humans and nature is degrading, exploitative and extractive, and maintain "ecological rifts" (Bellamy Foster, Clark and York 2009). As Saito (2017) argues, the forms and associations of capitalist reproduction dominate the concrete, material world in ways that are unregulated and deregulated through the valorisation of capital's material conditions and the negation of its limits.

Amplified by the immanence of viral and financial pandemics, and their connection to environmental degradation, such fatalism has thrown the closed imaginaries upon which we base our understandings of the world into confusion. The symbolic power of capitalism appears to deny humans any horizon of possibility beyond Capital's continued accumulation and organisation of social life. That humans are more able to imagine the end of the world reveals what has been termed *The End of History*. Our collective, material capacity to make history has ended because capitalism and its institutions appear natural and transhistorical, and human imaginations cannot process alternatives (Fukuyama 1992). Moreover, there is a tendency to see solutions in the finessing of the system as it currently exists rather than in the realm of real human agency. As a result, there is a focus on accelerating existing structures, cultures and practices, and a liberal scream against the apparent threats of authoritarian populism and nationalism, punitive or vindictive neoliberalism, or the realisation of capitalism with Chinese characteristics (Davies 2017; Haiven 2020).

However, reinforcing crises have led some to point towards an eruption of struggles at *the end of* The End of History (Aufhebunga Bunga 2019). This points to a refusal of global calls for the return of business-as-usual and a renewed tension over whether it is easier to imagine the end of the world (and of our humane values) than it is the end of capitalism and its institutions (and their drive for economic value) (Jameson 1994, following Franklin 1979). This demonstrates a yearning to invert this tension and to prioritise the ending of capitalism as the start of a new world or new worlds. Žižek (2020, 99) insists that "our situation is profoundly political: we are facing radical choices" between barbarism and "disaster communism" (ibid.) as a counterbalance to "disaster capitalism." This identifies a crisis management system based on the strong, interventionist role of the state and its institutions for prioritising human lives over private profit. In turn, Malm (2020) points towards "ecological war communism" focused upon an authoritarian state organising for

transition. Finally, Dardot and Laval (2020) analyse the coronavirus crisis against the need for *both* institutions of the common capable of producing living human solidarity *and* a global and shared infrastructure for knowledge management and welfare activities on a planetary scale.

At this apparent end of *The End of History*, what is the role of the University-as-is? As we witness communities yearning and working to create their own material histories, is another university possible?

At this apparent end of *The End of History*, what is the role of the University-as-is? As we witness communities yearning and working to create their own material histories, is another university possible? Here, intellectual workers might instead look to the connections between communism and the common. These two components, witnessed at the intersection of struggles against business-as-usual at the confluence of crises, feel important in a movement of abolishing the present state of things. The voices of those made marginal are louder and louder, and describe clear echoes of an alternative system alongside elements of our present-day reality that may lead us beyond our current predicament. In the rest of this article, we invite readers to go beyond *capitalist realism* in thinking about universities at the end of *The End of History*. This connects with a yearning for a non-capitalist future of higher education (HE), which is a necessity for survival beyond the expanding space-time of turmoil and crisis. Our yearning erupts from a communist imaginary as a perspective of political and economic organisation of the present that enables us to go beyond the limitations that capital imposes on the common (Hardt and Negri 2009; Dardot and Laval 2019).

The University and the End of Imagination

The University appears emblematic of the collapse of the power and potential for humans to reimagine the world in spite of its enrichment of the general intellect of society or our collective wealth in skills, knowledge, capacities and capabilities (Marx [1857] 1993). Certainly, in what is described as the global North, universities are governed and regulated in relation to the market, finance capital and processes of commodification. These appear to reinforce an impregnable realm or kingdom (de Sousa Santos 2020), which increasingly defines social life and reproduction technocratically and in economistic terms. HE's obsession with prestige, privilege and status, manufactured through separations enacted between individuals, subjects and institutions, which are then reinforced through competitive metrics and rankings, is reproduced at great cost to those who labour inside it and their communities.

Against emergent ruptures and flows of struggle, in remaining anchored to *The End of History*, the University is still painted as a liberal insti-

tution that simply needs reform (Connell 2019) rather than one needing transformation or abolition (Hall 2020; Meyerhoff 2019). This maintains the reified symbolic power of the University and laments the bastardisation of the public university (Holmwood 2011) and the depreciation of academic freedom (Furedi 2017) alongside inefficient performative managerialism that responds to market signals (Frank, Gowar and Naef 2019). Such lamentations cannot trace the links between institutions under capitalism, which collectively reproduce a terrain of intersectional and liminal injustices (Motta 2018). The determination of this terrain against values and modes of performance represented by material histories that are white, colonial, and patriarchal, shape the grounds upon which the institution, its disciplines and individuals are judged and performance is managed (Amsler and Motta 2017). Thus, University work symbolises the separation of the political economy and humanist potential of intellectual activity. At *The End of History*, that labour is governed by policy obsessed with productivity, efficiency and value-for-money (Ansell 2020), which has such power and such inertia that resistance tends to be diffused or dissipated.

Other counter-narratives tend to describe organising principles that desire a better University, framed by hope, love, care, solidarity, and so on, or they consider the social and ecological futures of the University and its publics (Facer 2019). Here, the University is an anchor point for social re-imagination, that needs to be re-centred away from dominant, neoliberal discourse. These form a terrain of outrage, but they tend to lack a deeper, categorical analysis of either the forces or relations of production that discipline, and give texture and meaning to the University. There is a limited possibility for a critique that situates University work against its basis in alienated labour (Hall 2018), through which the "vampire" of capital reproduces itself by feeding upon living labour (Marx [1867] 2004). Moreover, they risk preserving hegemonic imaginaries that are not mindful of intersectional and indigenous experiences and ways of knowing the world. This limits our collective engagement with radical imaginaries (Andreotti 2016; Elwood, Andreotti and Stein 2019), subaltern struggles (Harney and Moten 2013), or structural disadvantage (Darder 2018); instead, it reinforces how the University has become a failed or impossible redeemer (Allen 2017).

Thus, the University has become a place that has no socially-useful role beyond the reproduction of capital. In the context of globalisation and unifying sublation processes that are driven by transnational capital, it has become an anti-human project, grounded in narratives of human capital, productivity and value-for-money. It has become a place of

suspended time, grappling to make sense of and align with a landscape of unrealised and unrealisable promises, which are amplified by growing economic inequality and precarity. It is a space that sits uneasily against a terrain that demands entrepreneurial engagement with flexibility, risk-taking, efficiency and human capital, whilst at the same time working to annihilate the value of labour-power that cannot drive innovation in commodity production. As a result, the HE sector in the global North faces structural issues that are realised in stagnating wages, a huge increase in the reserve army of labour, growing precarity and diminishing security, the unbundling and outsourcing of functions like teaching and research, an acceleration in proposed delivery times for degrees, and so on. In the everyday existence of intellectual workers, ill-being and mental distress are allied with recurrent and overwork.

Moreover, people who identify or who are identified as black, female, disabled, queer, indigenous are likely to be differentially impacted. Hence, our universal analyses may usefully be situated against a range of extant, singular movements for Black and indigenous Lives, in support of refugees and asylum seekers, in support of abortion rights and women's right to choose, for environmental justice, and so on. In the University, they might be connected to: student rent strikes; graduate student wildcat strikes for a living wage; struggles for employment rights by precariously employed estates' staff; movements against sexual violence on campuses; campaigns for prison and fossil fuel divestment; and struggles for decolonisation. These singular eruptions form fragments of a movement from inside capitalist social relations, and which challenge capitalist realism. They question whether the *always-already*, for the potential for alternative social relations present within the toxic realities of capitalism, might realise different, material histories. They question whether new, universal conceptions of life might be possible.

Yet such conceptions are placed in asymmetrical relation to the University's place in the systemic maintenance of business-as-usual. In response to crises, it remains shaped as a tactical response to contradictions erupting from within capitalist reproduction. As a result, it is emblematic of the crisis and precarization in the lifeworld of contemporary society, precisely because the University's subsumption for value production has been made visible. This changes the very idea of the University and what it means to work inside the Academy, such that it is reorganised around surplus: surplus wealth; surplus labour; surplus time; and people surplus to requirements. In this, there is no space for collective politics or democracy, and, in fact, the University has become a key site for reproducing the separation of polity and economy as a mode of control.

The bureaucratic University's desire for surplus and its relationship to the everyday academic reality of feeling surplus to requirements questions whether there still exists space for an academic method or mode of subjectivation. This is an important moment in testing the possibilities for a horizon of hope against what feels like the inevitability of hopelessness (Hall 2020). However, here it is important to recognise global differentials in prestige and status across and within institutions, and how they contribute to hegemonic flows of power and value. The competitive norms implemented in the University in the North are further imposed on the South and the East, and prevent non-Northern modes of knowing and doing to circulate. In engaging with political economic and socio-environmental crises, it is important to question whether the University is able to go beyond such blockages. This then critiques the ability of the University in the global North to bring itself into relations with the epistemological sensibilities of the South and the East, which can treat other ways of seeing and praxis with dignity and respect.

The bureaucratic University's desire for surplus and its relationship to the everyday academic reality of feeling surplus to requirements questions whether there still exists space for an academic method or mode of subjectivation.

Hegemony in Higher Education

One of the primary modes of analysing HE has been in terms of geographical distinctions between institutions in the global North and South. Of course, these terms occlude distinctions in material history, cultures, practices, narratives between individuals and their communities. Moreover, they tend to amplify a focus upon the nation state, in particular in relation to economic development, shaped by narratives of core and periphery, dependency theory, or relations of privilege and marginalization (Love 1980; Prebisch 1980). Gramsci's opening-out of the North/South question in relation to Italy further questions the authenticity and usefulness of such binaries alongside the potential for nuance to enrich our understanding (Conelli 2019). It does this by bringing questions of core and periphery, and economic, political, cultural and social dependency, into relation with capital production, circulation and accumulation.

This also reflects upon the idea of closed world systems of production (Wallerstein 1974), which tend to act for the systemic recalibration, operationalisation and determination of performance. Here, the system is treated deterministically in order to engage with issues of global circuits of dynamic inefficiency and the control of uncertainty, in particular, through market-based structural adjustment. Using critical race,

indigenous and intersectional analyses as heuristics, it is possible to struggle against the imposition of binaries that reinforce closed systems and to situate them against the ongoing alienation of labour (Leong and Huang 2010). This utilises a range of decolonial and subaltern positions to shine a light upon material and historical developments in free markets, monopoly finance capital and the virtualisation of wealth, by focusing upon intergenerational, intersectional and intercommunal alternatives (Aman and Ireland 2015; Dinerstein 2015).

This focuses upon practices of liberation as material, epistemological and ontological, and situated against the realities of settler-colonialism embedded inside capitalist structures (Tuck and Yang 2012). For Carola (2017), this moves beyond the idea of knowledge being produced inside intellectual institutions of the North and seeks to enact the decolonising of Eurocentric, epistemological knowledge geographies as a process of re-humanisation. It demands "an ethical attitude acknowledging the various original people's right to live, to exist, and keep their history" (ibid.). Witnessed in what is called Latin America by the term *Abya Yala*, this is a referent made by the indigenous movement in the Americas to encapsulate the American continent as "an epistemological beacon of light that was not born in academia" (ibid.).

Being reminded of such alternative modes of knowing the world is important in refusing the methodological, structuring reality of market activities that have come to define intellectual work at *The End of History*. One risk in the North/South divide is that it furthers the idea that human agency in making history has ended, because the purpose of life becomes our ability to enable different activities to be compared across a global terrain in a determinate, closed system. Instead, engaging with intellectual work in a world that is stochastic, random and open-ended points towards pluralistic opportunities (Patomäki 2017; Shaikh 2016). University imaginaries are important here because they tend to operate based upon probabilities and risk in closed environments. They struggle to rationalise exogenous shocks like Covid-19 or the productive/unproductive disconnection noted above, other than through claims to business-as-usual. Thus, questioning the purpose of University activities that reinforce endogenous, deterministic and transhistorical assumptions might enable fatalism to be refused, because it might suddenly be possible to imagine life in places beyond capitalism.

However, to do so requires dissolving the common sense of North/South as a way of knowing or reading the world, including in its maintenance of disciplinary separations between philosophy and the natural sciences. Such separations reinforce the divorce between politics

and economics, individuals and communities, and the University and society. These common sense separations are reinforced and exposed during crises, and reveal how geographical and temporal divisions have reinforced how capitalist reproduction maintains its hegemony.

We understand hegemony as a certain *compromise balance* (Gramsci 1971) which is constantly emerging and agitating to overcome a

> state of unstable balance (within the limits of the law) between the interests of the given group and its dependent groups, a state of equilibrium in which the interests of the ruling group prevail, but only to a certain extent degree, and not to the absolute exclusivity of economic and corporate interests. (ibid., 182)

Domination materialises in the functioning of norms, values or languages as well as in the institutional forms in which these norms are implemented. In HE and science, this type of balance is maintained, for example, in discourse about the University as the engine of knowledge-based economies. Yet the sum of benefits derived from the dynamic development of science and HE taking place in all countries is not shared transparently or equitably on a global scale. Instead, claims are made based upon equality of access to marketised provision, meritocracy and equality of opportunity. As a result, dominant systems and countries not only attract the most outstanding researchers and the most talented students, but are also more efficiently able to use, commercialise or privatise knowledge produced by chance (and socially) in dependent systems.

Hegemonic power relations in global HE are shaped in three main domains distinguished by Lukes (2005). The first is the institutional area of centrality, strength and prestige. As Marginson and Ordorika (2011) write, certain privileged institutions and geographical systems dominate others through easier access to monetary resources, accumulated financial and human resources, and contacts with global power centers. The second domain of hegemony is the communicative power exercised in dominant discussions about global politics or shaping political strategies. The third domain emerges culturally through the very processes that shape the field of HE by: constructing its dominant values; defining what it means to be a leader; and designing its reform and performative templates (Marginson and Ordorika 2011). Through these three domains, ontological and epistemological control is maintained through knowledge production that works to standardise language and communication and centralise knowledge circulation and accumulation. Moreover, the obsession with competitive, global rankings of universi-

ties creates a unified and common space for abstract comparisons of institutions or entire systems on a global scale.

This returns us to the view of institutions operating as if they exist within a world system that is closed and can be risk-managed through more appropriate sharing of performance information that can be interpreted in the market. However, this is contingent upon a more punitive and disciplinary approach to the management of labour and the circulation of intellectual commodity capital across a global terrain. The smooth running of the privileged academic world, predicated upon ideas of the North/South, might usefully be framed against ideas of Western intellectual hegemony. This benefits intellectually through the normalisation of enlightenment rationality, which appears deterministic, evidenced-based and focused upon economic development rather than uncertainty, complexity and randomness. Emerging primarily from institutions in North America and Europe, such privilege is enabled: historically, by being able to draw down upon legacies of social, intellectual and financial capital; materially, by being able to shape discourses that act as fulcrums of domination, in relation to impact and excellence; and financially, in relation to international student flows and intellectual commodity-dumping.

This focus upon Western intellectual hegemony has recently been revisited in relation to the missing Second World, in particular, in relation to Eastern Europe and post-colonialism (Grzechnik 2019; Ignatiev 2008; Müller 2018). Developing Gramsci's focus upon the Southern Question, this recognises the nuances of national stories in relation to the reproduction of systems of global colonialism, including their intellectual validation. Pointing to semi-peripheral positionality, this highlights differential mechanisms of othering alongside ongoing complicity in the reproduction of Western, intellectual settler-colonialism, for instance, in the prioritisation of particular disciplinary methodologies and knowledges. Here, there is a possibility to rethink the material histories of different epistemological and ontological experiences, and to question those which have been threatened with erasure.

Of course, in each of these approaches and analyses, there is a risk of essentialising through the maintenance of difference and distinction, rather than bringing those differences into relation, in order to define multiple routes away from hegemony. Here, it is important to reflect upon Müller's (2018) demand that we move beyond the idea of the North/South divide as "a political and epistemological project," and instead define a multiplicity of epistemic spaces, beyond North and South or East and West. This is predicated upon unsettling the intellec-

tual "certainties of rich and poor, powerful and powerless, that we have perhaps grown too comfortable with." By recognising how North/South, coloniser/indigenous, or Eastern/Western make being in-between an uncomfortable experience, this cautions against making certain narratives, histories, cultures, ancestries and identities unknowable. Yet as the centres of liberal democracy struggled to contain the contagion of delegitimacy erupting up the confluence of crises, it is important to show how prestige, privilege and power can be called into question through different modes of intellectual work. Such modes work to show how associations and alignments can be opened up as new ecosystems that connect the alienation of *the missing second world* or *Global East* communities, with those of the global South, through an analysis of their entanglements and complicities in the system of coloniality. The idea of the University is too hopelessly wedded to the reproduction of an exclusionary epistemic space which denies hope as anything other than a liberal, utopian sop.

This is its role at *The End of History*. The predicament for those who work inside the University is how to overcome the ignorance of hope and thereby sublate it through a movement of indignity. In this way, the architecture of knowledge production as a mode of commodification might be ruptured, because it offers no way out of the suffocating conjuncture of crises. The flows of value that such an architecture enables have been interrupted in the intersection of financial and epidemiological crises. Overlapping with the long-standing Chinese ascent (Arrighi 2007), it appears clear that hegemonic structures, cultures and practices of intellectual work must be abolished and opened out as a process of deimperializing (Chen 2010).

This is its role at *The End of History*. The predicament for those who work inside the University is how to overcome the ignorance of hope and thereby sublate it through a movement of indignity. In this way, the architecture of knowledge production as a mode of commodification might be ruptured, because it offers no way out of the suffocating conjuncture of crises.

Covid-19 and the Idea of Western Higher Education

Nancy (2020) argues that Covid-19 is a communovirus, which has emerged communally, shining a light upon the exploitative and expropriative tendrils of global, social reproduction. In so doing, it also acts as a common referent on a global scale, and like the planetary climate and ecological catastrophes, it demonstrates our entanglements. Whilst it tends to enforce particular kinds of scientific collaboration and a planetary perspective for annihilating, ignoring or living with the virus, it also reflects the toxic nature of capitalism's mode of social metabolic control. However, the most valuable intellectual work has been predicated upon epidemiological science rather than venturing beyond the

close and fatalistic parameters of that scientific system. The acceptable boundaries of philosophical and social scientific endeavour seek to reimagine the reproduction of capitalism in the face of the epidemiological end of the world.

Different national HE systems have differential experiences of the virus, and intellectual activity has been re-geared around marketing, impact and research excellence in relation to national solutions and vaccine production. The reality of crisis is that it has an immanent relationship to value production that can be compared across a global terrain. However, the pandemic has impacted the intellectual hegemony exercised by those individuals, communities and institutions with privilege, labelled in terms of the Anglo-Saxon West, global North or settler-colonialism (Jayasuriya 2020). Marginson (2020a; 2020b) tries to point out significant cultural differences between national systems. In doing so, he emphasises the role of culturally-ingrained individualism and internalised modes of neoliberalism that ensure responses to the virus-induced crisis follow predictable paths. Such explanations are too focused on the internal problems of the North/West/settler-colonial institution to be sufficient.

It appears that Covid-19 marks a critical moment in this model of development, precisely because basing the reproduction of hegemony has become overleveraged. Its strategy has been based upon credit, the appearance of productivity and the sustainability of deficit planning, all the while bankrolled against a rentier political economy and an expectation of constant growth in student numbers.

Ultimately, such analyses locate the problem in the sphere of culture that is difficult to change and which stymies the development of human agency in the medium-term. While countries such as the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK) and Australia may differ in terms of measures, they ultimately offer solutions to the symptoms of the crisis rather than addressing its causes. As a result, they tend to address superficial yet acute manifestations of deeper problems plaguing the sector with responses based upon institutional restructuring in relation to governance, regulation and funding in order to maintain global hegemony (UK Department for Education 2020). This reflects the severity of the situation inside those HE systems that are dependent for their existence upon their insertion inside the circuits of finance capital (McGettigan 2015; Szadkowski and Krzeski 2019), including those reliant upon bond markets and the need to maintain investment-grade credit ratings (Connelly 2020).

It appears that Covid-19 marks a critical moment in this model of development, precisely because basing the reproduction of hegemony has become overleveraged. Its strategy has been based upon credit, the appearance of productivity and the sustainability of deficit planning, all the while bankrolled against a rentier political economy and an expectation of constant growth in student numbers. This has revealed the fragile foundations of intellectual work in the countries of the

capitalist core, which are increasingly forced to proletarianise labour conditions and increase the organic composition of capital (Marx 2004). Proletarianisation is revealed in the widening and normalising of precarious conditions, the intensification of workloads, work-based monitoring infecting the home, the unprecedented and a rise in reports of ill-being (Hall 2020; Workers Inquiry Network 2020). The backdrop to this is a context of unprecedented penetration of University learning, teaching, professional services and research by online infrastructure platforms for-profit providers (Williamson 2020), and the foreclosure of hopes for open science that were alive in the early stages of the pandemic (Xiu 2020).

What Lies beyond the Crisis? (Or How the Flock Do We Get out of This Mess?)

The pandemic has inflected the political connection between crisis and the critique, to the point tuning what is at stake in this crisis of the core of capitalist HE. Fuller (2020) distinguishes four orders of discourse relevant in this historical moment when the pandemic has revealed the horizon of human agency. The first is the potential for a national victory over the pandemic, experienced differentially. The second order is defining what it means to solve the crisis at the global level, with implications for certain national responses. The third relates to the lessons learned from solving the crisis, in particular in relation to the validity of business-as-usual (a capitalist realist position). The fourth order is a victory in the fight for what the lessons of crisis resolution means for our sense of who we are as agents in the world, or potentially as agents with the world. In thinking about this, in terms of HE at the intersection of financial, epidemiological and environmental crises, there are options and the potential for moving beyond hegemonic thinking. However, being willing to realise this potential immediately implicates the capitalist University in the reproduction of crises.

The competitive realities of HE systems at the capitalist core of a perceived, closed world system of production centres the resolution of crises around commodification, marketisation and financialisation. In terms of Fuller's first two orders, it is highly unlikely that those institutions might move beyond expressing their agency as anything other than surplus, defined in relation to impact, excellence, public engagement, entrepreneurship, knowledge transfer, and measured in global rankings. This pushes towards a reaffirmation of tropes of value-for-money, pro-

ductivity and business-as-usual, as a fatalistic renewal of *The End of History*. To be other than this is a denial of prestige, privilege and power, and in Fuller's terms, this risks reaffirming our toxic engagement with nature and the environment and reproduces capitalism's social metabolic control. Not only is it easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism, but the University at the capitalist core ensures that our progress towards that ending is more efficiently unsustainable (Hall and Winn 2011).

One of the crucial issues raised in ranking procedures is the tendency to attempt the abstraction of intellectual work in the form of teaching, research, social impact, public engagement and so on, at the global level. This is the attempt to scrub the concrete activities of intellectual workers, be they students, academics or professional services' staff, of any useful and differential content, such that they can be compared. This occurs at events like the IREG Observatory on Academic Ranking and Excellence conference. However, it is increasingly unclear how such transnational practices have relevance: first, as faith in a world system collapses, and as life itself becomes increasingly precarious for many people and ecosystems; second, as many alternative pathways open up for knowing, doing and being in the world; and third, as doubts and divergent thinking emerge in relation to the purpose of the University and intellectual work.

Just as hegemonic national systems seek to re-invoke the sanctity of global measurements and evidence-based practice shaped through disciplinary separation and ideological reinforcement, and as more peripheral nations seek access to prestige, geopolitical responses to crises are weakening hegemony. The University-as-is, defined as the global North/Western or settler-colonial, increasingly operates in a new mode of historical time. It stands at the bifurcation between historical epochs of domination in the transition from the unilateral rule of post-war capitalist core to functioning within a bilateral system led by China. In this moment, intellectual workers must question their ability to intervene in this field of capitalist reproduction in order to distort its trajectory. This returns us to Malm's (2020) indication that we turn our attention away from the symptoms of the crisis of the pandemic towards the causes of the intersection of crises.

A crucial question here is whether we are able to move intellectual work beyond the University, either by dissolving or converting it, or by building new, mutual and associational institutions, at the level of society. Returning to Marx ([1857] 1993), this is the liberation of the general intellect of society, or our shared knowing, doing and being in the world.

It accepts that humans and human activity has made the world, including reproduction of capital and social metabolic control, and that its structures, cultures and practices do not have to be pathological and methodological. This demands that intellectual workers connect to the needs of society for good living or *buen vivir* (Ecuadorian National Secretariat of Planning and Development 2012), rather than working for the commodity form as the mode of social reproduction.

These connections actively take up the issues of the functioning of capital in the sector, and more broadly across society, and oppose it in structures, cultures and practices based on mutuality, co-operation, solidarity and expansion of the commons, operating communally across a global terrain. The focus upon communal responses reminds us to be mindful of indigenous, Eastern, colonised and Southern responses to the intersection of crises. Here there is much potentiality, for instance witnessed in the invocation of *preguntando caminamos*, or *asking, we walk* (Marcos 2004; Sitrin 2005). Inside capitalist social relations, Marx (1852) was clear that humans make their own history, but not under conditions of their own choosing. Yet as crisis brings the transhistorical, naturalised realities of capitalism into question, *preguntando caminamos* acts as a beacon, reminding us that humans make their own history and our own paths through collective dialogue, based upon knowing where, how and why we find ourselves, and subsequently doing and being in the world.

We can only move towards "our true heart" (Marcos 2004, 268) in the next moment by understanding our modes of knowing, doing and being in the present moment. This teaches "how the world was born and show where it is to be found" (ibid., 276), as a movement of dignity. The struggle for movement delineates life as pedagogic practice, and erupts from our present, hopeless situation as a demand for generalised, intellectual engagement with alternative ways of making the world and being in it. It is predicated upon abolishing separation, for instance, between teacher and student, and transcending roles, such that each individual articulates their intellectual capabilities as a social activity.

This matters for intellectual workers and intellectual work in society, because, as Holloway (2010, 235) argues, "[l]iving in capital means that we live in the midst of contradiction," and finding ways to rupture that contradiction is a critical, historical question. In acknowledging the return of history, we recognise the potential for developing paths based upon *preguntando caminamos* and anchored in concrete, lived experiences, as a movement of becoming. Such becoming is the material production of history, as a constant unfolding. It is useful to be reminded

here that in capital's historical development "*everything posited is also a presupposition*" (Marx [1857] 1993, 278, emphasis in original). Every step closes and opens, and brings the self into a truer relation with the world. Such a truer relation is crucial because at the end of *The End of History*, the horizons of intellectual work must be described in relation to "the only scientific question that remains to us (…): how the fuck do we get out of this mess?" (Holloway 2010, 919).

Conclusion: Building Higher Education in and for the Common

One of the most skilled contemporary novelists, Kim Stanley Robinson, in a recent interview on his book *The Ministry of the Future*, which appeared on the pages of the socialist journal *Jacobin*, referred to Jameson's increasingly, frequently quoted statement about endings and the duality of the world and capitalism. For Robinson (2020), what we are "missing is a bridge from here to there," or in other words, "it's hard to imagine how we get to a better system." The biggest problem facing our radical imaginations today is not so much yearning for the utopia of a new system. Rather, as noted by Barnett (2017), at issue is how to address the "feasible utopias" of the transition.

The task of our time is how to think through the transition from a system shocked to its core by Covid-19 in ways that have been almost unimaginable in the context of financial or environmental crises. As the impact of these latter two crises were more widely felt at the periphery of the global system of reproduction, they had less imminent impact on corporeal existences with prestige, privilege and power.

The task of our time is how to think through the transition from a system shocked to its core by Covid-19 in ways that have been almost unimaginable in the context of financial or environmental crises. As the impact of these latter two crises were more widely felt at the periphery of the global system of reproduction, they had less imminent impact on corporeal existences with prestige, privilege and power. Accepting its intersectional and positional differences in impact, there is potential in addressing how the generalised, epidemiological shock unleashed in 2020 might enable the realisation of our yearnings for alternative, desired states. This is our ability to realise the *not-yet* and to recognise what has been *always-already* possible, that is, to develop the actions reachable through the collective self-steering performed collectively in the present (Szadkowski and Krzeski 2021). Here, we must recognise that the problem for intellectual workers, and for redefining and instantiating meaningful, intellectual work, is the transition itself and its corresponding, socially-useful institutions.

The general framework of this process has *both* already been rethought within the specific historical and geographic configuration of real socialisms (Temkin 1968), and has also historically become the starting point for the development of *alternative* modernisation projects on a global

scale (Mark, Kalinovsky and Marung 2020). However, it seems that we really need something of altermodernisation (Hardt and Negri 2009) or modes of social reproduction that will exceed the limitations imposed by colonial capitalist reason. Here, it may be that the historical connection between the postcolonial, indigenous world and East European real socialism might teach us valuable lessons about the feasibility of hegemonic or counter-hegemonic transitions. This might enable a struggle against business-as-usual alongside a renewed reflexivity, defined against Fuller's (2020) fourth, post-pandemic order of freedom.

Such considerations have been analysed by philosophers *both* of the common (Dardot and Laval 2019; Hardt and Negri 2009), *and* in the context of HE (Roggero 2011; Szadkowski 2019). At the intersection of these analyses emerges the potentiality for institutions of the common, as the organisation of the autonomy and resistance of living labor/knowledge. Beyond this, it has been defined in terms of the power to define the collective governance and regulation of society, predicated upon mutuality and co-operation, through which the production of common norms breaks with capitalist realism (Roggero 2010). Here, we are reminded of actually-existing models of the communal organisation of HE, for instance, in the Salesian polytechnic in the capital of Ecuador, Quito (Carrera and Solorzano 2019). Erdem (2020) has highlighted other global examples, which was beyond co-option and re-incorporation inside the circuits of capitalist reproduction. Here, it is important to recognise the tension that exists between a Commons of the global North/West/secular-colonialism, and the communalism enacted in indigenous and decolonial contexts, which themselves push for modes of knowing, being and doing (Marcos 2004; Santos 2014; Elwood, Andreotti and Stein 2020) alongside radical tenderness towards the world (D'Emilia and Chávez 2015).

While the institutions of the common or potential forms of communalism might give form to the transition for which we yearn, the vectors that give them direction are also important. Points in the present are necessary to guide us into the future. They can be identified using pairs of oppositions that are entangled and which centre practices that oppose the capitalist hierarchy and its power of abstraction. These exacerbate the contradictions of this hierarchy and its demands for intellectual work that reproduce it toxic, social metabolic control. Thus, such practices include: cooperation against competition; real social utility against impact, excellence' and prestige; concrete, local embeddedness against abstract, global eradication; multilingualism versus monolingualism; a multitude of ways of knowing, being in doing against capitalist

standardisation; global co-operation in research and teaching, rather than the competition embedded within hegemonic circuits of privilege; mutual engagement in knowing the world, rather than the domination of the world by the knowledge production of a small number of centres; openness and social control over the conditions of life, rather than their conditioning by intellectual private property, the market, the division of labour and commodity-exchange; public governance, regulation and funding of science and education, through reintegrated disciplines that stand against the privatisation and debt-financed intellectual.

In our thinking about intellectual work, such entanglements are many-fold and offer the potential to overflow the University of surplus, such that intellectual knowledge, skills and capabilities might be liberated at the level of society. Bringing this general intellect into conversation with alternative modes of knowing the world, enacted through the global South, the East, indigenous and post-colonial communities, offers a moment of moving beyond a crisis-driven world that threatens our corporeal and temporal existences in order to enact new modes of doing and being. It is here that the pandemic offers an opportunity to look beyond the hegemonic University at *The End of History*, and to reconnect with intellectual work as meaningful and authentic social activity, which abolishes the present state of things. This absolutely denies the appeal of a set of ready-made solutions for re-imagining a future University as a public good or for a better, more inclusive capitalism. Instead, it is a call for intellectual workers to remember that they make history at the level of society and that if we are to break out of the tight grip of *capitalist realism*, and thereby commit to building a global system based on mutuality, solidarity, and co-operation, then intellectual work must be returned to society. It must become collectively-managed, common or communal knowing beyond the University (Hall 2020; Meyerhoff 2019). Everything seems to be forever until it is no more. Communist intervention in HE starts from organising the always-already right now in order to point beyond the rule of capital.

References

Allen, Ansgar. 2017. *The Cynical Educator.* Leicester: Mayfly Books.

Aman, Robert, and Timothy Ireland. 2015. "Education and Other Modes of Thinking in Latin America." *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 34(1): 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1080/0260137

0.2015.1007719.
Amsler, Sarah. 2015. *The Education of Radical Democracy*. London: Routledge.
———, and Sara C. Motta. 2017. "The Marketised University and the Politics of Motherhood." *Gender and Education* 31(1): 82–99. https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2017.1296116.
Andreotti, Vanessa. 2016. "The Educational Challenges of Imagining the World Differently." *Canadian Journal of Development Studies* 37(1): 101–112. https://doi.org/10.1080/02255189.2016.1134456.
Ansell, Kim. 2020. "Articulating Value: Creating a Compelling Narrative." *Higher Education Policy Institute* (hepi), accessed June 11, 2020, https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2020/01/27/articulating-value-creating-a-compelling-narrative/.
Arrighi, Giovanni. 2007. *Adam Smith in Beijing: Lineages of the Twenty--First Century*. Verso: London.
Aufhebunga Bunga. 2019. "Aufhebunga Bunga Is Creating the Global Politics Podcast at 'The End Of The End Of History.'", accessed November 23, 2021, https://www.patreon.com/bungacast.
Badia, Marialuz Moreno, Paulo Medas, Pranav Gupta, and Yuan Xiang. 2020. "Debt Is Not Free." *IMF Working Paper* 20(1), accessed June 11, 2020, https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WP/Issues/2020/01/03/Debt-Is-Not-Free-48894.
Barnett, Ronald. 2017. *The Ecological University: A Feasible Utopia*. London: Routledge.
Bellamy Foster, John, Brett Clark, and Richard York. 2009. *The Ecological Rift: Capitalism's War on the Earth*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
Bloch, Ernst. 1995. *The Principle of Hope*, vol. 1. Translated by Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice and Paul Knight. Cambridge: MIT Press.
Carola, Carlos Renato. 2017. "Precursors of Decolonial Pedagogical Thinking in Latin America and Abya Yala." In *New Pedagogical Challenges in the 21st Century: Contributions of Research in Education*, edited by Olga Bernad Cavero and Núria Llevot-Calvet. London: InTechOpen. https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.72343.
Carrera, Paola, and Fernando Solórzano, eds. 2019. *The University--Commune: The Centrality of Community Action in the Management Model and Practices of Universities*. Quito: Abya Yala UPS.
Chen, Kuan-Hsing. 2010. *Asia as Method: Toward deimperialization*. Durham: Duke University Press.
Conelli, Carmine. 2019. "Back to the South: Revisiting Gramsci's

Southern Question in the Light of Subaltern Studies." In *Revisiting Gramsci's Notebooks*, edited by Francesca Antonini et al. Leiden: Brill.

Connell, Raewyn. 2019. *The Good University: What Universities Actually Do and Why It's Time for a Radical Change*. London: Zed Books.

———, and James W. Messerschmidt. 2005. "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept." *Gender & Society* 19(6): 829–859. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243205278639.

Connelly, Stephen. 2020. "Universities, Finance Capital and the Impact of Covid-19." *Discover Society,* May 28. https://discoversociety.org/2020/05/28/universities-finance-capital-and-the-impact-of-covid-19/.

Darder, Antonia. 2018. "Decolonizing Interpretive Research: Subaltern Sensibilities and the Politics of Voice." *Qualitative Research Journal* 18(2), 94–104. https://doi.org/10.1108/QRJ-D-17-00056.

Dardot, Pierre, and Christian Laval. 2019. *Common: On Revolution in the 21st Century*. Translated by Matthew MacLellan. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

———. 2020. "The Pandemic as Political Trial: The Case for a Global Commons." Translated by Matthew MacLellan. *Roar Magazine*, March 28, https://roarmag.org/essays/dardot-laval-corona-pandemic/.

Davies, William. 2017. "Elite Power under Advanced Neoliberalism." *Theory, Culture & Society* 34(5–6): 227–250. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276417715072.

Derrida, Jacques. 2001. "The Future of the Profession or the Unconditional University (thanks to the 'humanities,' what could take place tomorrow)." Translated by Peggy Kamuf. In *Deconstructing Derrida: Tasks for the New Humanities*, edited by Peter Pericles Trifonas and Michael A. Peters. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

De Sousa Santos, Boaventura. 2014. *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide*. London: Routledge.

———. 2020. "The Tragic Transparency of the Virus." *Critical Legal Thinking*, accessed November 28, 2021, https://criticallegalthinking.com/2020/04/06/the-tragic-transparency-of-the-virus/.

Dinerstein, Ana. 2015. *The Politics of Autonomy in Latin America: The Art of Organising Hope in the Twenty-First Century*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

D'Emilia, Dani, and Daniel B. Chávez. 2015. "Radical Tenderness Is... A Living Manifesto." accessed November 28, 2021, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1f5Kd91d2u-5F7iTbPfRSyNoHouQVhsLc/view.

Elwood, Jimmy, Vanessa Andreotti, and Sharon Stein. 2019. *Towards Braiding*, accessed November 28, 2021, https://decolonialfutures.

net/towardsbraiding/.
Erdem, Esra. 2020. "Free Universities as Academic Commons." In *The Handbook of Diverse Economies*, edited by J. K. Gibson-Graham and Kelly Dombroski, 316–322. London: Edward Elgar Publishing.
Facer, Keri. 2019. "Storytelling in Troubled Times: What Is the Role of Educators in the Deep Crises of the 21st Century." *Literacy* 53(1): 3–13. https://doi.org/10.1111/lit.12176.
Fisher, Mark. 2003. *Capitalist Realism. Is there an Alternative?* London: Zone Books.
Frank, Jeff, Norman Gowar, and Michael Naef. 2019. *English Universities in Crisis: Markets Without Competition*. Bristol: Bristol University Press.
Franklin, H. Bruce. 1979. "What Are We to Make of J.G. Ballard's Apocalypse?" *Adventure thru Inner Space: Essays and Articles*, accessed November 24, 2021, http://www.jgballard.ca/criticism/ballard_apocalypse_1979.html.
Fukayama, Francis. 1992. *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: Free Press.
Fuller, Steve. 2020. "Fourth Order Thinking About the Pandemic: A Transhumanist Challenge." *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective* 9(12): 10–13.
Füredi, Frank. 2017. *What's Happened To The University? A Sociological Exploration of its Infantilisation*. London: Routledge.
Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited by Quinton Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith. New York: International Publishers.
Grzechnik, Marta. 2019. "The Missing Second World: On Poland and Postcolonial Studies." *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 21(7): 998–1014. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369801X.2019.1585911.
Gunn, Richard. 1987. "Ernest Bloch's 'The Principle of Hope.'" *Edinburgh Review* 76: 1–9.
Haiven, Max. 2020. *Revenge Capitalism: The Ghosts of Empire, the Demons of Capital, and the Settling of Unpayable Debts*. London: Pluto Press.
Hall, Richard. 2018. *The Alienated Academic: The Struggle for Autonomy Inside the University*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
———. 2020. "The Hopeless University: Intellectual Work at the End of the End of History." *Postdigital Science and Education* 2: 830–848. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-020-00158-9.
———, and Kate Bowles. 2016. "Re-Engineering Higher Education: The Subsumption of Academic Labour and the Exploitation of Anxiety." *Workplace: A Journal for Academic Labor* 28: 30–47. https://

doi.org/10.14288/workplace.v0i28.186211.
———, and Joss Winn. 2011." Questioning Technology in the Development of a Resilient Higher Education." *E-Learning and Digital Media* 8(4): 343–356. https://doi.org/10.2304/elea.2011.8.4.343.
Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. 2009. *Commonwealth*. Boston: Harvard University Press.
Harney, Stefano, and Fred Moten. 2013. *The Undercommons Fugitive Planning & Black Study*. Brooklyn: Minor Compositions.
Holloway, John. 2010. *Crack Capitalism*. London: Pluto Press.
Holmwood, John, ed. 2011. *A Manifesto for the Public University*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
Ignatiev, Noel. 2008. *How the Irish Became White*. London: Routledge.
Jameson, Fredric. 1994. *The Seeds of Time*. New York: Columbia University Press.
———. 2003. "Future City." *New Left Review* (21): 65–79.
Jayasuriya, Kanishka. 2020. "COVID-19, Markets and the Crisis of the Higher Education Regulatory State: The Case of Australia." *Globalisations* 18(4): 584–599. https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2020.1815461.
Jewkes, Rachel, Robert Morrell, Jeff Hearn, Emma Lundqvist, David Blackbeard, Graham Lindegger, Michael Quayle, Yandisa Sikweyiya, and Lucas Gottzén. 2015. "Hegemonic Masculinity: Combining Theory and Practice in Gender Interventions, Culture." *Health & Sexuality* 17(2): 96–111. https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2015.1085094.
O'Keefe, Derrick. 2020. "Imagining the End of Capitalism with Kim Stanley Robinson." *Jacobin*, accessed November 28, 2021, https://www.jacobinmag.com/2020/10/kim-stanley-robinson-ministry-future-science-fiction.
Kose, M. Ayhan, Peter Nagle, Franziska Ohnsorge, and Naotaka Sugawara. 2019. "Global Waves of Debt: Causes and Consequences." *World Bank, Research & Outlook*, accessed June 11, 2020, https://www.worldbank.org/en/research/publication/waves-of-debt.
Leong, Chee Kian, and Weihong Huang. 2010. "A Stochastic Differential Game of Capitalism." *Journal of Mathematical Economics* 46(4): 552–561. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmateco.2010.03.007.
Love, Joseph L. 1980. "Raul Prebisch and the Origins of the Doctrine of Unequal Exchange." *Latin American Research Review* 15(3): 45–72.
Malm, Andreas. 2020. *Corona, Climate and Chronic Emergency: War Communism in the Twenty-First Century*. Verso: London.
Marcos, Subcommandante. 2004. *Our Word is Our Weapon: Selected*

Writings, edited by Juana Ponce de León. London: Serpent's Tail.
Marginson, Simon. 2020a. "The Relentless Price of High Individualism in the Pandemic." *Higher Education Research & Development* 39(7): 1392–1395. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2020.1822297.
———. 2020b. "Postcards from the Covid-19 Pandemic." *Thesis Eleven Blog*, accessed November 28, 2021, https://thesiseleven.com/2020/10/21/postcards-from-the-covid-19-pandemic/.
———, and Imanol Ordorika. 2011. "'El central volume de la fuerza.' Global Hegemony in Higher Education and Research." In *Knowledge Matters: The Public Mission of the Research University,* edited by Diana Rhoten and Craig Calhoun, 67–129. New York: Columbia University Press.
Mark, James, Artemy M. Kalinovsky, and Steffi Marung. 2020. *Alternative Globalizations: Eastern Europe and the Postcolonial World.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
Marx, K. 1857. *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/.
———. (1857) 1993. *Grundrisse: Outline of the Critique of Political Economy*. London: Penguin.
———. (1867) 2004. *Capital, Volume 1: A Critique of Political Economy*. London: Penguin.
Mazzucato, Mariana. 2020. "It's 2023. Here's How We Fixed the Global Economy." *Times Magazine*, accessed November 28, 2021, https://time.com/collection/great-reset/5900739/fix-economy-by-2023/.
McGettigan, Andrew. 2015. "The Treasury View of HE: Variable Human Capital Investment." *Political Economy Research Centre Papers Series 6*, accessed November 28, 2021, https://www.perc.org.uk/project_posts/perc-paper-the-treasury-view-of-higher-education-by-andrew-mcgettigan/.
Meyerhoff, Eli. 2019. *Beyond Education: Radical Studying for Another World*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.
Motta, Sara C. 2018. *Liminal Subjects: Weaving (Our) Liberation*. London: Rowman & Littlefield International.
Munevar, Daniel. 2020. "Arrested Development: International Monetary Fund Lending and Austerity Post Covid-19." *European Network on Debt and Development*, briefing paper, accessed November 28, 2021, https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/eurodad/pages/1063/attachments/original/1608122652/arrested-development-FINAL.pdf.
Müller, Martin. 2018. "In Search of the Global East: Thinking between North and South." *Geopolitics* 25(3): 734–755. https://doi.org/10.

1080/14650045.2018.1477757.

Nancy, Jean-Luc. 2020. "Communovirus." *Liberation 24 mars*, accessed November 28, 2021, https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2020/03/24/communovirus_1782922.

NSPD. 2013. "Ecuadorian National Plan for Good Living, 2013-2017." http://www.planificacion.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2013/12/Buen-Vivir-ingles-web-final-completo.pdf.

Patomäki, Heikki. 2017. "Capitalism: Competition, Conflict, Crisis." *Journal of Critical Realism* 16(5): 537–543. https://doi.org/10.1080/14767430.2017.1332807.

Prebisch, Raul. 1980. "The Dynamics of Peripheral Capitalism." In *Democracy and Development in Latin America*, edited by Louis Lefeber and Liisa L. North, 21–27. Toronto: Studies on the Political Economy, Society and Culture of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Robinson, Kim Stanley. 2020. *The Ministry of the Future*. New York: Orbit Books.

Roggero, Gigi. 2010. "Five Theses on the Common." *Rethinking Marxism* 22(3): 357–373. https://doi.org/10.1080/08935696.2010.490369.

———. 2011. *The Production of Living Knowledge: The Crisis of the University and the Transformation of Labor in Europe and North America*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Saito, Kohei. 2017. *Karl Marx's Ecosocialism: Capital, Nature, and the Unfinished Critique of Political Economy*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Shaikh, Anwar. 2016. *Capitalism: Competition, Conflict, Crises*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sitrin, Marina. 2005. "'Walking We Ask Questions': An Interview with John Holloway." *Leftturn: Notes from the Global Intifada*, accessed November 28, 2021, http://leftturn.org/%E2%80%9Cwalking-we-ask-questions%E2%80%9D-interview-john-holloway/.

Szadkowski, Krystian. 2019. "The Common in Higher Education: A Conceptual Approach." *Higher Education* 78(2): 241–255. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-018-0340-4.

———, and Jakub Krzeski. 2019. "In, Against, and Beyond: A Marxist Critique for Higher Education in Crisis." *Social Epistemology* 33(6): 463–476. https://doi.org/10.1080/02691728.2019.1638465.

———. 2021. "The Future Is Always-Already Now: Instituent Praxis and the Activist University." *Policy Futures in Education* 19(5): 554–567. https://doi.org/10.1177/14782103211003445.

Temkin, Gabriel. 1962. *Karola Marksa obraz gospodarki komunistycznej*. Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza.

Tuck, Eve, and K. Wayne Yang. 2012. "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1(1): 1–40, accessed November 28, 2021, https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/18630.

Wallerstein, Immanuel. 1974. *The Modern World-System I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*. New York: Academic Press.

Williamson, Ben. 2020. "Datafication and Automation in Higher Education During and After the Covid-19 Crisis." Accessed June 11, 2020, https://codeactsineducation.wordpress.com/2020/05/06/datafication-automation-he-covid19-crisis/.

WIN. 2020. "Struggle in a pandemic." Accessed June 11, 2020, https://notesfrombelow.org/issue/struggle-pandemic.

World Bank Group Education. 2020. "The Covid-19 Pandemic: Shocks to Education and Policy Responses." Accessed June 11, 2020, https://t.co/DHn34oFCZL.

Xu, Xin. 2020. "The Hunt for a Coronavirus Cure Is Showing How Science Can Change for the Better." *The Conversation*. https://theconversation.com/the-hunt-for-a-coronavirus-cure-is-showing-how-science-can-change-for-the-better-132130.

Žižek, Slavoj. 2020. *Pandemic! COVID-19 Shakes the World*. New York: OR Books.

KRYSTIAN SZADKOWSKI, Ph.D. – is a researcher at the Scholarly Communication Research Group of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan. His interests cover political economy and transformations of higher education systems in Central Eastern Europe as well as the issues of the public and the common in higher education. He worked as a researcher for Education International (Brussels, Belgium) and as a consultant in policy projects funded by the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education. He was a visiting researcher at the Centre for Global Higher Education, both at the Institute of Education, University College London (in 2018) and at the University of Oxford (in 2020). His interests cover political ontology, political economy of higher education, critical university studies, higher education research.

Address:
Adam Mickiewicz University
5 Międzychodzka St., room 404
Poznan – Poland
email: krysszad@amu.edu.pl

RICHARD HALL, Ph.D. – is Professor of Education and Technology at De Montfort University, Leicester, UK. He is a National Teaching Fellow and a Trustee of the Open Library of Humanities. His most recent books are *The Hopeless University: Intellectual Work at the end of The End of History* (MayFly Books) and *The Alienated Academic: The Struggle for Autonomy Inside the University* (Palgrave Macmillan). He writes about life in higher education at: richard-hall.org.

Address:
De Montfort University
Gateway House, LE1 9BH
Leicester – United Kingdom
email: RHall1@dmu.ac.uk

Citation:
Szadkowski, Krystian, and Richard Hall. 2021. "Has the University Become Surplus to Requirements? Or is Another University Possible?" *Praktyka Teoretyczna* 42(4): 111–137.
DOI: 10.14746/prt2021.4.5

Autorzy: Krystian Szadkowski i Richard Hall

Tytuł: Czy uniwersytet stał się naddatkiem względem wymagań? Albo: czy inny uniwersytet jest możliwy?

Abstrakt: W tym artykule dowodzimy, że Uniwersytet stał się miejscem, które nie ma społecznie użytecznej roli poza reprodukcją kapitału, i przemienia się wobec tego w projekt antyludzki. Wywód ten skoncentrowany jest na pragnieniu nadwyżki biurokratycznego uniwersytetu i jego związku z codzienną, akademicką rzeczywistością – odczuwania nadwyżki w stosunku do wymagań. Kreśląc kontury tej sprzeczności, w ramach normalizacji kryzysu polityczno-gospodarczego, kwestionujemy to, czy nadal istnieje miejsce na akademicką metodę lub sposób upodmiotowienia. Krytykujemy również zdolność Uniwersytetu z globalnej Północy do nawiązania relacji z epistemologiczną wrażliwością Południa i Wschodu, które traktują inne sposoby widzenia i *praxis* z godnością i szacunkiem. Zmagając się z ideą nadwyżki oraz z codziennymi i strukturalnymi sposobami manifestowania się jej produkcji, pytamy, czy możliwy jest inny uniwersytet.

Słowa kluczowe: Uniwersytet, kryzys, Globalny Wschód, hegemonia, wyobraźnia

HÉLIO ALEXANDRE SILVA (ORCID: 0000-0002-3636-1591)

A Critique of Poverty: Exploring the Underground of Social Philosophy

Poverty is the primary focus of this paper; more particularly, the critique of poverty and not its mere description. It would not be an overstatement to say that one of the common grounds for poverty theories is that they describe the poor as those who systematically experience their lives in privation, namely around having the minimum when it comes to needs such as housing, food, health, education, free time, etc. There is, therefore, a theoretical and socially accepted orientation that promotes the sedimentation of a deep affinity between poverty and the minimum. Based on this reasoning, what is set on the horizon is a kind of non-explicit acceptance that the overcoming of poverty can be achieved by granting the poor something beyond the minimum, however elementary that "something extra" may be. Thus, if the experience of poverty involves some sort of lack or privation, and if this condition can be fully filled by something that has already been socially produced, then what would justify the fact that some people are able to fully fill it while others (the poor) can only secure the bare minimum? In light of this, perhaps it would be better not to question the acceptable "minimum" but, rather, to ask: Why would the notion of poverty be guided by this normative criterion? Therefore, a way of

describing my broader hypothesis on poverty would be to understand that it should be measured based on the level of denial of access to what has been socially produced. The further one is from accessing social wealth, the poorer one is. Finally, this tendency toward assimilation between poverty and the minimum engenders a depressive effect on demands for social change.

Keywords: poverty, minimum, social philosophy

> If, however, the theoretician and his specific object are seen as forming a dynamic unity with the oppressed class, so that his presentation of societal contradictions is not merely an expression of the concrete historical situation but also a force within it to stimulate change, then his real function emerges.
> (Horkheimer 2002, 215)

> I slept and had a marvelous dream. I dreamt I was an angel. My dress was billowing and had long pink sleeves. I went from earth to heaven (…). God, send me these dreams for my aching soul.
> (Jesus 2015, 111)

Introduction

The main object of the present paper consists of contemplating poverty as a multidimensional social phenomenon. More specifically, it consists of showing that this multidimensionality coexists with a crystallized trend around a common form of assimilation theory between *poverty* and *the minimum*. I aim to show here some rates regarding this crystallisation as presented in some of the most influential works about poverty. This will allow us to explore the hypothesis that striving to offer theoretical elements to fight poverty has been crystallized in such a way that part of the fight's actual critical content has been lost. Thus, the quest, praiseworthy as it is, to guarantee the minimum as a way of fighting poverty has been translated in terms of a neutralization of the normative requirements that insufficiently exploit a decisive element in order to understand this social phenomenon, namely, the level of socially produced wealth. Accordingly, a way of describing my broader argument on poverty would be to signal that it should be understood based on the level of denial of access to what has been socially produced.

Now, I must point out that it would be impossible, given this limited space, to carry out an exhaustive analysis of the most influential theories of poverty. Therefore, rather than presenting an inventory filled with theories and reports, what I propose is to retrieve some representative aspects that may strengthen the most structural outlines of the trend I intend to criticize herein. This appears to be an initial effort to shed light on the theoretical inclination of assimilating poverty and the minimum.[1] Thus, my purpose is more to point at this general trend—

1 Although, in fact, "the way in which poverty is habitually defined by the

which marks a great deal of the most influential works on poverty—and less to rebuild and exhaustively analyse the details that support each of the theoretical paths and reports that I will present here.

However, I must disclaim any originality for the views I put forward. The main ideas are well known. My intention has been to organize them into general aspects by mobilizing some traits so that a critical argument of the assimilation between poverty and the minimum can be better appreciated.

It is worth noting, by way of introduction, that in his inauguration speech at the *Social Research Institute* in 1931, Max Horkheimer recalled, particularly in critical thinking, that considerations according to which the philosophical work must distance itself from the "specialized scientific praxis" were outdated. The development of the sciences would have already crystallised this "idea of a continuous, dialectical penetration and development of philosophical theory and specialized scientific praxis" into an unavoidable prospect for critical work. In this sense, social philosophy must be "capable of giving particular studies animating impulses" while "at the same time remain open enough to let itself be influenced and changed by these concrete studies" (Horkheimer 1993, 9). This is a way of presenting the more comprehensive spirit that will guide this paper.

The Background of a Social Phenomenon

In order to introduce the issue as such, it is necessary to highlight the fact that the growing industrialization that marked the beginning of capitalism was decisive for "workers to be assimilated to the poor." Housing and health conditions, large families, behavioural traits, and physical appearance were some of the aspects that quickly made workers and the poor indistinguishable[2] (Geremek 1997, 233).

In this sense, when presenting some of the consequences brought by rising capitalism, Marx emphasized in his *Economic and Philosophic*

social sciences and the image of it that prevails in society influence each other" (Rego and Pinzani 2013, 27), my interest here is less to investigate a kind of "habitual image of poverty" and more to point out to a common trend present in theories that deal with this social phenomenon.

2 It is worth pointing out that "poverty as a mass phenomenon" arises only by the end of the medieval period and upon the transition to capitalist societies in which the "agrarian structures" gave way to industrial structures (Geremek 1997, 11).

Manuscripts that salary levels always tend to be very low when compared to the wealth produced. For this reason, a worker's salary was usually "compatible with common humanity" in such a way that their lives were similar to a "cattle-like existence" (Marx 1988, 20). This means that most times, the worker was treated as a mere "working-animal" or even "as a beast reduced to the strictest bodily needs" (ibid., 29).

The reason that I present these remarks is less because they serve as a starting point to debate elements of philosophical anthropology or based on a specific conception of a good life, but more because they can help build intuitions that are capable of illustrating a common phenomenon in the "poverty theories," namely, the symbiosis between poverty and the minimum. Such proximity can be associated with the type of experience that Marx called a "cattle-like existence." This way of living not only reduces workers to mere working animals, in Marx's terms, but it also considers the guarantee of the bodily needs and immediate survival as virtually the sole aim. Here is an example of the movement of theoretical approach between the worker and the poor, and also between poverty and the minimum.

These approaches gain even greater relevance when some of the results presented by recent research on current levels of social wealth are considered. According to the *Global wealth report* produced by the *Credit Suisse Research Institute*, we saw a record level of world wealth in 2019.[3] More precisely, the report stated that "Aggregate global wealth rose (…) to USD 360.6 trillion, representing a growth rate of 2.6%. (…) Nevertheless, it exceeded population growth, so that average wealth grew by 1.2% to USD 70,850 per adult, an all-time high yet again" (Crédit Suisse 2020, 6). These numbers become even more decisive when approached from the point of view presented in Thomas Piketty's recent work. According to the French economist, the period between 1980 and 2020 showed an increase in inequalities, headed by a "particularly radical form of neo-proprietarian ideology" (Piketty 2020, 20).[4] If there was indeed an increase of the poor, of the middle classes and of the rich, in averagely rich countries, the inequality in this growth is remarkable. In numbers: the poorest 50% had a purchasing power increase ranging from 60 to 120%; at the same time, the richest 1% experienced an increase ranging from 80 to 240%. Although the estimated range lacks precision (60-120; 80-240), it is possible to state that "inequality between the bottom and

3 It is expected that this growth sets new records: "Global wealth is projected to increase 27% in the next five years, reaching US$ 459 trillion by 2024" See https://www.cshg.com.br/publico/conteudo/global_wealth_report_201910.

4 For a summary of Piketty's major arguments, see Silva 2020.

middle of the global income distribution has decreased, while inequality between the middle and top has increased" (ibid., 26) corroborated this scenario by showing that, between 1980 and 2018, the poorest 50% captured 12% of the growth, while the 1% on the social top accumulated 27% of the growth produced in the same period. It is worth mentioning, however, that being anchored to the results of these works is not merely a way of listing information as if the sum of several data would be sufficient to make arguments strong; neither is it a way of preventing the shift of the analysis to an "imaginary scenario" or ideally projecting a certain desirable state of things. In fact, the results of these works allow us to point towards potentials that can more precisely illuminate the referring issue we are approaching herein.

What matters is that we try to understand, at a time when global wealth has never been greater, the consequences of naturalising the understanding of poverty as being linked to the minimum, especially in a society that has been prone, in the last 40 years, to extreme polarization when it comes to having access to what has been socially produced.

In any case, two aspects interest me regarding the results provided both by the Global Report and by Piketty's work: firstly, respecting the last 40 years, economic growth has proven to be a fact, especially in more developed countries; secondly, this growth went hand in hand with a tendency to decrease in the "middle layers," thus expanding the distance between two extremes composed of an increasingly smaller group, the rich, and an increasingly larger group, the poor.[5] One of the obvious conclusions drawn from this scenario is that the common standard of living would be higher for the vast majority of people, especially for the poor, if access to wealth was not brutally unequal.

However, I do not want to discuss more accurate outlines of this potentially new "common standard of living" here, nor am I going to follow the trail of redistribution theories. What matters is that we try to understand, at a time when global wealth has never been greater, the consequences of naturalising the understanding of poverty as being linked to the minimum, especially in a society that has been prone, in the last 40 years, to extreme polarization when it comes to having access to what has been socially produced. Based on this framework, it is essential to define the central objective that I intend to develop here: if,

5 This trend has been detected by authors of different theoretical affiliations since the beginning of the 1990's. Douglas Coupland assumes that "Brasilfication" is "The widening gulf between the rich and the poor and the disappearance of the middle classes" (Coupland 1994); Dardot and Laval, more recently, called about "extreme polarization between rich and poor" (Dardot and Laval 2013); in the same way, the economist and anthropologist Jason Hickel states that "It is easy to assume that the divide between rich countries and poor countries has always existed" but "the gap between the real per capita incomes of the global North and the global South has roughly tripled in size since 1960" (Hickel 2018, 2). Then, theoreticians from different perspectives are in agreement that tendency towards hyper concentration in the hands of a few and increasing deprivation for most.

in fact, the poorest are the ones who suffer the most, as they are the ones who experience the lowest levels of access to wealth, would this require that a theoretical approach to poverty be primarily guided by these "lower levels"?

To try to deal with these matters, first I will revisit, in a non-exhaustive way, some studies that are based on different approaches but converge towards the tendency of assimilation between poverty and the minimum. Then, I would like to suggest an alternative reflection, seeking to escape this assimilation.

Relative Poverty, Absolute Poverty, and Minimum Guarantees

A staggering number of theoretical contributions, in the most diverse areas of knowledge, has been dedicated to the study of poverty as a social phenomenon. All sorts of approaches have been filling this field of research; some have brought the topic, more directly, to the centre of their analyses; others, more indirectly, have approached poverty in association with other themes. Some have approached poverty as the privation of a common standard of living (Townsend 1979, 1987), while others have turned their analyses to the central role of the economic dimension (Lipton 1988)[6] or to the connection with human rights (Pogge 2002). There are also those who have built more focused approaches on an ethical conception (Dieterlen 2006), and, finally, some have focused on the social context of each particular society (Paugam 2013), among many other things. Because it is a multidimensional social phenomenon, efforts towards theoretical approximation have often chosen, deliberately or not, to illuminate a certain aspect of poverty to the detriment of others. In one of the numerous attempts to summarize this matter, Mojca Novak highlighted a geographical distinction, stating that one of the most globally common approaches has been to treat poverty as "a lack of resources." However, when considering the works carried out in Latin America, the tendency has been to consider poverty in terms of "lack of basic necessities" (Novak 1996, 58–59). For this reason, it is worth resuming, although in an illustrative way, some of these theoretical efforts.

If we move our attention to studies conducted in Europe, Peter Townsend's late-1970s *Poverty in the United Kingdom* is a milestone. It is the result of a monumental effort to systematize a joint research on

6 See also: Hagenaars and van Praag 1985.

poverty in the United Kingdom. In order to "show the extent of poverty (…) and give some explanation for its existence," Townsend stated that he intended to deal with both the "social structure" and the "poor minorities" that exist within this structure (Townsend 1979, 17–18). It is necessary, he insisted, to join forces with the aim of developing a definition of poverty that can be "applied in different countries and regions" (ibid., 40). Having this purpose in mind, Townsend stated that "poverty can be defined objectively and applied consistently only in terms of the concept of relative deprivation." Thus, the poor would be those who access resources "so seriously below those commanded by the average" that often, due to this deprivation, are "excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities" (ibid., 31). Therefore, it is worth highlighting this essential aspect: it is not that any level of deprivation can be characterized as poverty, according to Townsend, but only one that pushes individuals to a way of life that is seriously *below* the standards commonly accepted by a particular society.

Economist Michael Lipton, in turn, took a slightly different path. In a document produced to support discussions on public policies that would be developed by the World Bank, based on studies carried out in India and northern Nigeria, Lipton proposed an analysis that would distinguish the poor from the ultra-poor. He adopted this division because, as he explained, in order to assess the patterns that signalled the existence of poverty, it would also be necessary "to measure the characteristics of the poor." Therefore, he insisted that "we need a scalar measure of absolute poverty" (Lipton 1988, 8). In this sense, Lipton showed that the measure composed of "the level of income or outlay, per person or consumer-unit" is difficult to be operationalized. Some problems arise when, for example, "two areas [or branches of science] competing for an anti-poverty project" consider "the same income per person"; however, they show that, often, this income "'buys' quite different levels of basic-needs fulfilment in the two areas." Thus, to "preserve a scalar poverty indicator," he continued, it is necessary to "measure the level of income or outlay, per person or consumer-unit," in order to ensure that different families in different areas have the same standard measure of "basic need" (ibid.). To deal with this difficulty, Lipton suggested the following standard: the "ultra-poor" are those who "spend 80 percent or more on food, yet fulfil less than 80 percent of the average calorie requirements for their age, sex and activity groups" (ibid.). Similarly, the "poor" are those who "spending 70 percent or more of income on food, and meeting 80-100 percent of requirements, are unlikely to be undernourished, but are sometimes hungry" (ibid., 9). It should be

noted that Lipton's concern was aimed at the need of assessing the limits between those who meet the average food requirements and those who live, to a greater or lesser extent, with hunger.

Thomas Pogge's (2002, 6) concern, especially in his work *World Poverty and Human Rights*, was openly related to what he called "severe poverty." He wondered why, despite the acknowledged growth in world wealth, there were still legions of people who purely survive "from one day to the next" (ibid., 13). Seeking to investigate the moral problems that emerge from the deepest experiences of poverty, he stated that the "very poor," or those on whom the effects of "severe poverty" are most evident, can be described as those who deal with the "lack of secure access to the minimum requirements of human existence." According to him, these requirements refer to "reliable food and water, clothing, shelter, basic medical care and basic education." This definition, which the author himself acknowledged to be "limited and absolute," corresponds to what the World Bank adopted as the "international poverty line" (Pogge 2006, 34–35). One way of understanding Pogge's effort, therefore, is to recognize his attempt to develop an absolute measurement marker capable of providing theoretical mechanisms that may address the need to ensure access to the minimum requirements for human life.

Coming from a background that "takes the idea of equality seriously," Paulette Dieterlen (2006, 16–17) guided her work, which privileges Mexican experiences, towards the development of an "ethical concept of poverty." To this end, she affirmed that being poor is "not having certain economic resources," but it also invariably means having "low self-esteem" and little "self-respect." In any case, Dieterlen (ibid., 15–16) clearly stated in her book *La pobreza: un estudio filosófico* that her intention was "to explain certain ideas that arise when we speak of poverty and, more particularly, of severe poverty." The concern about ensuring the minimum, indeed, permeates all of her work, where she always seeks to rely on a literature that can credibly produce a "package of needs that must be met" (ibid., 178), thus making it possible to "solve the problem of severe poverty" (ibid., 117). Such a solution becomes clearer when the author states that it is necessary that this "package of needs"—which must be guaranteed—can be thought of "regardless of the differences and singularities of each culture" (ibid., 178). One of the highlights of this work consists of her search for a theoretical setup that meets the requirements to satisfy people's basic needs regardless of social and cultural particularities.

Finally, it is facing the way in which poverty manifests itself, primarily in Europe, that Serge Paugam guided his work. Seeking to rely on

comparative studies, in his work *Les formes élémentaires de la pauvreté*, he presented an analysis of what he understood to be the forms of poverty, highlighting three patterns: integrated poverty, marginal poverty, and unqualified poverty (*la pauvreté disqualifiante*). Of the three forms of poverty, the third one is certainly the most similar to the use I would like to emphasize here as a recurring trend, that is, one related to the approach between poverty and the minimum. According to Paugam, unqualified poverty is the experience of "living standard degradation" and "marginalization" that results in a "situation of extreme poverty on the edge of social rupture." This scenario, he insisted, fuels a "process of social disqualification" that exposes the fragile condition of "social integration" (Paugam 2013, 181). Thus, extreme marginalization and the associated social disqualification are some of the structuring aspects that characterize the experience of poverty, as shown in this author's work.

Taken together, the above mentioned remarks could be summarized in the following terms: for Townsend, the effort revolves around showing that the deprivation that characterizes poverty is one that reduces the poor to a substandard in each society. For Lipton, the solution lies in solving the equation: family expenses multiplied by adequate food. That is why, according to him, the poor are those who spend 70% or more of their family income on food and, although they are not exclusively defined by this, they can live with the existence of hunger. Pogge, on the other hand, expressed the belief that the poor can be found where the "minimum requirements for human existence" are not guaranteed, such as access to food, water, clothing, shelter, basic medical care, and basic education. Guaranteeing access to a package of "needs that must be met," regardless of cultural singularities, is a way to overcome extreme poverty, according to Dieterlen. Paugam, in turn, highlighted the type of social experience that produces social disqualification as one of the three ways of looking at poverty. According to him, phenomena such as marginalization and life degradation are dimensions that arise from such disqualification. In summary, below-average standards, hunger, lack of water, food, medical care, unmet minimum needs, and forms of social disqualification are some of the characteristics that, according to the above mentioned authors, help compose the poverty scenario. In any case, they have not seemed to escape the trend recognized by Dieterlen, according to which "the methods to measure poverty have been established in order to detect what is minimally acceptable" (Dieterlen 2006, 129): minimum social integration, minimum ethical conside-

ration, minimum food, that is, the minimum needs seen as basic by each theoretical constellation.[7]

It should be noted, however, that there are virtues in this theoretical movement that aim to take multidimensionality into account. It is worth pointing out that "the concept of poverty has not remained [completely] unchanged over time." The increased complexity of the changes has required an effort at a theoretical understanding that is capable of considering some "particularities of highly industrialized countries" and their corresponding scientific development (Costa 1984, 275). Most of these approaches also have the merit of, on the one hand, preventing a moralizing and paternalistic analysis that sees the poor exclusively as objects of charity and, on the other hand, deviating from a functionalist view that sees poverty predominantly as an obstacle that impedes social progress. In this sense, a common way of bringing these works together is to divide them into two major groups: the first one consisting of efforts that focus on the guarantee of *absolute criteria*,[8] from which it would be possible to conceive the levels of poverty, and the second one consisting of theories that focus on *relative criteria*, in which social and economic dynamics are at the core and in which the levels of poverty are conceived. In other words, it is possible to distinguish the approaches on poverty between those that share an absolute concept and those that share a relative concept.[9]

The group more closely related to an absolute notion of poverty has usually set standards for making a distinction between poverty and what is below the poverty line, which is commonly described as extreme poverty, misery, or indigence. A significantly important part of the debate in this field deals with the definition and explanation of a package of minimum requirements—health, education, food, housing, free time, and freedom[10]—whose content varies according to the corresponding theoretical aspect and historical time. The same is true of the theoretical

7 See Edward 2006; Reddy and Lahoti 2015.

8 One of the most common ways of developing these criteria is through different versions of theories of justice that, by focusing on the normative aspect of the theory, seek to reach a level of abstraction that is not restricted to social and political contingencies.

9 For a more detailed consideration of the historical and normative construction of the concept of poverty, see Pinzani 2017.

10 This is the path presented by Sen, when he affirms that, to move away from poverty and to help advance the general capability of a person, it is necessary to guarantee different kinds of freedom (which he also calls rights and/or opportunities). They are political freedoms; economic concessions; social opportunities; guarantees of transparency and protective security (Sen 2000, 10).

group more closely related to a relative notion of poverty. More often than not, they have also been guided by the guarantee of minimum conditions. However, in this case, they have usually considered the poor as the "x" most disadvantaged percentage of the population. In this sense, the poor are those who make up the lowest social levels, or even those who suffer from a higher level of deprivation. In summary, they are those who orbit around the minimum.

This summary attempt aims at illustrating the trend that can be seen in *poverty theories*, which, most of the time, have focused on people whose housing conditions are guided by the minimum (houses that are small and distant from the main spots in the city); whose feeding conditions are guided by the minimum (they only eat what they can and not what they want to eat; they always buy the cheapest and lowest quality products); whose health conditions are guided by the minimum (seeking dental treatment is something unusual; it is given priority to the use of lower-cost drugs rather than effective treatments; they seek medication, not long-term prevention or medical monitoring); whose education is guided by the minimum (they have little time for formal studies, focusing primarily on entering the labour market; at most, reading and writing skills and fundamental mathematical operations are given priority); whose free time is the minimum for an equally minimal recovery of the physical strength required for maximum work performance, etc.

It is noted, therefore, that a potential tension between the group that gathers theoretical efforts around a conception of poverty from an absolute approach and that which comes from a relative approach have in common a normative horizon marked by the symbiosis between poverty and the minimum, although this minimum may contain more or fewer demands.

It is noted, therefore, that a potential tension between the group that gathers theoretical efforts around a conception of poverty from an absolute approach and that which comes from a relative approach have in common a normative horizon marked by the symbiosis between poverty and the minimum, although this minimum may contain more or fewer demands. If this synthesis is correct, a movement, that is not necessarily explicit, of acceptance can be observed, which suggests that overcoming poverty can be achieved when such a minimum stage is guaranteed. In this case, the variable element would be that which is contained in the "minimum basket."

Faced with this scenario, it may not be enough to question the acceptable "minimum"; more than that, the question should be: Why would the notion of poverty be guided by this criterion (CEC 1981, 8)?[11] Why measure poverty using the "minimum" ruler? Wouldn't an

11 The report of the Council of Ministers of the Commission of the European Communities, produced in the early 1980s, provides a definition of poverty according to which the poor would be those "individuals or families whose resources are so small as to exclude them from the *minimum acceptable* way of life of

effort to critically understand this social phenomenon be able to exploit more demanding potentials? If the experience of poverty involves some kind of deprivation that can be fully fulfilled by what has been produced socially or is available in nature, then it seems reasonable to question the reasons that justify the fact that a portion of people can fully fill such deprivations, some even with surplus, while another portion (the poor) can only be guaranteed the minimum.

Rather than answering these questions definitively, my purpose here is to highlight the fact that the tendency of assimilation between poverty and the minimum has created a new trend, namely, one that pulls down the demands for overcoming poverty. This can be seen, for example, in the diagnosis made by Vivian Ugá on the measures against poverty provided by the World Bank. According to her, the minimum standard of living defended by the World Bank "must be evaluated by consumption." This means that what must be guaranteed is the ability to meet "the necessary expense to acquire a minimum standard of nutrition and other basic needs," including "an amount that allows the individual to participate in the daily life of society." Thus, Ugá continued, "*it is a matter of calculating a minimum amount for each country* (or region) (…). Those whose income is below this amount may be considered poor[12] and, therefore, unable to live minimally well" (Ugá 2004, 58; emphasis added).

Rather than answering these questions definitively, my purpose here is to highlight the fact that the tendency of assimilation between poverty and the minimum has created a new trend, namely, one that pulls down the demands for overcoming poverty.

This tendency, followed by the World Bank, to guarantee a "minimum standard" contrasts with the level of world wealth provided by recent studies, such as those shown at the beginning of this paper. In 2019, for example, according to a recent report on global wealth,[13] wealth per adult has reached a new record, exceeding by 1.2% the index accumulated in 2018. Purely for illustration, the horizontal sharing of this socially produced wealth would mean a guarantee of around $5,800 per month per adult.

---

the Member State in which they live" (CEC 1981, 8; emphasis added).

12 What Ugá suggested as an alternative to the conception of poverty adopted by the World Bank is to think of it through the prism of "social citizenship"; therefore, she explained: "Social citizenship, in its essence, has always been related to guaranteeing rights and not to compensatory programs. She entails a social pact made by society as a whole, based on the definition that the State must guarantee social protection—through social rights—to all citizens, regardless of their income, simply because they are citizens. Thus, social citizenship requires that there is a minimum of solidarity, induced by the need to resolve social conflicts, and a feeling of responsibility of society towards the life of each of its members" (Ugá 2004, 61).

13 See https://www.credit-suisse.com/about-us/en/reports-research/global-wealth-report.html.

Faced with such a scenario, it is difficult to justify the insistence on thinking of poverty in terms of deprivation of the minimum. To put the problem in these terms is, to a large extent, to crystallize a particular way of looking at a particular social phenomenon, and it may result in the replacement, at another level, of the form of core domination that was intended to be criticized. A notion of poverty that is built around the minimum always runs the risk, especially when it needs to be transformed into public policies, of coagulating the demands for overcoming it, in terms that are hardly distinguished from what Marx once called "cattle-like existence." In this case, overcoming poverty means overcoming strictly bodily needs.

Thinking of poverty in these terms can result in the same difficulties that some authors may find in certain critiques of labour. When, for example, precarious labour is seen as a social pathology without questioning its very central role, it can be concluded that it is better to have a job than not to have one, or even, best case scenario, that it is better to have a stable job than an unstable one. Such considerations do not just take into consideration the distinction between what is socially normal or abnormal,[14] but also "endorse a dominant norm [the central role of work] within an existing social order." Thereby, as Fishbach (2009) explained, "social philosophy quickly becomes prescriptive" and finally, "admitted as a norm, this form is no longer questioned, it is naturalized and inaccessible to criticism." As a result, the critique itself is prevented from showing that "the dominant form in which work is socially taken may constitute an obstacle in itself" (Fischbach 2009, 150–151).

It is in this spirit that I understand the limits of the symbiosis between poverty and the minimum. Thinking of poverty as a lack of the minimum tends to reduce the limits of the debate itself. Such theoretical procedures tend to establish a boundary that neutralizes our critical capacity to explore the deeper structures that support the object of analysis itself. Thereby, little by little, the fact that poverty is the result of a specific form of domination falls out of sight. If this social phenomenon is synonymous with the lack of access to the minimum or to basic needs, then the assumption is that guaranteeing this minimum is a sufficient condition to overcome poverty. If that is the case, then the entire critical effort turns out to be guided by the debate about what is the accep-

14 It is worth mentioning that it is not a question of considering social pathology as a kind of degeneration of a normal social state that should be restored. Although it is not possible to proceed, at this moment, to a deeper debate on this issue, it is possible to think of poverty as a social pathology given that both "refer initially to the finding of social suffering" (Fischbach 2009, 151).

table minimum. As a result, the coexistence between those who have access to all socially produced wealth and those who have access to the minimum is no longer a social phenomenon and, although almost never explicitly, becomes a natural element of the social scene. From the point of view of theory, this naturalization becomes an obstacle that prevents the debate from advancing towards the critique of the very social form that produces and legitimizes the existence of those who have access to everything and those who have access to the minimum. In short, such assimilation tends to legitimize the scenario in which the 1% has access to everything and the remaining 99% increasingly orbit around the minimum. However, if, in fact, considering poverty as a phenomenon linked to the lack of minimum compresses its critical potential, what would be a way to decompress it?

What Is Poverty? Testing One More Hypothesis

In one of the countless attempts to establish the state-of-the-art studies on poverty, Else Øyen said that comparative works generally lead to a certain path, while investigations focusing on national problems lead to another. Likewise, the adoption of parameters produced in developed countries to investigate the phenomenon of poverty in developing countries tends to produce new obstacles. The sum of these difficulties, insisted Øyen, testifies that both researchers and those responsible for developing public policies have felt that the theoretical divergences about poverty seem to "lead nowhere." This diagnosis led Øyen to conclude that most of these difficulties lie precisely in the "*lack of philosophy* behind poverty measures and their accompanying concepts and theory" (Øyen 1996, 3; emphasis added).[15]

15 In the same direction, Pinzani (2017, 348) pointed out that "philosophers in general—political philosophers in particular—continue to show no interest on the topic, perhaps because they consider it not very susceptible to a philosophical approach, or because they are convinced that its normative proposals (...) would naturally end up offering an answer also to the poverty issue." In any case, he continued, "Studies or pages dedicated specifically to poverty will be sought in vain in the work of John Rawls, Michael Walzer, Charles Taylor, Jürgen Habermas, Karl-Otto Apel and other renowned contemporary political philosophers." However, although it has not been an exhaustive object of investigation by philosophers, Ugá stated that "the treatment of contemporary social ills based on the concept of 'poverty' (…) as much as it tries to assume a purely 'technical' character, it actually implies a specific philosophy or social worldview" (Ugá 2011, 289). However, it may not be exactly the lack of a philosophical approach, but of a cri-

In view of Øyen's provocation, it is perhaps not an exaggeration to insist on the quite common theoretical movement of assimilation between poverty and the minimum, which tends to place poverty solely where life is compatible with a "cattle-like existence." In this sense, Marx insisted that the worker "feels himself to be freely active," although not when he performs tasks that contribute to the reproduction of his "animal functions," such as "eating, drinking, procreating." However, "in his human functions, he no longer feels himself to be anything but an animal." Thus, "animal becomes human and what is human becomes animal" (Marx 1988, 74). Although he recognized that eating, drinking, and procreating are also functions of both women and men, he stated that, when separated from other human activities, these functions change. What Marx helps us understand here is that being guided by the guarantee of maintaining certain elementary "functions" is nothing more than guaranteeing some "animal" features to women and men.

However, as a social phenomenon, the experience of poverty produces obstacles that the accumulation of the currently available social wealth would be able to overcome. In this sense, it is possible to state, as Franck Fischbach pointed out, that if Social Philosophy does not want to renounce its "title of Philosophy," it must follow a path that can be found in Marx's words, which, by developing his critical analysis of capitalism, would come from an approach that pointed both to the core of the capitalist social form and to its properly adversarial nature. For the author of *Das Capital*, the concepts of commodity and value refer to the core of the capitalist social form. The concept of commodity, which is both "sensible" and "super sensible," and that of labour, which is both "abstract" and "living" under the aegis of the capital, designate the tension inherent to the system (Fischbach 2009, 148–149). This is also the path from which I believe it is possible to understand poverty. As a notion that designates a social phenomenon, it must be able to function from the same spirit present in the tension witnessed by the concepts of commodity and value; that is, it shall allow both the diagnosis of a negative social experience (deprivation or lack of access) and the opening to a critical tendency capable of proposing a theoretical consideration of this social phenomenon (expectation of accessing what has been socially produced) that breaks the orbit of the minimum. Based on this theoretical framework, I think it is possible to reposition the notion of poverty, making it more complex, as it distances itself from a kind of exclusive

tical approach capable of capturing structural trends that help us point out the current limits of a particular hegemonic way of thinking about poverty.

domain of extreme deprivation experiences. Such an effort may have the virtue of making a clearer distinction between poverty and the experiences of deep deprivation, such as misery, indigence, penury, and other extreme forms of suffering that, taken together, seem to describe a social state of barbarism.[16]

I believe there are several reasons that allow this repositioning. Perhaps one of the most convincing ones is that, although it can be said that the current level of social wealth available is so high that the average life expectancy of a child born on the African continent today is greater than that of a child who lived in London in the 19th century[17] (Deaton 2017), the gap between those who access social wealth without limits and those who struggle to guarantee the minimum continues to expand. Building a critical notion of poverty requires contemplating it in view of the transformations—especially in terms of the production of goods and the development of technology—that shaped the last period. Therefore, a way of describing my broader hypothesis on poverty would be to understand that it should be measured based on the level of denial of access to what has been socially produced. The further away people are from accessing social wealth, the poorer they are. When this deniability reaches levels that directly threaten survival, such as lack of minimal access to food and housing, what we have is an animal life, or perhaps more appropriately, barbarism.

The socially produced wealth and the inequality that still persist allow us to consider a critical notion of poverty as a lack of access to what has been socially produced. More precisely, poverty is the *denial, at some level, of access*[18] *to both what has been socially produced and to what is available in nature, provided that the universalization (becoming common)*[19] *of access does not impede or weaken social living but contributes to*

More precisely, poverty is the denial, at some level, of access to both what has been socially produced and to what is available in nature, provided that the universalization (becoming common) of access does not impede or weaken social living but contributes to the maintenance or expansion of individual and collective potentials.

16 See Hickel 2017, chap. 9 "The Necessary Madness of Imagination."

17 "How lame an anticlimax!" Marx would say (Marx 1982, 806): "If the extremes of poverty have not lessened, they have increased, because the extremes of wealth have."

18 Considering the "equality of access" as a central aspect of a reflection on poverty is something that the Indian economist Srinivasan also suggested, particularly in *Poverty: Some measurements problems* (Srinivasan 1977). However, Srinivasan did not develop the notion beyond the requirement of a set of needs that he considered to be essential for overcoming poverty, namely, facilitating access to education, medical assistance, and job opportunities (ibid., 2). In this sense, he insisted on the horizon of the minimum that is embodied in guaranteeing access to these three aspects.

19 One of the essential references here is the work of Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval, entitled *The Common: An essay on the 21st century revolution*

the maintenance or expansion of individual and collective potentials.[20]

One aspect that must be pointed out here is that stating that poverty can be understood as a lack of access, to some extent, to what has been socially produced does not under any circumstances mean that fighting poverty involves encouraging consumption and the accumulation of property and goods, such as automobiles, to set an emblematic example. This is because universal access to such goods does not mean expanding social and individual possibilities. The opposite is more likely; that is, it may represent, in the medium and long term, an obstacle, as the increase in the number of cars leads to an unavoidable environmental[21] and urban liability. Hence, the need to highlight, as a way of fighting poverty, not the dimension of possession, but that of common

(2016). Describing what they understand by common, the authors claimed that it is a "formula of movements and currents of thought that intend to oppose the dominant trend of our time: that of the expansion of private appropriation to all spheres of society, culture and life. In this sense, the term 'common' designates not the re-emergence of an eternal communist idea, but the emergence of a new way to challenge capitalism, or even to consider its overcoming" (Dardot and Laval 2016, 19). However, the element that certainly most contributes to the debate on poverty is precisely the distinction shown in the work as "political proposition 2," which presents the distinction between "use rights and property." Roughly speaking, this distinction intends to show that the one who is "user of the common" is fundamentally linked to others through the "coproduction of rules that govern the common's use." This is, for Dardot and Laval, a central link, as it is not anchored in the "division of the same piece of property between two unequal subjects," but in the "co-obligation that prevails between all those who simultaneously make use of a 'non-proprietary' resource" (ibid., 926). David Harvey is also an important source as he reflected upon the spatial consequences of adopting the private rather than the common as a constitutive axis of social life (see Harvey 2013).

20 It is worth mentioning, once again, that Peter Townsend, in his work *Poverty in the United Kingdom* (1979), shared his thoughts about poverty in terms of *relative deprivation*: "Poverty can be defined objectively and applied consistently only in terms of the concept of relative deprivation" (ibid., 31; emphasis added). This definition can coexist with the one I present here. However, there is a difference that does not deny what Townsend presents, but adds an element that I believe to be central to building a critical notion of poverty: overcoming this "relative deprivation" does not lie in encouraging the possession of minimum guarantees or basic needs in accordance with the standard of some particular society, but in guaranteeing access to everything that has been socially produced.

21 Although it is not possible to develop this dimension here, it must be pointed out that this is also an increasingly central element when it comes to poverty and ways of fighting it. Particularly because "[the] *poorest* populations will be the first to suffer the disastrous consequences of global warming" (Dardot and Laval 2016, 15; emphasis added).

access to what has been socially produced. In other words, it is less about possessing and more about guaranteeing access. Thus, a critical notion of poverty may not take the economic dimension as its primary aspect, although this is certainly an unavoidable horizon when we think of poverty.

Understood in these terms, the analysis should go in the direction of expanding the social focus from where this phenomenon arises. If the subject is unable to access what has been socially produced, that incapacity cannot be understood simply as an individual limitation,[22] but as an accusation of the current social inability of giving common access to what is produced. This inaptitude not only causes suffering at the individual level, but also offends the principle of equality, which, at the normative level, is one of the guiding principles of the modern times.

If we take the level of socially available wealth as a concrete reference, on the one hand, and one of the normative structuring elements of modern societies (equality) on the other, I believe there is a sufficiently structured scenario to understand poverty in the terms proposed herein. Not to mention the fact that in every description of poverty, a "moral imperative" that "something should be done" is implied (Spicker, Leguizamón and Gordon 2007, 238). It is always worth mentioning that Horkheimer's (2002, 218) comment that "the meaning of [the critical concept] is to be sought not in the preservation of contemporary society but in its transformation" based on the experiences produced by current social dynamics.

Therefore, the attempt to see poverty in its social dimension allows us to consider its politicization through the "immanent affirmation of the politics in the social as a space of division and conflicts," but also of displacements and interrogations (Fischbach 2009, 11–12). In this sense, if poverty is lack of access to what has been socially produced, it is also a negative dimension of the good life expectancy fuelled by each individual. Thus, critically understanding the social field from which poverty is experienced in all its immediate complexity requires a "totalizing and immanent" approach by social philosophy (ibid., 147) in the sense that such a critique must assume, reflexively, its participation in the social world in which it appears and takes as object. This participation, howe-

22 As in the case, according to Ugá, of the policies proposed by the World Bank, which divides individuals into two groups: the incapable and the competitive, the poor would be the incapable individuals; therefore, the role of the policies for combating poverty formulated by the World Bank would have the purpose of transforming the incapable individual into someone capable and competitive (Ugá 2004, 60).

ver, must illuminate, in the dynamics of the current reality, a movement that can abolish its obstacles from within itself (ibid., 145). In other words, this means that the critique should not be based on abstractly isolated elements, but it should be guided by the core of the society it studies in order to at once both understand it and rely on it, thus building a critical point of view (ibid., 147). In these terms, it is not a matter of exclusively knowing whether the critique is immanent from the point of view of its normative principles, but from the point of view of the practical dynamics that irrigate these principles and the ways in which they operate. This form of conducting the critique is guided by a repositioning of the relationship between social philosophy and social sciences. Thereby, "the theoretical critique [which] expresses the critical dynamics that emerge from social experience" lies once again at the centre of philosophy, as it was thought by Horkheimer in the 1930s.[23]

Conclusions

As I have tried to demonstrate here, thinking of poverty as something that orbits around the minimum is part of a trend in the theoretical field that deals with this social phenomenon. However, one of the consequences of this symbiosis, although sometimes well intentioned, is that it tends to cover up a movement of indirect legitimation of inequality and, consequently, poverty. The lack of access to any of the socially produced assets (home, food, health, education, etc.) exposes different dimensions of poverty, but their possession does not necessarily mean poverty has been overcome. Meeting basic needs or minimum conditions, which disregards the level of socially produced wealth, is not enough to overcome poverty. In most cases, the movement symbolized by the explicit effort to guarantee the minimum for many, often functions as an implicit justification that legitimizes the possession of the maximum for a few. The framework presented by Piketty and the research on global wealth mentioned at the beginning of this paper offer very convincing subsidies to this movement. Under the argument of turning to the understanding of the dynamics included in the deepest deprivation experience, that is, of thinking of poverty from the perspective of the minimum, there is a risk of building analyses that reduce its normative element to the expectations of overcoming barbarism instead of finding more promising emancipatory potentials.

23 See Dufour, Fischbach and Renault 2012.

One may still raise the question as to whether a conception of poverty such as the one advocated here could be caught in the common trap of confusing poverty with inequality. Regarding such objections, we would have to recall what Thomas Piketty pointed to as a trend in the last forty years. According to what he showed in *Capital and ideology*, wealth has been accumulated in the hands of an increasingly restricted group, and the traditional middle classes have been moving away from the top, getting closer and closer to the bottom of the social pyramid. He has shown, therefore, a tendency towards hyper concentration in the hands of a few and increasing deprivation for most. In view of this scenario, what is the critical capacity of a poverty concept that is normatively guided by the minimum? The criteria of humanity, dignity, satisfaction of basic needs are some of the candidates when it comes to finding ways of fighting poverty. It is important to recognize the value of these theoretical efforts as they help to highlight those who suffer most from the lack of access to what has been socially produced; that is, the poorest. However, since the poor are not the only ones who experience the lack of minimum, these theories tend to be unable to deal with reality, such as that which marks early 21st century societies, which brings together, at the same time, two trends: global growth and the concentration of wealth. In a reality where wealth records have been reached year after year, it does not seem reasonable to see poverty as a place where the life experience of the poor limits them to what Marx once called "beast[s] reduced to the strictest bodily needs."

Obviously, although I did not have time to properly address this matter, this is far from an open defence of unlimited growth and expansion of wealth. The whole recent debate on climate emergency shows where such orientations can take us. I hereby reiterate that poverty is the lack of access to what is socially available, as long as that access does not become an obstacle. When freedom of access to wealth becomes a social obstacle, it is no longer freedom. Limitless economic growth certainly does not meet this requirement, which, after all, is more of a limit placed by nature than a normative requirement as such. Thus, the notion of poverty proposed here maintains the distinction between poverty and inequality, as it recognizes that there are those who do and those who do not have access to everything that has been socially produced. Among the latter, we can find different levels, but they are all poor because they are denied access, albeit in different measures, to what is socially available. There is, therefore, inequality between those who have full access to what has been socially produced and those who do not. Among the latter, the poor, inequality lies in the different levels of inaccessibility.

When traditional poverty theories have thought of this social phenomenon, primarily based on the metric of the minimum, they have tended to produce some critical deficits or, quoting Horkheimer, they are no longer "a force within it to stimulate change." Such deficits can be illustrated by the result, in practical terms (such as public policies), of the efforts focused exclusively on those who live close to absolute deprivation. If poverty is understood as revolving around the lack of access to the minimum, then we can only expect that the policies derived from this concept would be limited to fighting barbarism (hunger and malnutrition, for example). When the normative principle crystallizes around the minimum, this tends to contribute to a relative reduction in the scope of the social demands turned into public policies.

If poverty is understood as revolving around the lack of access to the minimum, then we can only expect that the policies derived from this concept would be limited to fighting barbarism (hunger and malnutrition, for example). When the normative principle crystallizes around the minimum, this tends to contribute to a relative reduction in the scope of the social demands turned into public policies.

Therefore, as suggested by Horkheimer, the exposure of social contradictions should also be a factor that stimulates social and political transformations. Contemplating poverty from the critique of a theoretical assimilation tendency associated with the minimum, without disregarding it as a multidimensional social phenomenon, can certainly be a step in that direction.

References

CEC-Commission of the European Communities. 1981. *Final Report from the Commission to the Council on the First Programme of Pilot Schemes and Studies to Combat Poverty*. Brussels.

Crédit Suisse. 2020. *Global Wealth Report 2019*. Zurich: Switzerland.

Coupland, Douglas. 1994. *Geração X: Contos para uma Cultura Acelerada*. Lisboa: Teorema.

Dardot, Pierre, and Christian Laval. 2016. *Comum: Ensaio sobre a revolução no século XXI.* Translated by Mariana Echalar. São Paulo: Boitempo.

———. 2013. *The New Way of the World: On Neoliberal Society*. Translated by Gregory Elliott. New York: Verso.

Deaton, Angus. 2017. *A grande saída: saúde, riqueza e as origens da desigualdade*. Translated by Marcelo Levy. Rio de Janeiro: Intrínseca.

Douglass, Bruce, ed. 1990. *Liberalism and the Good*. New York: Routledge.

———. 1998. "Capacidades humanas y justicia social: Una defensa del esencialismo aristotélico." In *Necesitar, desear, vivir. Sobre necesidades, desarrollo humano, crecimiento económico y sustentabilidad*, edited by

Jorge Riechman. Madrid: Los Libros de la Catarata.
———. 2000. *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Dufour, Éric, Franck Fischbach, and Emmanuel Renault. 2012. *Histoires et définitions de la philosophie sociale*. Grenoble: Recherches sur la philosophie et le langage.
Edward, Peter. 2006. „The Ethical Poverty Line: A Moral Quantification of Absolute Poverty." *Third World Quarterly* 27(2): 377–393. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436590500432739.
Fischbach, Franck. 2009. *Manifeste pour une philosophie sociale*. Paris: Éditions La Découverte.
Geremek, Bronisław. 1997. *Poverty: A History*. Translated by Agnieszka Kołakowska. Oxford: Blackwell.
Hagenaars, Aldi, and Bernard van Praag. 1985. "A Synthesis of Poverty Line Definitions." *Review of Income and Wealth* 31(2): 139–154. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4991.1985.tb00504.x.
Harvey, David. 2013. "A liberdade da cidade." In *Cidades rebeldes: passe livre e as manifestações que tomaram as ruas do Brasil,* edited by Carlos Vainer. São Paulo: Boitempo.
Hickel, Jason. 2017. *The Divide: A Brief Guide to Global Inequality and Its Solutions*. New York: W.W. Norton.
Horkheimer, Max. 1993. "The Present Situation of Social Philosophy and the Tasks of an Institute for Social Research." In *Between Philosophy and Social Science: Selected Early Writings Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought*. Translated by G. Frederick Hunter, Matthew S. Kramer and John Torpey. London: MIT Press.
———. 2002. "Traditional and Critical Theory." In *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*. Translated by Matthew J. O'Connell and others. New York: Continuum Publishing Corporation.
Jesus, Carolina Maria. 2015. *Child of the Dark: The Diary of Carolina Maria de Jesus*. Translated by David St. Clair. London: Penguin.
Kerstenetzky, Celia Lessa. 2000. "Desigualdade e pobreza: lições de Sen." *Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais* 15(42): 113–122.
Lipton, Michael. 1988. *The Poor and the Poorest: Some Interim Findings*. Washington: World Bank.
Marx, Karl. 1982. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*. Volume One. Translated by Ben Fowkes. New York: Penguin Books.
———. 1988. *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. Translated by Martin Milligan. New York: Prometheus Books.
Novak, Mojca. 1996. "Concepts of Poverty." In *Poverty: A Global Review. Handbook on International Poverty Research*, edited by Else Øyen,

S.M. Miller and Syed Abdus Samad. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.

Nussbaum, Martha. 1990. "Aristotelian Social Democracy." In *Liberalism and the Good*, edited by Bruce Douglass and Gerald Mara. London: Routledge.

Øyen, Else. 1996. "Poverty Research Rethought." In *Poverty: A Global Review. Handbook on International Poverty Research*, edited by Else Øyen, S.M. Miller and Syed Abdus Samad. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.

Paugam, Serge. 2013. *Les formes élémentaires de la pauvreté*. Paris: PUF.

Piketty, Thomas. 2020. *Capital and Ideology*. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer. London: Cambridge.

Pinzani, Alessandro. 2017. "Vai trabalhar, vagabundo: retórica anti-pobre e aspectos normativos de uma teoria da pobreza." In *Sob os olhos da crítica: reflexões sobre democracia, capitalismo e movimentos sociais*, edited by Hélio Alexandre Silva. Macapá: Unifap.

Pogge, Thomas. 2002. *World Poverty and Human Rights: Cosmopolitan Responsibilities and Reforms*. Polity Press: Cambridge.

———. 2006. "Reconhecidos e violados pela lei internacional: os direitos humanos dos pobres do mundo." *Ethic@: An International Journal for Moral Philosophy* 5(1): 33–65.

Reddy, Sanjay G., and Rahul Lahoti. 2015. "$1.90 per day: What does it say?" https://reddytoread.files.wordpress.com/2015/10/wbpovblogoct6final1.pdf.

Rego, Walquiria Leão, and Alessandro Pinzani. 2013. *Vozes do Bolsa Família*. São Paulo: São Paulo State University Press.

Sen, Amartya. 2000. *Development as Freedom*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Silva, Helio Alexandre. 2020. "'Capital et ideólogie' de Thomas Piketty: ainda é mais fácil pensar no fim do mundo que no fim do capitalismo?" *Ethic@: An International Journal for Moral Philosophy* 19(2): 464–480.

Spicker, Paul, Sonia Alvarez Leguizamon, and David Gordon. 2007. *The International Glossary on Poverty*. London: Zed Books.

Srinivasan, Thirukodikaval Nilakanta. 1977. *Poverty: Some Measurements Problems*. New Delhi: World Bank.

Townsend, Peter. 1970. *The Concept of Poverty: Working Papers on Methods of Investigation and Life-Styles of the Poor in Different Countries*. London: Heinemann.

———. 1979. *Poverty in the United Kingdom: A Survey of Household Resources and Standards of Living*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

———. 1987. "Deprivation." *Journal of Social Policy* 16(2): 125–146. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279400020341.
Ugá, Vivian Domíngues. 2004. "A categoria pobreza nas formulações de política social do Banco mundial." *Revista de Sociologia e Política* 23(2): 55–62.
———. 2011. *A questão social como pobreza: crítica à conceituação neoliberal*. Curitiba: Appris.
World Bank. 1980. *World Development Report*. Washington: World Bank.

HÉLIO ALEXANDRE SILVA, Ph.D. – is a professor of Ethics at the School of Human and Social Sciences of the São Paulo State University (Unesp). He is also Professor of Social and Political Philosophy at the Postgraduate Program in Philosophy at the School of Philosophy and Sciences of Unesp. He is the author of *As paixões humanas em Thomas Hobbes: entre a ciência e a moral, o medo e a esperança* (2009) and *Sob os olhos da crítica: reflexões sobre democracia, capitalismo e movimentos sociais* (2017). He is also the author of articles and book chapters in Brazil, France and Argentina. His current research is concerned with Social Philosophy, especially on the subject of poverty and inequality.

Address:
São Paulo State University
School of Human and Social Sciences
900 Eufrásia Monteiro Petraglia Avenue
Franca, SP, 14409-160, Brazil
+55 (16) 3706-8700
email: helio.alexandre@unesp.br

Citation:
Silva, Hélio Alexandre. 2021. "A Critique of Poverty: Exploring the Underground of Social Philosophy." *Praktyka Teoretyczna* 42(4): 139–165.
DOI: 10.14746/prt2021.4.6

Autor: Hélio Alexandre Silva
Tytuł: Krytyka ubóstwa: Eksploracja podziemi filozofii społecznej
Abstrakt: Głównym tematem tego artykułu jest ubóstwo, w szczególności zaś jego krytyka, a nie tylko opis. Nie będzie przesadą stwierdzenie, że jedną z powszechnych podstaw teorii ubóstwa jest definiowanie biednych jako tych, którzy systematycznie doświadczają swojego życia w niedostatku, a mianowicie posiadają określone minimum, jeśli chodzi o potrzeby takie, jak mieszkanie, żywność, zdrowie, edukacja, czas wolny itp. Istnieje zatem teoretyczna i społecznie akceptowana orientacja sprzyjająca wytwarzaniu głębokiego pokrewieństwa między ubóstwem a minimum. Na opartym na takim rozumowaniu horyzoncie pojawia się rodzaj niewyraźnej akceptacji, że przezwyciężenie ubóstwa można osiągnąć poprzez przyznanie ubogim czegoś ponad minimum, niezależnie od tego, jak elementarne może być to „coś ekstra". Jeśli więc doświadczenie ubóstwa wiąże się z jakimś rodzajem braku lub niedostatku i jeśli ten warunek może być spełniony przez coś, co zostało już społecznie wytworzone, to co uzasadniałoby fakt, że jedni ludzie są w stanie go spełnić, a inni (ubodzy) mogą zapewnić sobie tylko absolutne minimum? W świetle tego być może lepiej

nie kwestionować dopuszczalnego „minimum", ale raczej pytać: dlaczego pojęcie ubóstwa miałoby kierować się tym normatywnym kryterium? Dlatego sposobem na opisanie mojej szerszej hipotezy dotyczącej ubóstwa byłoby zrozumienie, że należy je mierzyć na podstawie poziomu odmowy dostępu do tego, co zostało społecznie wytworzone. Im dalej od dostępu do bogactwa społecznego, tym biedniejsi są ludzie. Wreszcie, ta tendencja do asymilacji ubóstwa i minimum wywołuje depresyjny wpływ na żądania zmiany społecznej.
Słowa kluczowe: ubóstwo, minimum, filozofia społeczna

JEREMIAH MORELOCK (ORCID: 0000-0002-6506-4940)
YONATHAN LISTIK (ORCID: 0000-0002-4684-9611)
MILI KALIA

Why is Life Worth Saving? Neoliberalism, COVID-19, and Boris Johnson's Public Statements

We apply Brown's Foucauldian framework on neoliberalism to the COVID-19 crisis in the UK, and use qualitative content analysis to interpret the moral logics within 32 of Boris Johnson's public statements on COVID-19. We present the content analysis in six parts. For the first four parts, we apply four elements of Brown's framework: economization, governance, responsibilization, and sacrifice. Next, we explain two other moral logics— utilitarian and sympathetic. Johnson's condensation of logics contains ideological connotations: neoliberal rationality serves the mass of people and the purpose of sympathy. Within Brown's conceptual framework, the problem is not just the domination of the market, but the logic that grants the market legitimation as a human-centered logic. The adjustment we suggest is in recognizing the human-centered aspect as not a veneer for neoliberalism, but rather as a collection of disparate moral logics, combined with them smoothly on the surface, but messily underneath.

Keywords: neoliberalism, morality, COVID-19, Boris Johnson

> For millennia, man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for a political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question.
> (Foucault 1978, 143)

Introduction: Pandemic and Neoliberalism at Large

The COVID-19 crisis presents us with new global challenges. Societies are destabilized in profound and unexpected ways. People inside and outside the academy struggle to make sense of what is happening and its significance. Pre-pandemic social theories take on new connotations and require re-examination. From choosing to wear a mask and resolving on a personal regime of social distancing, to determining who gets a ventilator, to instituting lockdown and opening the economy, decisions that people consistently face are not just technical. They have an intrinsic, and sometimes very explicit, moral significance.

While COVID-19 throws us into a radically different social configuration, it simultaneously maintains already established problematic patterns of neoliberal capitalism.

While COVID-19 throws us into a radically different social configuration, it simultaneously maintains already established problematic patterns of neoliberal capitalism. On the one hand, lockdowns and social distancing limit our ability to circulate, consume and interact in close proximity. Such normative decisions and guidelines for dealing with the crisis seem to challenge or limit the hegemonic scope of neoliberal rationality. On the other hand, neoliberalism not only remains, but it is commonly framed as exemplifying a central rationality for responding to new challenges, and so its scope extends further.

In this article, we employ two linked strategies to assess this configuration: the articulation of a theoretical framework and its application in the form of qualitative content analysis. First, we explain our framework, and then apply it to empirical examples. In the first section, we explicate our theoretical framework for understanding the complex moral aspects of the discussion surrounding COVID-19. We suggest Wendy Brown's (2015; 2016) Foucauldian writings on neoliberalism, the state and economization have become strikingly relevant at this juncture. Brown's theory of neoliberalism is read here as critiquing a misleading appearance of harmonic normative duality (instrumental and human-centered) implicit in neoliberal rationality—she highlights immanent contradictory tensions within that rationality. Here, we will emphasize the latter, and focus in on the murky and unresolved combination of neoliberal values with two disparate moral logics, which we denote as utilitarian and sympathetic.

Wendy Brown roots her account of neoliberalism in Foucault's theory of neoliberalism as he specifically articulates it in *The Birth of Biopolitics*, so our account of neoliberalism sticks to this Foucauldian theory as well. After giving a brief historical introduction of neoliberalism (based on Foucault's description) and the moral logics of utilitarianism and sympathy, we explain our methodology for qualitative content analysis. In the second section, we apply this theoretical framework to the COVID-19 crisis in the UK. We show how Prime Minister Boris Johnson's statements surrounding COVID-19 often display a complex of disparate moral logics. They do not, for instance, fit a simple dichotomy of either prioritizing people or the economy. The UK government has both allowed private companies to handle a significant part of its response (e.g., staffing, providing COVID-19 secure work environments, travel to work, etc.), and implemented policies that extend state intervention into previously market-dominated and private spheres (leisure, care-work, etc.). Brown's theory of neoliberalism is central to our framework, but we also stretch her focus into two dissonant moral logics present within the case at hand. We present the content analysis in six parts. In the first four parts, we explain and apply four elements of Brown's theory: economization, governance, responsibilization, and sacrifice. Next, we explain the other two moral logics—utilitarianism and sympathy. We illustrate the themes from Brown's theory as well as utilitarian and sympathetic moral logics, in reference to quoted examples from our content analysis of 32 public announcements from Boris Johnson concerning COVID-19.

Theoretical Background

1. Foucault and Brown on Neoliberalism

In Foucault's (2008) framing in *The Birth of Biopolitics*, classical liberalism presupposes a natural condition that must be safeguarded against external intervention to allow the flourishing of life. This is the first sign of a biopolitical narrative. One could portray liberalism as a form of immunological administration of life—akin to a vaccination aimed to limit or weaken government/state intervention in everyday life, allowing the individual to optimally self-develop. In liberal ideals, governments should supply the bare minimum to ensure individuals can survive. Additionally, individuals are treated as autonomous and responsible agents. In other words, the political sphere prevents and is prevented from dominating the economy. Liberalism evolved into neoliberalism,

and it is in the American variety that Foucault sees the full expression of his conception of neoliberalism. The United States is not the exclusive location of the dynamics Foucault identifies in the American model, however, as this logic can be extended in other regions, as the British case demonstrates.

Neoliberalism dominates by folding the larger society into its logic, namely "the calculation—which, moreover, may be unreasonable, blind, or inadequate—through which one or more individuals decided to allot given scarce resources to this end rather than another" (Foucault 2008, 223). Notions such as free exchange, consensual interactions and agreements come to dominate the public sphere informed by this reasoning. This does not mean that all social relations are commercial, rather it means that the economy standardizes social interactions. For example, neoliberal subjects may often say that something is 'not marketable,' but they rarely ask why it would be in the first place. Under neoliberalism people become *homo œconomicus*, and orient themselves around the amassing of human capital, i.e., skills, assets, and connections that enhance their own 'marketability.'

Additionally, for Foucault (2008), liberalism involves the birth of a specific articulation of subjectivity—the individual agent becomes the central figure, politics merely concerned with guaranteeing individuals' autonomy. Under neoliberalism, subjects are 'invested' in themselves according to economic reasoning. In their pursuit of 'human capital' (ibid., chap. 9), subjects are expected to 'freely' harmonize their lives with neoliberal society. Foucault calls this mentality 'governmentality.' It is marked by the voluntary investment of the subject with society, and the concomitant process whereby government is colonized by economizing logic, 'governance.' Frictions and even distinctions dissolve between individual will, government policy, and workings of the economy. This structure does not refer to the conclusion one reaches after reflecting on politics, instead, the rationality under which the conclusion makes sense or even becomes inevitable. Business and government converge, and subjects need not be coerced to subjugate themselves—business, government, and subjectivity all run by the same rationality. As powerful as his theory of neoliberalism is, Foucault does not *concretely* engage with the negative ramifications of neoliberal rationality extending throughout society, nor does he explicitly comment on the dangers implicit in the liberal configuration.

This is taken up more by Wendy Brown (2015; 2016); hence, she is the main theoretical anchor here. She unfolds how this articulation serves specific economic interests by naturalizing the logic of capitalism.

Brown constructs the specific ramifications of Foucault's perception of the neoliberal subject. Where Foucault points to individualization, Brown points out that this new entity is fashioned as a private enterprise: "the self *is* an individual firm" (Brown 2016, 3). Brown explores the trap within this conception of self-made autonomy where, instead of the promised freedom, one is, in the long run, subjugated without any protection from a rigged and unfair game.

Brown (2015; 2016) presents a development to Foucault's original position in three ways. First, she adapts his discussion of 'biopolitical' logic to neoliberalism in a more concrete sense, demonstrating how the governing of life, implicit in neoliberal rationality, is not just metaphorical or conceptual—it has implications for politics and quality of life, such as exasperating poverty and wealth disparity. Neoliberalism directly affects the conditions of life and death. Brown strengthens the connection between biopolitics and neoliberalism, so there is no ambiguity regarding how neoliberalism is a politics of life and of letting die. With this clearer demarcation, her theory demonstrates a greater relevance for our purpose of assessing the COVID-19 crisis.

Second, Brown substantially explores the weakening of political life under neoliberalism. According to Brown, the impossibility of disputing neoliberal capitalism given its almost tautological engendering of economics as the underlying social principle, represents the impossibility of politics proper. This consensus is based on what Foucault described as limiting government interference on behalf of society. All interferences neutralized, social relations appear to result from free agreements between individuals. Thus, sociality is engendered as the result of tacit and common agreement. For Brown, this new dynamic represents an erasure of politics as a relevant framework of life. Politics is understood as the possibility of influencing common culture, not just as a dispute between technics of public administration. The neoliberal economy might seem open to any possibility under the guise of its 'marketplace of ideas,' but it cannot offer an idea that is not marketable. In other words, it never offers an escape from the market structure.

Third, although Brown most frequently cites Foucault's theory of neoliberalism as her primary influence, some of her ideas are dialectical. Foucault was not a dialectician (Mahon 1992; Cook 2018). Hence, Brown's description reaches outside of her Foucauldian influence. Particularly notable for us, Brown's ideas imply a dialectic of neoliberal rationality generating irrationality. While one could argue that Foucault's theory is suggestive of this and other dialectics (Grant 2010), the rationality/irrationality dialectic is treated explicitly by the early Frank-

furt School, particularly *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002). For Horkheimer and Adorno, Enlightenment rationality arose out of mythology, always contains mythological elements, and leads back to myth through several pathways. In the political sphere, this translates into the claim that liberal democracy tends to devolve into fascism. In terms of thought, it means that the instrumental rationality of late capitalism is both predicated on irrationality, and generative of irrationality. Like Foucault, the nexus where business and the state bleed into one another is central to Brown's description of neoliberalism. Yet she adds an emphasis on a neutralizing technical discourse that mystifies the dominating qualities of the integration between business and the state. For her, the crux of the rationality/irrationality dialectic is located in the nature of Foucauldian 'governance,' being a systemically integrated logic of control relying on 'governmentality,' i.e., the active engagement of the governed in their subjugation.

This is fundamental to the argument constructed here since it points at the presence of what will be denoted as 'governance speak,' where 'guidelines' replace law, 'facilitation' replaces regulation, 'standards' and 'codes of conduct' (disseminated by a range of agencies and institutions) replace overt policing and other forms of state coercion in the discussion over COVID-19. These replacements vanquish vocabulary of power, and hence power's visibility, from the lives and venues that governance organizes (Brown 2016, 5). Moreover, we notice that this governance speak exhibits instrumental rationality—instead of moral judgment, we have practical truth. Liquidated of any ostensible values other than neutral/technical ones that are thus incontestable, governance speak articulates a reality that ostensibly has nothing to do with power in the sense of direct oppression, but remains permeated by its trace. Governance is outside the orbit of control by persons, and in nobody's specialized interest—it comes from nowhere. It simply and incontrovertibly *is*. We would like here to highlight that this *is*-ness gives it an immense power, in that being naturalized and attached to nobody specific as its creator, it is identified with reality. It becomes omniscient, usurping the unassailable place of authority that God's will or a natural law—there is no ostensible force, entity, system, etc. There is only reality, and it is up to the individual to adapt.

Liquidated of any ostensible values other than neutral/technical ones that are thus incontestable, governance speak articulates a reality that ostensibly has nothing to do with power in the sense of direct oppression, but remains permeated by its trace.

2. A Brief History of Neoliberalism, Utilitarianism, and Sympathy

In *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Foucault (2008) typifies the main characteristic of classical liberalism as the administration of administration: "It is the idea of society which permits the development of a technology of

government based on the principle that it is already in itself »too much«, »excessive«—or at least that it is added as a supplement whose necessity and usefulness can and must be questioned" (Foucault 2008, 319). He emphasizes the connection even in classical liberalism between conceptions of law and economy, noting that figures such as Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham were concerned with both areas. For us, it is also significant that they were both concerned with morality. In Bentham's utilitarianism (Mill and Bentham 1987), moral action is that which produces the greatest pleasure to the greatest number of people. Adam Smith's (1791) famous economic metaphor of an 'invisible hand' could be argued to fit well enough with Jeremy Bentham's utilitarianism—if everyone pursues their own self-interest, then economic benefits will extend throughout the population. The combined logic of Smith's economics and Bentham's utilitarianism is that self-interested acts in the economic sphere are moral acts, because they will benefit the larger population. Effectively, acting in self-interest is the best way to serve the collective. Yet Smith was not a utilitarian (Hanley 2009; Witztum and Young 2013). 'Moral sentiments' for him were rooted in the experience of 'sympathy,' rather than in utilitarian calculation (Smith [1822] 2010). This is a view of morality as deriving intuitively *from the individual*, albeit in intrinsic relation to society. Smith's notion of the deep connection between morality and sympathy points toward the association of morality with a caring impulse rather than obeyed edict as we will develop later in our assessment of the case of Boris Johnson's COVID-19 statements.

In this manner, we will demonstrate how neoliberal rationality contains its own moral dimension, despite its participation in stripping moral qualities from capitalist society. In a situation like the COVID-19 pandemic, many decisions must be made, based on different calculations, on all levels of society. And despite the garb of instrumentality, the calculations they consult are rooted in moral valuations. For example, consider the exclusion of infected seniors from intensive care due to their lower chances of survival and a scarcity of hospital beds. The argument in favor of this, based on supplies and probabilities, derives from a deeper utilitarian moral schema about ensuring the greatest good for the greatest number. This utilitarian calculation can easily become a kind of inhumane biopolitics, when by definition, the actual individual human experience of suffering and loss is not factored into the calculus unless consolidated and quantified with the suffering of others. The implicit commitment to utilitarian morality demands that, in public health crisis, there will be many situations where the calculus dictates that a life

The implicit commitment to utilitarian morality demands that, in public health crisis, there will be many situations where the calculus dictates that a life is not worth saving.

is not worth saving.

Yet, as we will show, even in a neoliberal politician's statements, sympathy tends to be invoked—just associated in an unarticulated fashion with utilitarianism and neoliberalism, giving the illusion of a simple, coherent formula when, in actuality, we will argue that multiple logics operate simultaneously within the same texts. We suggest that the texts should be understood to be morally ambivalent and at times self-contradictory.

Methodology

In this article, we use qualitative content analysis to interrogate Boris Johnson's public statements from March 9 through December 2, 2020. Our approach shares some commonalities with sociologist Brian Lowe's theory of "moral vocabularies" as well as the approaches to critical discourse analysis (CDA) outlined by Fairclough, and Reisigl and Wodak. We should not overstate these comparisons, as our approach is not rooted in them; there are some points of agreement between our qualitative content analysis approach, and the referenced approaches, and some similar preoccupations with them, but we are not following a moral vocabularies approach or CDA. A rigorous elaboration of the differences in our approach here as compared with the approaches of Lowe, Fairclough, Reisigl and Wodak is beyond scope of this article, but we nevertheless wish to contextualize our approach by briefly juxtaposing it with these other frameworks, highlighting the specific/punctual additions such frameworks can provide to our overarching assessment. We will briefly explain some points of concord with those approaches, to help illustrate some dimensions and inflections of our qualitative content analysis.

Lowe defines a moral vocabulary as "a form or ethos of moral reasoning which includes particular symbols, signs, code words, forms of argumentation and other moral resources" (Lowe 2006, 2010). His approach is directed toward identifying the "moral resources" that moralising claimsmakers utilize when operating within a given vocabulary, and in understanding the role of moral vocabularies in their wider social contexts. Essentially, Lowe's approach is geared toward unpacking the 'toolkits' of moral claimsmakers and showing how such toolkits are employed. We value the framework created by the concept of 'moral vocabulary,' but Lowe's analyses focus on the arguments and rhetoric that come from social groups explicitly promoting their particular posi-

tions, movements, campaigns, etc. We are interested more in identifying the implicit moral reasoning that may be uncovered within statements that cannot so easily be assigned to an explicit position or agenda. In other words, instead of investigating the language employed by neoliberals to argue for deregulation, for example, we would be more interested in investigating the genre(s) of language employed about deregulation by persons when they are *not* ostensibly arguing from a definite stance on the economy, neoliberal or otherwise. By doing this, we might uncover neoliberal presuppositions in their language, or unwitting employment of language that Lowe might identify as belonging to the 'toolkits' of neoliberals. We want to dig down to a more implicit level of meaning, which is addressed more in critical approaches to discourse analysis.

Fairclough's CDA (critical discourse analysis) is strongly influenced by the Foucauldian concept of discourse (Foucault 1972; Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982; Gutting 1989). Fairclough explains: "The analysis of discourse for Foucault is (…) a matter of discerning the rules which 'govern' bodies of texts and utterances" (Fairclough 2003, 124). Fairclough's particular take on discourses is that they are different perspectives, shaped by people's identities and social relationships. They embody representations of the world, and possibilities and hopes for how the world could be changed. In this sense, Fairclough claims that there are political and moral dimensions of discourses. He also notes that discourses exist in various relationships; "they may complement one another, compete with one another, one can dominate others, and so forth" (ibid., 124). We are not interested in the subject positions and social inequalities implicated by the language of the text. Instead, we look to pull apart the complex of connotated inner moral logics that may contradict one another, despite the simpler appearance of meaning on the surface of statements, for instance on the level of denotation. In this sense—uncovering contradictory or dissonant logics beneath appearance—our method overlaps with what Reisigl and Wodak have called "text or discourse immanent critique," which is one of three tiers in the "discourse-historical approach" (Reisigl and Wodak 2016; Forchtner 2011). In these ways—taking influence from Foucault's concept of discourse and from immanent critique—our approach overlaps broadly with aspects of some approaches to CDA.

Yet 'discourse analysis' proper refers to specific traditions of linguistic analysis that we do not practice here. To avoid confusion over this issue, we avoid the use of the term 'discourse' in our own analysis, and instead employ the broader term 'logic.' In the sociology of organizations, a par-

ticular use of the concept of 'logics' is found in the notion of 'institutional logics,' where normatively-binding ways of reasoning are rooted in specific social institutions such as the family, the economy, the state, etc. (Friedland and Alford 1991; Thornton and Ocasio 1999; 2008). Scholars have also specifically applied this concept in studying 'competing institutional logics' within organizational settings (Reay and Hinings 2009; Pache and Santos 2013). Here again, our focus overlaps but does not fall within the purview. We are not focused on how 'competing' logics interface within particular organizations so much as how they are buried within a particular individual's language; and we are not concerned with logics as indicative of specific social institutions so much as with the internal nature of the logics themselves. As discussed earlier, neoliberal subjectivity, in Foucault's sense, extends well beyond any particular institution in the contemporary period. Our treatment of utilitarianism and sympathy is similarly focused purely on the nature of reasoning, not claiming it as intrinsically derived from any particular social institution.

Considering the above, we are interested in the dimension of taken-for-granted moral logics that operate as background assumptions to the text (the *ought*), and are occasionally connotated by choices of phrase. Within this dimension, multiple moral logics in various relations can be implicit within the same texts. Focusing on the issue of normativity, we are interested in implied moral logics. In this sense, we aim to uncover the copresence of divergent moral logics within the text; and how these logics, in relation to one another, contain divergent moral presuppositions that are implicated in the text, whether or not they are stated directly.

Several recent scholars have critically analyzed Johnson's language. Their findings have included implicit sexism (Sunderland 2020) and manipulation in his language on Brexit (Kadhim and Jawad 2020). It has been argued that Johnson frequently employs metaphorical language specifically animated by moral implications (Charteris-Black 2019). Others have conducted discourse analysis of a variety of sources and texts dealing with COVID-19, including from Twitter (Wicke and Bolognesi 2020), popular media (Mohammed et al. 2021), and the speeches of Chinese President Xi Jinping (Jinshuang and Rong 2020). Other recent studies investigate moral motivations and understandings of various populations dealing with COVID-19 (Kim and Chung 2021; Qian and Yahara 2020). We intend for this article to contribute to these bodies of work; the one collection of studies concerning the implicit logics—moral and otherwise—in Boris Johnson's language, and the

other collection concerning the implicit language—moral and otherwis—in discussions surrounding COVID-19. We bring these two areas of focus together in this article.

Application: COVID-19 and Boris Johnson's Moral Logics

Below, we present the outcome of our qualitative content analysis of Boris Johnson's moral logics in his public statements on COVID-19 spoken at the Prime Minister's Office or the House of Commons from March 9th through December 2nd, 2020, retrieved from websites: gov.uk, wired-gov.com, and rev.com. Our analysis is focused on the presence of four families of cues in the texts that we argue signify respectively three different normatively-weighted logics: neoliberal, utilitarian, and sympathetic.

We begin with the *neoliberal logic*, which concerns the moralizing aspects and stylistics pointed out in Brown's analysis. In other words, we trace the employment of elements such as: economistic language, 'governance speak,' citizens identified as individuals responsible for the well-being of society, and the encouragement of sacrifice in service of this purpose. This neoliberal logic, as mentioned above, is taken from Brown's analysis and her categories. We structure the presentation sequentially around Brown's concepts (economization, governance, responsibilization, and sacrifice). For each concept, we combine a brief theoretical explanation with examples taken from Johnson's COVID-19 statements. We then proceed to the two human-centered moral logics: utilitarianism and sympathy.

1. Economization

The "study of economization involves investigating the processes through which activities, behaviors and spheres/fields are established as being economic (whether or not there is consensus about the content of such qualifications)" (Çalışkan and Callon 2009, 370). Building on the argument of Çalışkan and Callon, Brown unpacks a specific mode of economization that underwrites and informs austerity politics. Çalışkan and Callon defend a theoretical shift away from studying the economy as a pre-existing, distinct, social sphere of activity to something that evolves. Overall, economization incessantly focuses on contextualized processes and practices of disembedding and re-embedding, material, and non-material assemblages. Brown's analysis of austerity politics lays bare complexities and contradictions of neoliberal econo-

mization as a permutation in rationality that corrupt our understanding of wellbeing.

For Brown, neoliberal economization does not allow the utilitarian notion that individuals make decisions around their pleasure or pain. Instead, the neoliberal subject is produced within discursive space between state and capitalist processes through the *seemingly* coherent logic of human capital which produces dis-embedded (vs. free), isolated (vs. autonomous), governable (vs. politically engaged) and dispensable (vs. valuable) subjects. Brown notes, "conversion of the worker, the consumer, the activist citizen—all entities capable of linking together into a social force—into isolated bits of self-investing human capital both makes them more governable and integrates them into a project: economic growth, to which they may potentially be sacrificed." (Brown 2016, 8).

The naturalization of economic processes can be seen in the general way 'the economy' is discussed in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. Questions concerning what will happen to this or that industry are posed in a manner similar to weather patterns where downturns are predicted that will throw millions of people out of work. The pure neoliberal response to the problem of unemployment and recession is that the economy must be 'reopened' to allow all the gears to keep turning, leaving to society the imperative to absorb whatever patterns result from such operations. Like the 'invisible hand' of the market, the disease is best allowed freedom of movement. Letting COVID-19 run its course will result in 'herd immunity.'

As an expression of 'formal rationality,' neoliberalism is ostensibly amoral. Yet, in neoliberal society, heeding the incontrovertible laws of reality with an eye toward personal 'success' is provided a moral color. Without other qualifiers, means-ends rationality implies a bias toward obeying the laws of the market and making wise personal choices in relation to them. If a person neglects to conform to these requirements, this is a failure worthy of moral condemnation, not because somebody else was hurt, but simply because the nonconformist has failed to live according to the dictates of neoliberal rationality.

There are two ways that economization was evident in Johnson's language: in statements about helping the economy and in statements discussing sickness and suffering through instrumental abstractions and metrics. Regarding the first (helping the economy), on March 18, Johnson said "there will of course be far fewer children in schools and that will help us to slow the spread of the disease. And these measures are crucial to make sure the critical parts of the economy keep functioning."

Here, his logic is economizing in that he discusses the quantity of children and its instrumental relation to the spread of disease, and most tellingly, he explains this is crucial because of the economy, which is implied to be of preeminent importance to disease transmission and to children's education.

On March 19, Johnson emphasized "we're asking such a huge amount (…) we're asking people not to socialize in the normal way and already we can see the impact that this is having on the UK economy and on business, on great, great companies." Like children's schooling in the quote before, here he again discusses a very human-centered issue, being people's way of participating in social life; and again, he turns to the relationship of this to the economy as the determining rationality guiding his posture. On July 3, he said: "As lockdown eases, we should focus on supporting the livelihoods of business owners and their employees up and down the country—all of whom are opening their doors for the first time in more than three months." Here, his emphasis is on supporting business owners and their employees first and foremost, which implies viewing them in their roles as members of economic society—and in the word 'livelihoods,' he reveals that he is concerned foremost with their financial well-being, again translating their role as citizens to their role as economic agents. Regarding the second (sickness and suffering), statements like the following were common. "And while the number of people dying with coronavirus remains too high, the numbers do continue to fall" (July 3). "[T]he data is improving—with the percentage of people testing positive falling from a weekly rate of 12.2% on 29 June to 4.8% yesterday" (July 17). "[T]here will be a clear incentive for everyone in areas where the virus prevalence is high to get a test, to get one of these rapid turnaround lateral flow tests" (November 23). The abstract and quantitative language, even when discussing death, mark the naturalized economic logic, even if the economy is not directly mentioned in his statement. Besides the abstractions and calculations, the term 'incentive' harkens to economistic language about human motivation.

2. Governance

Governance is Brown's concept to denote the replacement of politics by management. In that way, governance substitutes government as the central political concept. The political disappears since it is reduced to issues of technical management of society rather than profound questions regarding common life. Following economization, the sole responsibility of the political is to foment the economy. This logic is supported by

a deeper conception of society as a free space of exchanges and autonomous individuals.

Such an idea can only emerge from undisputed presence of principles of administration in politics. That is, the complete replacement of political dispute by technical and market-oriented administration (Brown 2016, 6). Brown points out that what is presented as a positive move towards a less bureaucratic mechanism is in turn a move towards autonomy that simultaneously binds this new structure of individuality to a system of its administration. Since everyone is a common stakeholder of the current configuration, there is no political dispute. More specifically, this means that social conflict is reduced to the negotiation of practice guidelines, objectively determined by the technical knowledge of experts.

This is an essential aspect of our understanding of the responses to the COVID-19 crisis since it aids in understanding the logic behind the government's economizing insistence on saving the market. It emerges from the idea that by saving the market, one is saving society. The best practices principle underlying governance dictates that government should behave as a company would: strategically minimizing its intervention to achieve what is perceived as the best possible outcome. In other words, government no longer acts politically in the sense of having an overarching responsibility towards all citizens; it acts technically. The underlying narrative is that the problems brought about by the crisis have no connection to political issues. In fact, the technical government no longer deals with "political" issues. Its role is merely to safeguard individuality and ensure the market can naturally resolve any crisis that might emerge.

According to Brown, governance is the ubiquity of administrative terms such as 'best practice' in political discourse. In the context of the COVID crisis in the UK, the constant use of vague and imperative language such as 'keep your distance,' 'stay alert,' 'protect your communities' and 'control the virus' is symbolic of this logic. Often it comes down to generalized best practices and individual decisions, where government responses come closer to providing overarching advice rather than clear-cut directives. "A huge public information campaign is being rolled out, so people get all the information they need to protect themselves and others" (March 18). "Instead of government telling people to work from home, we are going to give employers more discretion, and ask them to make decisions about how their staff can work safely. That could mean of course continuing to work from home (…). Or it could mean making workplaces safe by following COVID-secure guide-

lines." (July 17). Most often, Johnson's presentation followed this pattern of giving advice and guidelines and presenting them as objectively determined by expert opinion: "[I]t's absolutely critical in managing the spread of this virus that we take the right decisions at the right time, based on the latest and best evidence." (March 9). "We are going to be driven by the science, the data and public health." (May 10)

Stretching the nature of governance, Johnson frequently included the caveat that if people did not voluntarily follow guidelines, infection rates would rise, and he would then have to enforce the guidelines or stricter ones: "And I have to warn you, there will be further local outbreaks. So, we will monitor carefully, we will put on the brakes as required, and where necessary, we will re-impose measures. It's important to be clear about that up front" (May 28). "And I must tell you that if the virus were to begin to run out of control, I will not hesitate to put on the handbrake on and reverse some of these changes, at a local or indeed national level as required. But we can avoid that if we all continue to stay alert and do our bit to control the virus" (June 23). Johnson's logic is that he should ideally govern as little as possible even when facing a crisis such as a global pandemic.

3. Responsibilization

'Responsibilization' is the tendency for individuals to be ascribed the agency that renders them blameworthy or commendable for their own situations as well as the state of the nation. The context within which the individual operates is naturalized and unproblematized as the essential political sphere—self-interested and independent individuals become the unit of politics. The concrete social conditions, and even moreso, the material conditions, that frame the position of the individual are no longer articulated as a political issue. Still, this emancipation is invariably an abandonment of the social subject to their own resources as this new configuration of agency is exclusively engendered in economized self-valorization. With the invisibility of the "social" as a legitimate domain of intervention, the status quo gains a kind of quasi-religious authority and is raised to the level of a self-evident moral injunction for the individual to adapt effectively to. Brown notes that typically the individuals with the least power are held most responsible. This is an extension of neoliberal rationality in the sense that the individual is saddled with both freedom and responsibility to determine their own fate and that of the collective.

In the case of COVID-19, responsibilization can be seen both in the language around protective measures such as mask wearing and social

distancing as well as in the push to reopen the economy as fast and completely as possible. Regarding protective measures, the narrative is that what individuals choose to do determines not only their own fate but also the fate of others: "Our principle is to trust the British public to use their common sense in the full knowledge of the risks (…). [W]e will continue to trust in the common sense and the community spirit of the British people to follow this guidance" (June 23). "[W]e must rely on our willingness to look out for each other, to protect each other. Never in our history has our collective destiny and our collective health depended so completely on our individual behaviour" (September 22). The individual remains responsible for the actions that will determine their own financial and medical well-being. "But the success of these businesses, the livelihoods of those who rely on them, and ultimately *the economic health of the whole country is dependent on every single one of us acting responsibly*. We must not let them down" (July 3; emphasis added.). The notion that 'the economy' has 'health' transfers the notion of sentience and necessity onto economic processes, which can only be helped by the 'responsible' actions of every individual person.

4. Sacrifice

Under neoliberalism, the market is transformed into an almighty and amorphic entity that demands constant subjugation via the subject's total investment into the system without any promise of return. Brown argues that this continuous submission to the market becomes the overarching element of neoliberal subjectivity. While the market demands total dedication, it offers no guarantee. Individuals are responsible for ensuring the satisfaction of the market while the market is not accountable for anything. Brown mentions the example of periods of economic crisis when individuals are expected to endure all the consequences of instability without any guarantee of compensation in periods of recuperation: "Through this bundling of agency and blame, individuals are doubly responsibilized: they are expected to fend for themselves (and blamed for their failure to thrive) and for the well-being of the economy (and blamed for its failure to thrive)." (2016: 8)

Sacrifice is the culmination of all Brown's other factors (economization, governance, and responsibilization). It is the most dramatic expression of the neoliberal agent. The COVID-19 context stretches—but does not break—Brown's logic. The issue is that sacrifice can take one of two forms: a) not going to work to limit the spread of the virus,[1]

1 To some extent, protective measures such as mask wearing and social distan-

despite the risk to your own material well-being, or b) going to work, despite the risk to your own health. Either course—working or not working—can be framed as a necessary sacrifice for the greater good. In the case of working, it might be framed as helping get people what they need, and/or as helping 'the economy' run. Here, the market only (but not always) figures in (b), so the logic of sacrifice extends here beyond just the market, into the broadly defined well-being of the mass.

During COVID-19, this was emblematic on several fronts. The first and most emblematic was the treatment of nurses and other medical and educational staff who were constantly referred to as heroes for their sacrifice (Mohammed et al. 2021). The logic behind this narrative is that professionals were expected to put themselves at risk on behalf of the social good. Despite the spectacle of reverence, they were not compensated or supported in any other manner than symbolic commemoration, such as being given medals (BBC, July 2, 2020). Some would say that the 'hero' designation may also have functioned at cross-purposes with rectifying the lack of proper protective gear for medical staff (Higgins, 2020). This principle is extended to the general population as well. Rather than the government being accountable for a sequence of poorly managed and executed decisions that continuously create confusion, the 'poorly' behaved individuals who insist on breaking a lockdown that was never fully imposed become the ultimate culprits. This last point completes the circle of sacrifice since it legitimizes the sacrifice even of those who do not 'voluntarily' offer themselves. If the individual is the locus of responsibility, then the victims of COVID-19 become sacrificial, given their 'failure to thrive', in this case by not adhering to self-care guidelines.

Johnson's language of sacrifice primarily focuses on the general population: "I want to thank families for their sacrifice at this difficult time" (March 18). "Bit by bit, day by day, by your actions, your restraint and your sacrifice, we are putting this country in a better and stronger position" (March 20). "[I]t is thanks to your effort and sacrifice in stopping the spread of this disease that the death rate is coming down and hospital admissions are coming down" (May 10). "[T]he public have responded magnificently and selflessly. Putting their lives on hold, bearing any burden, overcoming every obstacle and tolerating every disruption and inconvenience no matter how large or small or inconsistent" (November 4). He uses the notion of sacrifice to honor the general mass he hails

cing can be viewed as sacrificial, but they do not generally carry with them the same gravity as unemployment or risking infection.

through his words. But more than this, he suggests that it is the collection of individual sacrifices that has been central in mitigating the pandemic. The logic is directly tied to responsibilization, as in Brown's formulation. It is the individual citizen who is deemed responsible for the country's successes in the face of the crisis, through their willingness to sacrifice for the good of the whole. Politics and government disappear into the backstage.

5. Other Moral Logics: Utilitarianism and Sympathy

Utilitarianism—the calculation of the greatest good for the greatest number—is indicated in statements that honor behaviors which benefit large numbers of people. In this, it conceptually overlaps considerably with economization, with the difference that utilitarianism is always an explicitly moral logic—it involves a sense of *ought*—whereas economization is only indirectly normative, in senses explained above. Economization is a key theme within the neoliberal logic, but on its own, it is not properly a moral logic. In the following examples of the utilitarian logic, the presence of factors beyond pure economism becomes evident. On March 16, Johnson mentioned that he wanted to "reduce the peak, to save life, minimize suffering." On July 3, he said: "Without doubt, lockdown has saved many hundreds of thousands of lives—but it has also had a devastating impact on our way of life and our economy (…). Our goal remains to enable as many people as possible to live their lives as close to normally as possible—in a way which is as fair and as safe as possible." From July 17: "When we set out our plan to rebuild on 11 May, we said our goal was to return life to as close to normal as possible, for as many people as possible, as fast and as fairly as possible, in a way that is safe and continues to protect our NHS. That goal remains the same." Even though the logic of these statements is marked by an economy of life, it cannot be reduced to the pure economism that Brown describes. Utilitarian moral logic is evident in the reference to life having a value in itself rather than merely having an instrumental or calculative character. The value associated to quality of life, for instance, is a factor directing the outcome of the overarching calculation.

Sympathy involves articulations of emotion experienced regarding the suffering of others, or "close up" or "personal" articulations of human suffering that might be expected to evoke emotion in the listener: "There have now been four deaths from coronavirus in the UK, and our deepest sympathies are obviously with their friends and families" (March 9). "Of those who have tested positive for coronavirus, across all settings, it saddens me to report that 42,927 have now died" (June 23). Johnson

frequently mentioned being "sad" about lives lost. On May 28, he said, "I know the toll that lockdown has taken on families and friends who have been unable to see each other." On June 10, he lamented "more families in mourning." On November 26, he appealed to the sympathetic dimension when he mentioned positive developments with a vaccine, which could help the people of the country "reclaim our lives and all the things that we love."

While sympathy was commonly present, it was not typically expressed in reference to helpful behavioral or political responses to the pandemic so much as an aside. Emotions were narrated and spoken about with care, but they were not mobilizing forces or rationales for actions taken. The more common rationales were along the lines described by Brown in reference to "governance"—the sense of scientific necessity, the plea to citizens to be responsible, lest the government need to resort to greater measures of enforcement. Still, this turn to an intra-personal and intimate approach to what is a political concern reverberates the categories explored earlier. Even though Brown makes no reference to the emotional elements of the neoliberal configuration, we find, in the sympathy logic highlighted above, a turn to the individual as the unit of politics that is consistent with Brown's account. In plain words, the fact that the PM responds as an individual rather than under his political role is emblematic here.

Conclusion

We have argued that the public statements on COVID-19 from UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson can be read to embody at least three distinct moral logics simultaneously: neoliberal, utilitarian, and sympathetic. Our analysis in this article does not intend to comment on state interventions or lack thereof. It is simply to point out that Johnson's public statements about the crisis indicate a murky mixture of these various logics and themes. The argument presented here diverges from optimistic approaches who see in COVID-19 a breaking point of capitalist logic and, therefore, an historically specific opportunity for the construction of an alternative society, and it also diverges from pessimistic approaches that argue the logic of capital remains totalizing. We argue that none of these logics should be read as a single true underlying motivator, the others as ruses or misinterpretations. Instead, we argue that all the logics are combined within these texts.

A key insight Brown offers is that neoliberalism conflates the dichotomy between humanism and economy into a logic that reveals itself to be simultaneously inhumane and humane. In the categories explored, Brown demonstrates that the neoliberal logic allows for a political regime that uses empowerment to dismiss any responsibility over the well-being of its citizens and, therefore, employs it in a manner that legitimizes its abandonment of the social sphere to an almost unmediated market logic. We suggest that her assessment is sound, yet some more specifically targeted analysis of the dissonances, contradictions, and relations between disparate moral logics within the text might also be informative. In reference to Brown's theory, it is not entirely clear how one should read the relationship between neoliberal rationality and other moral logics—e.g., allusions to sympathy or to utilitarian calculations—that at least on the surface clash with her core concepts—e.g., economization, governance, responsibilization, and sacrifice.

Even assuming the clashing moral logics are not intended as a form of mystification, their earnest yet murky assemblage serves an ideological function, granting neoliberal rationality a greater rhetorical base and moral legitimation. This is how neoliberal rationality can be insidious and all powerful.

In the examples explored, we suggested that the ambivalent moral reasoning expressed should not be rashly interpreted as indicative of dishonesty, as in the sense that Johnson pretended to care or used moral language purely for rhetorical purposes; it is less presumptive to just point out that he expresses a condensation of disparate moral logics. When collapsed together and not articulated as a condensation—which is perhaps more likely to be the way they are typically experienced by speaker and listener, in this case, Johnson and the citizenry—an implication is generated that neoliberal rationality is the way to serve the mass, and because serving the mass is the height of sympathy, in continuing to fulfil our duties as neoliberal subjects we serve the purpose of sympathy. In this way, even assuming the clashing moral logics are not intended as a form of mystification, their earnest yet murky assemblage serves an ideological function, granting neoliberal rationality a greater rhetorical base and moral legitimation. This is how neoliberal rationality can be insidious and all powerful.

The mixture of logics that we interpreted in Johnson's COVID-19 statements should by no means be assumed to be the dominant mixture throughout the UK, much less the rest of the world. Yet, it is plausible that such a mixture might be found among other prominent politicians in other locations and even perhaps within other arenas such as in the narratives of popular news reporting or how organizations respond to the crisis. Our approach of qualitative content analysis here might be extended to other such arenas. In this sense, the aim of this article is neither to provide a definite frame for structuring logics nor is it to point at contingent and specific elements in its case. Instead, the difficulties

and ambivalences highlighted, intend to point at tensions deserving of further investigation. The entangled dynamics between logics are fundamental to the overarching argument since they block the formation of any stable and identifiable account of the issues.

Ultimately, our purpose in centering our account on Brown's conceptual framework is to highlight the self-evidence of certain logics as thought-provoking. We mean neither to dismiss nor uphold them in their entirety. Our argument is that the problem is not just the domination of the market, but the logic that grants the market legitimation as a human-centered logic. Within Johnson's statements, we focused on the latter aspect by sketching moral logics of sympathy and utilitarianism that stretch Brown's original frame. The adjustment we suggest is to recognize the human-centered aspect as not a veneer for neoliberalism or antithetical to a neoliberal agenda, but rather as a collection of disparate moral logics, combined with them smoothly on the surface, but messily underneath. As in the assessment of the logics of Johnson's narrative, one finds that a conflation of neoliberalism and human-centered morality complexifies the political scenario.

Our argument is that the problem is not just the domination of the market, but the logic that grants the market legitimation as a human-centered logic.

References

BBC. 2020. "Man Honours His Community Nurses with 'Hero' Medals." *BBC News*, July 2, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-leeds-53267082.

Brown, Wendy. 2015. *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

———. 2016. "Sacrificial Citizenship: Neoliberalism, Human Capital, and Austerity Politics." *Constellations* 23(1): 3–14. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8675.12166.

Çalışkan, Koray, and Michel Callon. 2009. "Economization, Part 1: Shifting Attention from the Economy towards Processes of Economization." *Economy and Society* 38(3): 369–398. https://doi.org/10.1080/03085140903020580.

Charteris-Black, Jonathan. 2019. "The Metaphors of Boris Johnson." In *Metaphors of Brexit: No Cherries on the Cake?*, 161–196. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Cook, Deborah. 2018. *Adorno, Foucault and the Critique of the West*. New York: Verso.

Dreyfus, Hubert L., and Paul Rabinow. 1983. *Michel Foucault: Beyond*

Structuralism and Hermeneutics. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Fairclough, Norman. 2001. *Language and Power.* London: Pearson Longman.

———. 2003. *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*. London: Routledge.

Forchtner, Bernhard. 2011. "Critique, the Discourse–Historical Approach, and the Frankfurt School." *Critical Discourse Studies* 8(1): 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2011.533564.

Foucault, Michel. 1972. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. New York: Pantheon.

———. 1978. *The History of Sexuality. Volume 1: An Introduction.* New York: Pantheon.

———. 2008. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Friedland, Roger, and Robert R. Alford. 1991. "Bringing Society Back in: Symbols, Practices, and Institutional Contradictions." In *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*, edited by Walter W. Powell and Paul J. DiMaggio, 232–263. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Gutting, Gary. 1989. *Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reason: Science and the History of Reason*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Grant, John. 2010. "Foucault and the Logic of Dialectics." *Contemporary Political Theory* 9(2): 220–238.

Hanley, Ryan Patrick. 2009. *Adam Smith and the Character of Virtue*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Higgins, Charlotte. 2020. "Why We Shouldn't Be Calling Our Healthcare Workers 'Heroes.'" *The Guardian*, May 22, 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/may/27/healthcare-workers-heros-language-heroism.

Horkheimer, Max, and Theodor W. Adorno. 2002. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, edited by Gunzelin Schmid Noerr. Translated by Edmund Jephcott. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Jinshuang, Lv, and Li Rong. 2020. "A Positive Discourse Analysis of Diplomatic Speech of President Xi in Covid-19." *IETI Transactions on Social Sciences and Humanities* 8: 24–31. https://doi.org/10.6896/IETITSSH.202006_8.0004.

Kadhim, Riyadh Tariq, and Sa'id Abdulwahab Jawad. 2020. "A Critical Discourse Analysis of Manipulative Ideological Discursive Strategies in Boris Johnson's Speech on Brexit." *Journal of Human Sciences*

27(3): 688–703.
Kim, Eun-Sung, and Ji-Bum Chung. 2021. "Korean Mothers' Morality in the Wake of COVID-19 Contact-Tracing Surveillance." *Social Science & Medicine* 270. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2021.113673.
Lowe, Brian M. 2006. *Emerging Moral Vocabularies: The Creation and Establishment of New Forms of Moral and Ethical Meanings*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
———. 2010. "The Creation and Establishment of Moral Vocabularies." In *Handbook of the Sociology of Morality*, edited by Steven Hitlin and Stephen Vaisey. New York: Springer.
Mahon, Michael. 1992. *Foucault's Nietzschean Genealogy: Truth, Power, and the Subject.* New York: State University of New York Press.
Mill, John Stuart, and Jeremy Bentham. 1987. *Utilitarianism and Other Essays*, edited by Alan Ryan. London: Penguin Books.
Mohammed, Shan, Elizabeth Peter, Tieghan Killackey, and Jane Maciver. 2021. "The 'Nurse as Hero' Discourse in the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Poststructural Discourse Analysis." *International Journal of Nursing Studies* 117. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2021.103887.
Pache, Anne-Claire, and Filipe Santos. 2013. "Inside the Hybrid Organization: Selective Coupling as a Response to Competing Institutional Logics." *Academy of Management Journal* 56(4): 972–1001. https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2011.0405.
Qian, Kun, and Tetsukazu Yahara. 2020. "Mentality and Behavior in COVID-19 Emergency Status in Japan: Influence of Personality, Morality and Ideology." *PloS One* 15(7). https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0235883.
Reay, Trish, and C. Robert Hinings. 2009. "Managing the Rivalry of Competing Institutional Logics." *Organization Studies* 30(6): 629–652. https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840609104803.
Reisigl, Martin, and Ruth Wodak. 2016. "The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)." In *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, edited by Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer. London: Sage.
Smith, Adam. 1791. *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations.* London: Librito Mondi.
———. (1822) 2010. *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. London: Penguin.
Sunderland, Jane. 2020. "Gender, Language and Prejudice: Implicit Sexism in the Discourse of Boris Johnson." *Open Linguistics* 6(1): 323–333. https://doi.org/10.1515/opli-2020-0022.
Thornton, Patricia H., and William Ocasio. 1999. "Institutional Logics and the Historical Contingency of Power in Organizations: Executive Succession in the Higher Education Publishing Industry, 1958–

1990." *American Journal of Sociology* 105(3): 801–843. https://doi.org/10.1086/210361.

———. 2008. "Institutional Logics." In *The Sage Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism*, edited by Royston Greenwood, Christine Oliver, Kerstin Sahlin and Roy Suddaby, 99–128. London: Sage.

Wicke, Philipp, and Marianna M. Bolognesi. 2020. "Framing COVID-19: How We Conceptualize and Discuss the Pandemic on Twitter." *PloS One* 15(9). https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0240010.

Witztum, Amos, and Jeffrey T. Young. 2013. "Utilitarianism and the Role of Utility in Adam Smith." *The European Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 20(4): 572–602. https://doi.org/10.1080/09672567.2011.592846.

JEREMIAH MORELOCK, Ph.D. – is a postdoctoral researcher and the project coordinator of the Taking Care of Us study at the William F. Connell School of Nursing at Boston College. He also teaches sociology at Boston College's Woods College of Advancing Studies and directs the Research Network on Dialectics & Society. He is the author of *Pandemics, Authoritarian Populism, and Science Fiction* (Routledge, 2021), and co-author (with Felipe Ziotti Narita) of *The Society of the Selfie* (University of Westminster Press, 2021) and *O Problema do Populismo* (UNESP, Paco Press, 2019).

Address:
Boston College
Department of Sociology
426 McGuinn Hall
140 Commonwealth Ave
Chestnut Hill, MA 02467
(617) 552-4130
email: morelocj@bc.edu

YONATHAN LISTIK – is PhD candidate from the University of Amsterdam working on political theory from a continental perspective. He works on the entanglement between democracy, stupidity and power.

Address:
Oude Turfmarkt 143
Postbus 94201
1090 GE Amsterdam – Netherlands
email: y.listik@uva.nl

MILI KALIA – works for the Oxford City Council and owns a Sociology tutoring business. She has completed her master's degree from Oxford University and has trained as a doctoral student in the US. Her research, academic, and work interests/passions lie at the intersection of everyday legality and economic processes—more specifically, how market-based practices and rationality engage and confront temporary migrant legality assemblages.

Address:
Oxford City Council
Town Hall, St Aldate's, Oxford, OX1 1BX – England
email: littlemili1@gmail.com

Citation:
Morelock, Jeremiah, Yonathan Listik, and Mili Kalia. 2021. "Why is Life Worth Saving? Neoliberalism, COVID-19, and Boris Johnson's Public Statements." *Praktyka Teoretyczna* 42(4): 167–192.
DOI: 10.14746/prt2021.4.7

Autorzy: Jeremiah Morelock, Yonathan Listik, Mili Kalia

Tytuł: Dlaczego warto ratować życie? Neoliberalizm, COVID-19 i publiczne wypowiedzi Borisa Johnsona

Abstrakt: W przedstawionym artykule stosujemy wypracowaną przez Browna Foucaultowską perspektywę ujęcia neoliberalizmu po to, by przyjrzeć się związanemu z pandemią COVID-19 kryzysowi w Zjednoczonym Królestwie. Używając jakościowej analizy treści, staramy się odsłonić moralną logikę stojącą za 32 publicznymi wypowiedziami Borisa Johnsona na temat COVID-19. Podzieliliśmy naszą analizę na sześć części. W pierwszych czterech częściach wykorzystujemy cztery kategorie wskazane przez Browna: ekonomizację, rządzenie, czynienie odpowiedzialnym i poświęcenie. Następnie objaśniamy dwie inne logiki moralne – utylitarystyczną i współczującą. Połączenie tych logik przez Johnsona niesie ideologiczny przekaz o następującej treści: neoliberalna racjonalność służy ludziom i ich wspiera. W ramach perspektywy Browna problemem jest nie tylko dominacja rynku, lecz także legitymizowanie rynku jako logiki skoncentrowanej na człowieku. Proponowane przez nas uzupełnienie polega na rozpoznaniu faktu, że owa skoncentrowana na człowieku logika nie jest pokostem neoliberalizmu, ale raczej zestawem niespójnych logik moralnych, spojonym jedynie na powierzchni, ale wewnątrz wciąż rozproszonym.

Słowa kluczowe: neoliberalizm, moralność, COVID-19, Boris Johnson