Anti-fascism: A panel discussion on its problematic history and meaning

Wolf Wetzel, Henning Mächerle, Manuel Kellner, and Jan Gerber

Since the Nazi seizure of power eighty years ago anti-fascism has been integral to left-wing politics. The struggle against fascists and Nazis is morally self-evident, so that political anti-fascism seems to be similarly self-evident. Yet in past periods of history, the politics of anti-fascism was completely different, as was the understanding of what it contributed to leftist politics more generally. Still certain continuity can be discerned in anti-fascism's retention of anti-capitalist claims. Where does this come from? What was anti-fascism and how has it changed? How do the category and concept of anti-fascism help us to understand both historical and contemporary political realities? What does anti-fascism mean today in the absence of fascism as a mass movement?

What follows is an edited transcript of an event organized by the Platypus Affiliated Society in Frankfurt on April 30, 2013. The discussion addressed the different historical and political implications of anti-fascist politics in order to throw into relief the underlying questions and problems of left-wing politics in the present.

Wolf Wetzel: This discussion is itself an historical event. The Left is at present so fractured that it is impossible, even forbidden, to have discussions with each other. We would normally never see a group like this on a platform together. Yet the problem of the Left is also one of anti-fascism. Many people from the "Antifa" [anti-fascist movement] here in Frankfurt have refused to attend this discussion since on the evening before an anti-Nazi march, they can only meet to discuss plans of action. They cannot allow themselves to discuss anti-fascism itself because for them to do so on the day before an action would be demobilizing. This is remarkable given that formerly such discussions of political substance were commonplace.

The other issue is the intense mutual criticism of the different positions represented on this platform. Who can speak with whom? When is it a betrayal? When is it bourgeois, even counterrevolutionary? The assemblage here—representing anti-German, Trotskyist, German Communist Party (DKP), and Autonomist positions—could meet nowhere else in the Federal Republic. Even though I oppose many of the views represented here, these meetings are valuable because they show where these political differences come from and what lessons can be drawn from them.

I want to raise the question of the role Nazism plays today and how to understand the Nazis. This is a big question, one that is too often avoided by anti-fascists themselves. But one must ask: How threatening are they? Are they dangerous materially, politically, or ideologically? Also the historical question must be raised: Who in the ruling apparatus and state institutions of the 1930s when the Nazi Party was on the rise had an interest in their program? If the system itself is in crisis and the political elite hit rock bottom, what prevents the Left from coming to power (something much more likely in the 1930s than it is today)? At that time, it was an existential crisis for the political and business class: Would the conflict arising in the capitalist crisis be answered in a rightwing, fascistic way, or in a socialist way? Might not the crisis conclude with the bursting apart and transcendence of the capitalist system itself?

When we demonstrate against the Nazis we should ask what significance they have, not how many of them there are—200 or 500. Such figures anyway sometimes get exaggerated in order to inflate the sense of the threat the Nazis pose.

We must discuss what role neo-fascist organizations, their parties, and their armed groups play. My view is that conditions today are massively different from the 1930s. The fascist movement then and today cannot be equated. The political class and the political system have become something quite different. It is absolutely necessary to ask where the true menace lies. I do not believe that the neo-Nazis are the driving protagonists of German racism and nationalism. Racism and nationalism are mainstream and have the support of the majority. These arrived a long time ago at the center of society. They are represented by political power. The National Democratic Party (NPD) and the other, less organized neo-Nazi groups only express consistently what is already established as mainstream.

Henning Mächerle: What we are discussing here today depends on the fact that the German workers' movement of the 1920s and 1930s failed. The Communist Party of Germany was defeated. At the time, it was the biggest Communist Party outside the Soviet Union and it failed without organizing any significant armed resistance or, indeed, interfering with the functioning of the Nazi Party on a large scale. The dilemma of the German left is that we drag this historical burden along with us. That we are mortgaged to history in this way is the occasion for this debate on anti-fascism. To advance our discussion first we need to understand fascism. That is only possible when we describe society as a class society and understand that it is one in which the owners of the means of production—the ruling class—have a compelling interest in the maximization of profit for which a large number of people must sell their labor power. Because of this, the workers' movement formed and, through its decisive battle with the capitalist class, shaped the last 150 years. For Eric Hobsbawm, the October Revolution was the decisive point of the "short 20th century" that first showed the possibility of establishing a non-capitalist, perhaps socialist society of free and equal people. The Left was then—unlike today—a truly serious social movement. It was comprised of people who were not primarily ensconced in universities, but had normal wage work and social interests. The big problem of the Communist Party was it only represented a specific milieu within the workers' movement.

The petty bourgeoisie and the middle classes, who had owned small means of production or were otherwise independent, lost their property in the economic crisis that reached its peak in 1929. The result was that the social anxiety they experienced grew creating the environment in which a romantic anti-capitalism could establish itself. This romantic anti-capitalism addressed the need for a change of circumstances and spoke out against the massive rationalization and concentration of capital. It registered discontent with a process that was undermining the position of these social classes. This is how they became susceptible to certain ideologies. A process of social destabilization was a necessary but insufficient condition for the rise of a mass fascist movement and its eventual seizure of power. While addressing these classes' anxieties, it was also fundamentally beholden to the interests of the ruling class.

The difference in this respect between Germany and Italy is not so great. Both countries were late nation-states. Both combined massive large-scale production with landlordism. In both there was an unfinished bourgeois revolution that spawned a middle class that, in turn, habitually operated in cooperation with the feudal nobility and other elements of the ruling class. In the 19th century both conceived a desire to win "a place in the sun." They wanted colonial possessions like the established imperial powers. This and the First World War that resulted from it combined to produce the conditions without which German fascism is unthinkable.

Often we encounter arguments that emphasize the uniqueness of German fascism. And, certainly, it was unique in its brutality, efficiency, anti-Semitism, and willingness to exterminate millions. On the other hand, one can ask, is it possible to understand Auschwitz without thinking of Monowitz, I. G. Farben's camp at Auschwitz, where about 15% of the Reich's production of methanol and fuels took place? When one considers this fact then the irrational no longer seems so irrational. One can observe capitalism in its crudest form in German fascism, if one thinks it through to the end. Man is a commodity that is only of interest as a factor of production.

In today's debate, we must realize that we are dealing with a political dispute and not a moral question. Politics can only exist with clear positions and an overarching perspective. As the political left, we will only reach people if we can offer them a way out of their concrete life problems. Otherwise, elements of the ruling class will exploit these people in a crisis situation and mobilize them for a right-wing mass movement. This is the most important lesson from the history of anti-fascism, which was not always just pure dilettantism. After 1945, it stood in the tradition of the Oath of Buchenwald for the clear positions that it took: for example, the demilitarization of Germany; its de-Nazification; its de-monopolization; democratization; as well as support for the welfare state, international understanding, and anti-fascist unity. There was always in this concept the idea that another society is possible and necessary, one that must be struggled for against the ruling forces and the ruling class. That is the only way a mass movement is possible. Without the mobilization of people there will be no other society. If we do not ask the right questions and offer solutions, then others will do it for us.

Manuel Kellner: I will refer to the contributions of the outstanding Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky in the collection *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*. This does not itself make me a "Trotskyist." My political mentor, the Belgian-Jewish Marxist and revolutionary Ernest Mandel, was the best-known member of the Fourth International, and he wrote a preface to this collection.[1] In it, writing as an admirer of the revolution proscribed by the official Communist movement, Mandel claims that Trotsky developed a coherent theory of fascism. I view the matter more critically. If I compare the discussions of the Communist International under Stalin with its earlier phase at the time of the fourth Congress in 1922, then I recognize no distinctive "Trotsky-*ism*" with respect to anti-fascist politics any more than with respect to the strategy of transitional demands. Trotsky was simply the main theorist to continue the analytical, political and programmatic tradition that began with the Communist International. Stalinism is the distortion of that tradition.

The difficulty is to draw lessons from the past without concocting blueprints for today. Despite all the structural similarities we think we can perceive, the reality today is in fact quite different from that prevailing during the Weimar Republic. I will illustrate the change in the politics of anti-fascism with a quote from Georgi Dimitrov at the time of the seventh congress of the Communist International in 1935. Dimitrov's view was the Communist International's official line: Fascism is the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary chauvinist and most imperialist elements of finance capital. But this definition leaves out very important elements. Because the characteristic of the fascist movement, especially of Nazism, is that it represents a *radical mass movement* organized to serve as a battering ram against the labor movement so as to smash it completely—its mass parties, its ancillary organizations, and its unions. It emerged at the pinnacle of the structural crisis of capitalism. The example of Italian fascism demonstrates unmistakably that fascism's aim was the defeat of the workers' movement. There was a revolutionary upsurge, a mass strike movement, which fought for the demand of workers' control. The union leadership, however, betrayed this demand and the left movement began to melt away. Shortly thereafter, the great upsurge of the reactionary mass movement began.

Trotsky describes this as follows: "Everything that should have been eliminated from the national organism in the form of cultural excrement in the course of the normal development of society has now come gushing out from

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Statement of purpose

Taking stock of the universe of positions and goals that constitutes leftist politics today, we are left with the disquieting suspicion that a deep commonality underlies the apparent variety: What exists today is built upon the desiccated remains of what was once possible.

In order to make sense of the present, we find it necessary to disentangle the vast accumulation of positions on the Left and to evaluate their saliency for the possible reconstitution of emancipatory politics in the present. Doing this implies a reconsideration of what is meant by the Left.

Our task begins from what we see as the general disenchantment with the present state of progressive politics. We feel that this disenchantment cannot be cast off by sheer will, by simply "carrying on the fight," but must be addressed and itself made an object of critique. Thus we begin with what immediately confronts us.

The *Platypus Review* is motivated by its sense that the Left is disoriented. We seek to be a forum among a variety of tendencies and approaches on the Left—not out of a concern with inclusion for its own sake, but rather to provoke disagreement and to open shared goals as sites of contestation. In this way, the recriminations and accusations arising from political disputes of the past may be harnessed to the project of clarifying the object of leftist critique.

The *Platypus Review* hopes to create and sustain a space for interrogating and clarifying positions and orientations currently represented on the Left, a space in which questions may be raised and discussions pursued that would not otherwise take place. As long as submissions exhibit a genuine commitment to this project, all kinds of content will be considered for publication.

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Articles will typically range in length from 750–4,500 words, but longer pieces will be considered. Please send article submissions and inquiries about this project to: *review_editor@platypus1917.org*. All submissions should conform to the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

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the throat; capitalist society is puking up the undigested barbarism. Such is the physiology of National Socialism."[2]

What was the 20th century debate on how to fight fascism and National Socialism? A key concept was the united front policy, that is, joint action by all organizations of the workers' movement. At the time, these consisted chiefly in the Social Democratic Party, the Communist Party, and the All Germany Trade Union Federation. Social Democracy was often unwilling to participate because this put them on a par with the extremism of the left and right. They were more inclined to fight the Communists, or to unleash the police against striking workers, especially when they had influence within the state apparatus. The Communist leadership did not consistently support the united front policy either, such as when they depended on the so-called theory of "social fascism." According to this, Social Democracy was worse than the Nazis, because they constituted a hidden and disguised form of fascism.

The best parallel with the situation in the 1930s can be found today perhaps in Greece, where the issue is very acute. The development of the Golden Dawn is awful! These are open Nazis and anti-Semites who use extreme brutality against all who do not fit into their racial image. This is something quite different from right-wing populist forces, no matter how much we must also combat the latter. As in the past, we here have the electoral success of open Nazis, an intensified economic crisis combined with the inability to find an adequate response to these developments by the bureaucracy in Brussels. Accompanying this has been a spectacular decline in the living standards of the broad masses and confusion on the Left. This shows how acute this problem has remained.

If we wait for the whole spectrum of the Left, with all their different traditions, currents, and political horizons to agree on a program and strategy then the Nazis will long since have won. This is not what is meant by anti-fascist unity, but rather, as was said in the 30s, "march separately, strike together." It is the willingness to defend each other, to come out on the streets together on the first call, and thus to jointly build the mass movement to ensure that the legal and illegal gangs are unable to destroy the movement's ability to exist.

Jan Gerber: Tomorrow, the first of May, the great dream of Georgi Dimitrov will come true here in Frankfurt: The Popular Front will prevent the takeover of fascism! If all goes well, "Single Unionists," Trotskyists and Stalinists, anarchists as well as the Wolf Weltzel will, together with Mayor Feldmann, resolutely oppose the march of the NPD to Berlin.

The call of the "anti-fascist council Rhein-Main" alone is supported by more than a hundred groups and organizations. Yet, apart from the estimated 37 members of the NPD-District Association in Frankfurt this Nazi demonstration would seem to be of no significance to anyone. Frankfurt is an ordinary German city in 2013 and, indeed, apart from some of the mayors of eastern provinces there is hardly anyone in the Federal Republic who has any sympathy for pillaging and murderous Nazis. What was to be read in the nineties only in anti-fascist leaflets today is found in the conservative *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. Anti-fascism has become statesmanlike. The New Germany has a craving for recognition of its anti-fascist sentiments. Indeed, the Federal Republic parades Germany's pioneering role in overcoming the past. On this basis, it presents itself to the world as a great moral authority.

We must also address the question of whether the current anti-fascism might not be best understood as a psychological reaction formation, which was designated by a wise man many years ago as counter-phobic: In order to escape the attraction of fascism and a possible repetition compulsion, their attraction is displaced toward its apparent opposite. The trouble is that this opposition perpetuates what one seeks to avoid. Anyone who was in the Antifa knows what I mean. In these groups there is always someone obsessed by the "Landser" and the "Störkraft" [names of neo-Nazi bands]: He can sing along to any Nazi text, he reads little else other than Nazi pamphlets—of course, for "research reasons"—and he knows the uniforms of the different SS units better than Heinrich Himmler.

Historic anti-fascism has in this respect served as a model because, tragically, the men and women who returned from the concentration camps and from exile, have often done more for the bad continuity of German history than have the NPD, the Mutual Aid Association of Former Waffen-SS Members (HIAG), and the German refugee associations put together. In the labor movement, from which emerged most of the anti-fascist resistance fighters, the proles were indoctrinated long before 1933 in thought patterns that the Nazis had to discover for themselves in order to be successful. Love of country, cleanliness, order, and diligence were taught years before by the KPD and the SPD to workers who later defected to the Nazis. They learned these virtues from the Left, not only from the Storm Troopers or the German Labor Front. After 1945, though the former resisters could take these thought patterns and sustain or rehabilitate them, as resisters they were not discredited due to any collaboration with the Nazis.

The smarter anti-fascists who will go out tomorrow against a march by a party that gets 1.5% of the vote know all that, of course. If, however, they enlist in "the great Germany stays clean campaign," it is not clear that this is because they fear a fascist takeover. But they do so in order to satisfy their need for the immediate and concrete. Of course, this need for immediacy and concreteness, for "direct action," is not a specialty of the Left, but it nevertheless exposes what these social relations do to people.

These left actions and campaigns have in the world of our parents, our colleagues and fellow students a counterpart, that of the do-it-yourselfer. Against the background of the adjusted practice—because a political practice, worthy of the name, currently is not possible—the actions of the Left remind one of hobbyists who sullenly withdraw after work into basement workshops where they proceed to make things that are available at the hardware store, the only difference being that the store-bought article is both of better quality and cheaper. In the case of both of the contemporary Antifa activist and the do-it-yourselfer, the bastions of immediacy must be saved in the hardened and consistently mediated society. In both cases, individuals who have long lost their subjectivity and spontaneity try to pretend that everything depends on them. This form of practice is an instrument to fend off reality. Since leftists, like all people, are often less stupid than the pronouncements of their respective organizations might lead one to believe, they are aware that nothing depends on their actions.

In the 80s Antifa was only a sideshow where the radical left was active; the Nazis were so curtly dismissed out of hand by "Antiimps" [anti-imperialists], autonomists, etc. Back then one turned to what were believed to be more basic problems: nuclear power plants, the western runway [of the Frankfurt airport], hugging trees, etc. Since 1989, however, Antifa has become the main activity of the radical left. This development is not only due to the growth of the Nazi movement after reunification; Antifa groups arise not only in response to a threatening situation. (In Frankfurt, it is likely then that there will not be a half-dozen neo-Nazi groups, maybe none.)

Antifa groups arise not least because from time to time we can still have in the anti-Nazi struggle a sense of achievement as leftists. In this placeholder function that the current anti-fascism serves it resembles the older tradition. For even the historical anti-fascism always wanted to be more than a struggle against fascism and Nazism. Because of its understanding of fascism—the idea that behind fascism was capital and in no case the proletariat—the anti-fascist could hold fast to the belief in a logical course of history and the historical mission of the working class.

By making fascism fit seamlessly into bourgeois rule, you could pretend to pull on the Red Thread of history, which had long since been ripped out by the Nazis. A weak sort of afterglow of these concepts, of the relation of Antifa to anti-capitalism, is found in the call of the *Stürmische Zeiten* ["Stormy Times"] alliance that issued the watchword for tomorrow in all seriousness: "Stop the Nazi march—fight for a liberated society." The difference between this and historic anti-fascism, however, is that the old anti-fascists actually acted on their own account and had to defend themselves against the absolute majority of their countrymen. With their resistance they delivered an existential judgment on Nazism which despite all criticism, is worthy of the highest esteem. With today's anti-fascists, however, everything which presents itself as rebellious has turned into conformity: The children of dentists play at Red Front Fighters till they have finished their studies, at which point they take over Dad's practice or enter the advertising industry.

WW: Jan Gerber, you accuse the victims of the Nazis, the anti-fascists of the Communist Party, for fighting for a "national community" [*Volksgemeinschaft*] only under an opposite sign. This is too much! It is unspeakable with regards to the anti-fascism of the 1930s, the German Communist Party, and all the organizations that responded to the fascists to say that they have shown only a disguised form of the "national community." Similarly outrageous is the claim that the Antifa today actually think and act according to the logic and structure of the "national community." One can criticize the Antifa for a great deal, but you are reaching the point where the possibility of a genuine political discussion wanes. "National community" implies a fascist ideology and a racist logic and a characteristic dictatorial style. To refer in this way to the resistance of the 1930s—or, for that matter, of the 70s and 80s—is intolerable. The problem of Antifa are not their rituals, but the difficulty of the work, which can be illustrated with reference to Dresden: Since 2010–11, there has been a great effort by many anti-fascist and left-wing organizations against the annual Nazi rally marking the anniversary of the Dresden bombing. This produces large contradictions within the Alliance, everything from the "chains of light" (processions of people marching with candles) of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) to the SPD to militant blockages. Events have led to the political class responding and having to simulate protests. But their candlelight processions have nothing to do with the militant blockers. In order to get enough people on the street to prevent a march, of course you always have to make compromises. But these problems are far removed from your concerns. You do everything you can to make yourself ridiculous and cynical by pulling back into the guard tower of theory and pleading for "pure criticism" in order not to make yourself an accomplice.

HM: I agree with Jan Gerber on the point that the ruling class has since 1989 claimed for itself and rendered impossible many terms that have previously been part of the ideological resources of the Left. One of these is anti-fascism, which the ruling class—especially with Gerhard Schröder—tries to exploit precisely in order to generate momentum for imperialism! But just because one's opponents do something, it does not mean one can just leave off oneself. Rather, we must act because the rulers always act. We cannot stop doing anti-fascist work just because there are people on the other side who exploit it for their own purposes.

The real issue is, in fact, what assessment one has of fascist groups. It is not about the NPD or the respective small groups, but what functional relation they have to the ruling class. The complex in which they are located and the political context in which they operate can be exploited. For example, the asylum debate has been prepared substantially by the fascist right-wing populist groups, so that the dominant politics could reach a compromise on the right to immigrate by way of claiming political asylum. So, the fascist and right-wing groups perform an important function.

JG: How do you estimate the potential risk and the effective power of fascist groups now? To me it seems obvious that they currently have no influence at all. Here in Frankfurt tomorrow they will put a maximum of 300 people on the street. You say if we do not act, then the rulers will act. Yes, the rulers will act tomorrow: The German Federation of Unions will make a great rally, and the SPD mayor has jointly issued a ban with the other department heads of the CDU. The mayor will give a speech tomorrow and everybody will be there—from the Free Democratic Party to the Greens to the Antifa. Against this background, one must ask, what function does such an action serve? Tomorrow they march against 200-300 people who are completely marginalized, at least here in the west (because in the east there is a whole other discussion). Tomorrow the new Germany—the current ruling class, as you mentioned earlier—holds one of their identity-forming rituals. They will come together to position themselves as anti-fascists. They will come together again and play the old song: "We have learned the lessons of history," etc. It is on this basis that Germany claims moral authority in the international arena. And you play along! This is true no matter what goals you have, even if you basically condemn it. If no one would take action against the Nazis, then that would be another thing: you would be compelled to do so. But here in Frankfurt this is not the case. Here you would have to jam this great community ritual or at the very least criticize it. Otherwise, you are allowing yourself to be used.

MK: I think the contribution made by the early anti-German ideology critique was very important. I have learned a lot from it and have confronted my reading of Mandel with it. Although he himself was persecuted as a Jew and a Marxist who survived a concentration camp, the feeling remains that he had a need to relativize and contextualize National Socialism.

To Jan Gerber I want to say: you have designated the mobilization against the Nazi rally as a "national community" assembly, but imagine what would happen if these people were not against the Nazis, but turned against us as we sit here and discuss. When you think of Greece, this is not far-fetched. If the German workers and unemployed are set against the poorest countries in Europe to compete and German exports fall away because no one can pay for them, then the real and perceived crisis tendencies will be exacerbated. But you will not come around and risk getting your hands dirty. The requirements of an emancipatory practice are not so easily avoided.

Q&A

What role does anti-Semitism play in German fascism? Is there a difference between the struggle against anti-Semitism and racism and the struggle against fascism?

HM: In German fascism, the anti-Slav attitude is inseparable from anti-Semitism. The high civilian casualty figures in the Slavic countries, the concept of people without space [*Volk ohne Raum*], and anti-Semitism form a common complex with the development of ethnic nationalism in 19th century Germany. The history of Jewish assimilation made a certain kind of resentment fruitful, on which the middle classes were able to draw very effectively.

One must think "people without space" together with exterminationist anti-Semitism. The concentration camp system can be reduced to neither extermination complex nor forced labor camp. Instead, German fascism must be regarded as a historic complex, which had its own development. At first, it was about a possible "empty" territory on which the annihilation by starvation of the Jewish and Slavic population was planned. When they could not succeed in the war because of the resistance of the Red Army, the fascists had a big problem. At the latest it was the uprising in the Warsaw ghetto that triggered a rethinking by the fascist elite. But the concentration camp system and the plan for the "Final Solution of the Jewish Question" only emerged during the war.

MK: Although capital, put simply, handed over its political power to the Nazis, it is still important to insist that Nazi rule was in the service of capital. The destruction of organized labor made the independent representation of working class interests impossible: The Nazi "national community" meant the forced community of workers and capitalists. And real wages fell during Nazi rule, while the profits of big capital exploded. One can prove empirically what a strong position large corporations held in the Nazi state and for example, how much they benefited from the war industry. An aggressive, pseudo-biological anti-Semitism and racism were characteristic of National Socialism. Its monstrous willingness led to mass murder. Many people knew about it and were directly or indirectly involved. This willingness to exterminate based on anti-Semitism and racism does not go simply in to a Marxist class analysis. One can make it too simple.

JG: Historic anti-fascism continues to this day to be based on two pillars. The first is the reduction of Nazism to the dictatorship of a small clique of capitalists, hence the motto "behind fascism is capital." The second is that the mass basis of National Socialism is completely obscured. Against this background, historical anti-fascism holds a central place in the left worldview: It is the upholder of the faith in a logical and reasonable course of history, a belief that was refuted it would seem by the Nazis. Fascism was seen as the "last gasp" of capitalism and of imperialism, which were subsequently to be replaced by socialism. In this way, anti-fascism has sealed off the communist or materialist view of history from a complete confrontation with the historical experience of National Socialism. By using classical categories and dualisms such as "progress" and "reaction," categories which are themselves trapped in the economism of the labor movement, anti-fascism itself distorts Auschwitz. It only has space for the category of the struggle but not for that of extermination. This extermination for extermination's sake is the key element of National Socialism, not the productivity of capital. This eliminationist anti-Semitism is devoid of all rationality.

MK: Hitler from the beginning publicly expressed his position on the "Jewish Question." He clearly stated where he wanted to go. There is a connection between the anti-Semitism and the anti-capitalist demagogy of the Nazis in a particular context. The Jew was made the projection screen for the pent-up hatred of the angry masses. They were targeted, not capitalist social relations. In 1932 the Nazis had already shown themselves to be harmless toward capital. Their anti-capitalist demagogy was just propaganda. There was no reason for the capitalists to withhold their support. But I agree with Jan Gerber that you cannot just dissolve the ideology of National Socialism into a rationalistic or historically deterministic account that operates exclusively with class analysis.

What are the qualitative shifts in political consciousness that took place to cause young activists who were beginning to be politically active to get involved in the Antifa and not in a leftist political party?

WW: I would like to address the question of the alliance, which was in the 1920s and 1930s not of the five or ten groups, but one of millions of people. Anti-fascism is an issue not of whether you are correct, but whether you possess the power to beat fascism, to prevent it from coming to power. It is wrong that the anti-fascists tried in the 1930s to recapitulate the "national community" [*Volksgemeinschaft*], because at the beginning the KPD had an ultra-left orientation. They were not seeking "national community" [*Volk*], nor did they just want to rally around those who were against the Nazis. The social fascism thesis had a real core: The SPD has contributed significantly to the fact that there is still capitalism and war. It was quite a politically conceivable idea to combat the SPD when you fought fascism and thus to aim at achieving a non-capitalist society. This was historically correct. In terms of the alliance issue the problem was that then you fought fascism with a lot less people. When the KPD made a turn in the late 1930s to a Popular Front alliance (i.e. cooperated with all those who are against the Nazis), it was already too late.

The problem today is the exact same thing, only at a lower level. The question is whether one wants to be right with one's anti-fascism, i.e. demonstrate with 50 people and experience reprisals, or—as the attempt was made in Dresden—if you try to create an alliance that brings possibly ten thousand people out. This anti-fascism is not only symbolic. It is actually effective in preventing a Nazi rally. This always implies that you compromise and political conflicts are kept small. To get as many people today in Germany out on the street, you have to let a lot of things go that would otherwise be assessed differently. To have plenty of people to win an important goal is more important than being right.

HM: Alliances are a practical necessity. But whenever there are such agreements there are of course also political discussions. It should always be a given for the Left that it not remain as it is. That is, new people come into the political conversations which do not remain static. Anti-fascist policy is always about the possibility of reaching people with whom one usually has nothing to do. In these situations, people listen to each other who would not normally listen to each other. The second factor is that Antifa is always also a driving element. I would disagree with Jan Gerber. It is not just symbolic politics, but many ordinary people would not do anything if there were no Antifa. The question of why young people organize themselves as "Antifa" in the first place is, I think, very logical. For the question of party organization, or even the ideological alignment of an organization, presupposes that one has an interest in ideological confrontation, or an ideological preference. After the defeat of 1989, we have the problem that ideological moments and theoretical issues on the Left no longer play a role for young people. There is of course in the anti-fascism of an Antifa group a larger space to form connections than there is in that of a communist party. However, one must also say that any Antifa group is in this sense a political practice, a way to develop a political consciousness among young people: because political awareness usually results not from books but from practical experience.

What is the relevance of Rosa Luxemburg's formula "socialism or barbarism" for you today?

MK: The Rosa Luxemburg quote is good because it shows that not all Marxists had a historical determinism which assumed that socialism is brought about by a law. For Luxemburg there were always two possibilities. Maybe there are also three or four. If we do not succeed in breaking the domination of capital in the relatively near future, if we fail to build a socialist democracy, build a democratically planned economy serving the criteria of needs, and generate environmental responsibility, then it makes me pessimistic for the future of the next generation.

JG: I fear that the formula "socialism or barbarism" plays no role anymore! It is very easy to forget that barbarism has already taken place and continues to exist. Because of the fact that barbarism has already taken place in Nazi Germany and Auschwitz, the question of socialism is very different. Especially if you look at the way that left movements, the Socialists and Communists, contributed to the victory of fascism. With my formulation that the Popular Front of the 1930s was also a form of "national community" [*Volksgemeinschaft*], I want to show what a share the labor movement, the SPD, and the KPD have in the rise of fascism. The Nazi movement could never have succeeded without them. Where did the workers, who one after another after 1930 went over to the Nazis, come from? Where did they learn to submit to authority? In the organizations of organized labor! There they were taught the love of the "the people" [*Volk*] and nation state. "National community" [*Volksgemeinschaft*] is not really the Right's term. Kurt Schumacher and other Social Democrats charged in 1933 that the Nazis would not really stand up for a genuine "national community."

You certainly know the program statement on "national socialism," i.e. to achieve "national and social liberation of the German people." The order [national before social] is significant. And, finally, there were the actual collaborations between Nazis and Communists. Recall the Berlin transport workers' strike (1932) where, for example, posters have been found on which the red star and the swastika appear together. So, the Left—the Communists, the Socialists, and also a part of the Left Socialists (some of whom I would, however, exclude here because some were a little smarter)—they all contributed to this outcome in one way or another. This does not mean that they were Nazis, but that they ultimately had a role in creating the basis for the emergence of National Socialism. And this legacy lives on after 1945.

HM: It is always complicated to retrospectively analyze a historical situation and to do so as if the people who made pre-1933 policy could know what happened afterwards. If you analyze history, you have to be fair and analyze the decisions of the players in their situation at that moment. The communist movement was a backlash against social democracy. Throughout the European labor movement there were two earlier wings: In Germany it was the "Lasalle wing" and the "Bebel wing." Lasalle was an exponent of the position that imperialism was actually quite alright so long as you can be part of it. There is in the labor movement that tradition, but the communist movement was intended precisely to counter that. We have here social movements with real people who have children and fear. In 1929-1930, they did not know what was coming in 1933. They could not have known, because their experience was the proscriptions of the Alliance of Red Front Fighters [*Rotfrontkämpferbundes*] and the KPD in the 1920s. Certainly, the KPD was stronger, but it had a strategic problem: It emerged from a milieu which, despite several attempts, was very difficult to get out of. They tried to snatch people from the Nazi party which was getting stronger—and in this context one would have to talk more precisely about the course of the Berlin transport workers' strike. There was also the Farmers Emergency Program. Those were two of the desperate attempts to get out of the ghetto in which you can reach just certain people and not at all the greater part of the Ger-

"Anti-fascism" continues on page 4

Lukács, continued from page 2

undermined by the Industrial Revolution, and pointed beyond capitalism, in that the realization of the demands for the proper social value of labor would actually mean overcoming labor as value in society, transforming work from "life's prime need" to "life's prime want:" Work would be done not out of the social compulsion to labor in the valorization process of capital, but rather out of intrinsic desire and interest; and society would provide for "each according to his need" from "each according to his ability." As Adorno, a later follower of Lukács and Korsch's works circa 1923 that had converted him to Marxism, put it, getting beyond capitalism would mean overcoming the "law of labor."[7]

Korsch's argument in his 1923 essay "Marxism and philosophy" was focused on a very specific problem, the status of philosophy in Marxism, in the direct sense of Marx and Engels being followers of Hegel, and Hegel representing a certain "end" to philosophy, in which the world became philosophical and philosophy became worldly. Hegel announced that with his work, philosophy was "completed," as a function of recognizing how society had become "philosophical," or mediated through conceptual theory in ways previously not the case. Marx and Engels accepted Hegel's conclusion, in which case the issue was to further the revolution of bourgeois society—the "philosophical" world that demanded worldly "philosophy." The disputes among the Hegelians in the 1830s and 40s were concerned, properly, with precisely the politics of the bourgeois world and its direction for change. The problem, according to Korsch, was that, after the failure of the revolutions of 1848, there was a recrudescence of "philosophy," and that this was something other than what had been practiced either traditionally by the Ancients or in modernity by revolutionary bourgeois thinkers—thinkers of the revolution of the bourgeois era—such as Kant and Hegel (also Rousseau, John Locke, Adam Smith, et al.).

What constitutes "philosophical" questions? Traditionally, philosophy was concerned with three kinds of questions: ontology, what we are; epistemology, how we know; and the good life, how we ought to live. Starting with Kant, such traditional philosophical "first questions" of *prima philosophia* or "first philosophy" were no longer asked, or, if they were asked, they were strictly subordinated or rendered secondary to the question of the relation of theory and practice, or, how we account to ourselves what we are doing. Marxism is not a philosophy in the traditional sense, any more than Kant and Hegel's philosophy was traditional. Lenin, in the Conclusion of *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* (1908), summed up that the late 19th century Neo-Kantians "started with Kant and, leaving him, proceeded not [forwards] towards [Marxist] materialism, but in the opposite direction, [backwards] towards Hume and Berkeley." It is not, along the lines of a traditional materialist ontology, that firstly we are material beings; epistemologically, who know the world empirically through our bodily senses; and ethically we must serve the needs of our true, material bodily nature. No. For Kant and his followers, including Hegel and Marx, rather, we consciously reflect upon an on-going process from within its movement: We don't step back from what we are doing and try to establish a "first" basis for asking our questions; those questions arise, rather, from within our on-going practices and their transformations. Empirical facts cannot be considered primary if they are to be changed. Theory may go beyond the facts by influencing their transformation in practice.

Society is the source of our practices and their transformations, and hence of our theoretical consciousness of them. Society, according to Rousseau, is the source of our ability to act contrary to our "first nature," to behave in unnatural ways. This is our freedom. And for Kant and his followers, our highest moral duty in the era of the process of "Enlightenment" was to serve the cause of freedom. This meant serving the revolution of bourgeois emancipation from traditional civilization, changing society. However Kant considered the full achievement of bourgeois society to be the mere "mid-point" of the development of freedom.[8] Hegel and Marxism inherited and assumed this projective perspective on the transitional character of bourgeois society.

Marx and Engels can be considered to have initiated a "Second Enlightenment" in the 19th century the degree to which capitalism presented new problems unknown in the pre-Industrial Revolution bourgeois era, because they had not yet arisen in practice. By contrast, philosophers who continued to ask such traditional questions of ontology, epistemology and ethics were actually addressing the problem of the relation of theory and practice in the capitalist era, whether they recognized this or not. Assuming the traditional basis for philosophical questions in the era of capitalism obscured the real issue and rendered "philosophy" ideological. This is why "philosophy" needed to be abolished. The question was, how?

The recrudescence of philosophy in the late 19th century was, according to Korsch, a symptom of the failure of socialism in 1848, but as such expressed a genuine need: the necessity of relating theory and practice as a problem of consciousness under conditions of capitalism. In this respect, Marxism was the sustaining of the Kantian-Hegelian "critical philosophy" but under changed conditions from the bourgeois-revolutionary era to that of capitalism. Korsch analogized this to the recrudescence of the state in post-1848 Bonapartism, which contradicted the bourgeois-revolutionary, liberal prognosis of the subordination of the state to civil society and thus the state's "withering away," its functions absorbed into free social relations. This meant recognizing the need to overcome recrudescent philosophy as analogous to the need to overcome the capitalist state, the transformation of its necessity through socialism. "Bonapartism in philosophy" thus expressed a new, late found need in capitalism, to free society. We look to "philosophers" to do our thinking for us the same way we look to authoritarian leaders politically.

As Korsch put it, the only way to "abolish" philosophy would be to "realize" it: Socialism would be the attainment of the "philosophical world" promised by bourgeois emancipation but betrayed by capitalism, which renders society—our social practices—opaque. It would be premature to say that under capitalism everyone is already a philosopher. Indeed, the point is that none are. But this is because of the alienation and reification of bourgeois social relations in capitalism, which renders the Kantian-Hegelian "worldly philosophy" of the critical relation of theory and practice an aspiration rather than an actuality. Nonetheless, Marxist critical theory accepted the task of such modern critical philosophy, specifically regarding the ideological problem of theory and practice in the struggle for socialism. This is what it meant to say, as was formulated in the 2nd International, that the workers' movement for socialism was the inheritor of German Idealism: it was the inheritor of the revolutionary process of bourgeois emancipation, which the bourgeoisie, compromised by capitalism, had abandoned. The task remained.

Transformation of Marxism

Lenin, Luxemburg and Trotsky, "orthodox Marxists" of the 2nd International who radicalized their perspectives in the crisis of the 2nd International and of Marxism in world war and revolution 1914–19, and were followed by Lukács and Korsch, were subjects of a historical moment in which the crisis of bourgeois society in capitalism was expressed by social and political crisis and the movement for "proletarian socialist" revolution, beginning, after the Industrial Revolution, in the 1830s–40s, the attempt to revolutionize society centrally by the wage-laborers as such, a movement dominated from 1889–1914 by the practical politics as well as theoretical consciousness of Marxism.

Why would Lukács and Korsch in the 20th century return to the origins of Marxism in Hegelianism, in what Korsch called the consciousness of the "revolt of the Third Estate?," a process of the 17th and 18th centuries (that had already begun earlier)? Precisely because Lukács and Korsch sought to address Marxism's relation to the revolt of the Third Estate's bourgeois glorification of the social relations of labor, and the relation of this to the democratic revolution (see for example the Abbé Sieyès's revolutionary 1789 pamphlet *What is the Third Estate?*): how Marxism recognized that this relation between labor and democracy continued in 19th century socialism, however problematically. In Lukács and Korsch's view, proletarian socialism sustained just this bourgeois revolution, albeit under the changed conditions of the Industrial Revolution and its capitalist aftermath. Mike Macnair acknowledges this in his focus on the English Enlightenment "materialist empiricism" of John Locke in the 17th and 18th centuries and on the British Chartism of the early 19th century, their intrinsic continuity in the democratic revolution, and Marx and Engels's continuity with both. But then Macnair takes Kant and Hegel—and thus Lukács and Korsch following them—to be counter-Enlightenment and anti-democratic thinkers accommodating autocratic political authority, drawing this from Hume's alleged turn away from the radicalism of Locke back to Hobbes's political conservatism, and Kant and Hegel's alleged affirmation of the Prussian state. But this account leaves out the crucially important influence on Kant and German Idealism more generally by Rousseau, of whom Hegel remarked that "freedom dawned on the world" in his works, and who critiqued and departed from Hobbes's naturalistic society of "war of all against all" and built rather upon Locke's contrary view of society and politics, sustaining and promoting the revolution in bourgeois society as "more than the sum of its parts," revolutionary in its social relations *per se*, seminal for the American and French Revolutions of the later 18th century. Capital, emerging in the 19th century, in the Marxist view, as the continued social compulsion to wage-labor after its crisis of value in the Industrial Revolution, both is and is not the Rousseauian "general will" of capitalist society: It is a self-contradictory "mode of production" and set of social relations, expressed through self-contradictory consciousness, in theory and practice, of its social and political subjects, first and foremost the consciousness of the proletariat. It is self-contradictory both objectively and subjectively, both in theory and in practice.

Marx and Engels's point was to encourage and advance the proletariat's critical recognition of the self-contradictory character of its struggle for socialism, in what Marx called the "logical extreme" of the role of the proletariat in the democratic revolution of the 19th century, which could not, according to Marx, take its "poetry" from the 17th and 18th centuries, as clearly expressed in the failure of the revolutions of 1848, Marx's famous formulation of the need for "revolution in permanence."[9] What this means is that the democratic revolutionary aspirations of the wage-laborers for the "social republic" was the self-contradictory demand for the realization of the social value of labor after this had already taken the form of accumulated capital, what Marx called the "general intellect." It is not the social value of labor, but rather that of this "general intellect" which must be reappropriated, and by the wage-laborers themselves, in their discontents as subjects of democracy. The ongoing democratic revolution renders this both possible and superfluous in that it renders the state both the agency and obstacle to this reappropriation, in post-1848 Bonapartism, which promises everything to everyone—to solve the "social question" of capitalism—but provides nothing, a diversion of the democratic revolution under conditions of self-contradictory bourgeois social relations: The state promises employment but gives unemployment benefits or subsidizes the lost value of wages; as Adorno put it, the workers get a cut of the profits of capital, to prevent revolution.[10] Or, as Adorno's colleague, the director of the Frankfurt Institute Max Horkheimer put it, the Industrial Revolution and its continued social ramifications made not labor but the workers "superfluous."[11] This created a very dangerous political situation—clearly expressed by the catastrophic events of the 20th century, mediated by mass "democratic" movements.

Marxism in the 20th century

In the 20th century, under the pressure of mass democracy—itself the result of the class struggle of the workers—the role of the state as self-contradictory and helpless manager of capitalism came to full fruition, but not through the self-conscious activity of the working class's political struggle for socialism, confronting the need to overcome the role of the state, but more obscurely, with perverse results. Lenin's point in *The State and Revolution* (1917) was the need for the revolutionary transformation of society beyond "bourgeois right" that the state symptomatically expressed; but, according to Lenin, this could be accomplished only "on the basis of capitalism itself" (*"Left-Wing" Communism: An Infantile Disorder*, 1920). If the working class among others in bourgeois society has succumbed to what Lukács called the "reification" of bourgeois social relations, then this has been completely naturalized and can no longer be called out and recognized as such. For Lukács, "reification" referred to the hypostatization and conservatization of the workers' own politics in protecting their "class interest," what Lenin called mere "trade union consciousness" (including that of nationalist competition) in capitalism, rather than rising to the need to overcome this in practice, recognizing how the workers' political struggles might point beyond and transcend themselves. This included democracy, which could occult the social process of capitalism as much as reveal it.

One phenomenon of such reification in the 20th century was what Adorno called the "veil of technology," which included the appearance of capital as a thing (as in capital goods, or techniques of organizing production), rather than as Marxism recognized it, a social relation, however self-contradictory.

The anti-Marxist, liberal (yet still quite conservative) Heideggerian political theorist Hannah Arendt (and antagonist of Adorno and other Marxist "Critical Theorists" of the Frankfurt School, who was however married to a former Communist follower of Rosa Luxemburg's Spartacus League of 1919), expressed well how the working class in the 20th century developed after the failure of Marxism:

> The modern age has carried with it a theoretical glorification of labor and has resulted in an actual transformation of the whole of society into a laboring society. The fulfilment of the wish, therefore, like the fulfilment of wishes in fairy tales, comes at a moment when it can only be self-defeating. It is a society of laborers which is about to be liberated from the fetters of labor [by technical automation], and this society does no longer know of those other higher and more meaningful activities for the sake of which this freedom would deserve to be won. Within this society, which is egalitarian because this is labor's way of making men live together, there is no class left, no aristocracy of either a political or spiritual nature from which a restoration of the other capacities of man could start anew. Even presidents, kings, and prime ministers think of their offices in terms of a job necessary for the life of society, and among the intellectuals, only solitary individuals are left who consider what they are doing in terms of work and not in terms of making a living. What we are confronted with is the prospect of a society of laborers without labor, that is, without the only activity left to them. Surely, nothing could be worse.[12]

This was written contemporaneously with the Keynesian economist Joan Robinson's statement that, "The misery of being exploited by capitalists is nothing compared to the misery of not being exploited at all."[13] (Robinson, who once accused a Marxist that, "I have Marx in my bones and you have him in your mouth."[14]) Compare this to what Heidegger offered in Nazi-era lectures on "Overcoming metaphysics," that, "The still hidden truth of Being is withheld from metaphysical humanity. The laboring animal is left to the giddy whirl of its products so that it may tear itself to pieces and annihilate itself in empty nothingness;"[15] and, in "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking" (1964), the place of Marx in this process: "With the reversal of metaphysics which was already accomplished by Karl Marx, the most extreme possibility of philosophy is attained."[16] But this was Heidegger blaming Marxism and the "metaphysics of labor" championed politically by the bourgeois revolt of the Third Estate and inherited by the workers' movement for socialism, without recognizing as Marx did the self-contradictory character in capitalism; Heidegger, for whom "only a god can still save us" (meaning, only the discovery of a new value to serve),[17] and Arendt following him, demonized technologized society as a dead-end of "Western metaphysics" allegedly going back to the Socratic turn of 'science" followed by Plato and Aristotle in Classical Antiquity, rather than recognizing it as a symptom of the need to transform society, capitalism and its need for socialism as a transitional condition of history emerging specifically in the 19th century.

This was the resulting flat "contradiction" that replaced the prior "dialectical" contradiction of "proletarian socialism" recognized by Marxism, whose theoretical recovery, in the context of the crisis of Marxism in the movement from the 2nd to 3rd Internationals, had been attempted by Lukács and Korsch. What Arendt called merely the (objective) "human condition," the "vita activa" and its perverse nihilistic destiny in modern society, was, once, the (subjective) "dialectical," self-contradictory "standpoint of the proletariat" in Marxism, as the "class consciousness" of history: the historical need for the proletariat to overcome and abolish itself as a class, including its own standpoint of "consciousness," its regressive bourgeois demand to reappropriate the value of labor in capitalism, which would both realize and negate the "bourgeois right" of the value of labor in society. Socialism was recognized by Marxism as the raising and advancing of the self-contradiction of capitalism to the "next stage," motivated by the necessity and possibility for "communism." What Arendt could only apprehend as a baleful *telos*, the society of labor overcoming itself, Marxism once recognized as the need for revolution, to advance the contradiction in socialism.

When Marxists such as Adorno or Lukács can only sound to us like Arendt (or Heidegger), this is because we no longer live in the revolution. Adorno:

> According to [Marxist] theory, history is the history of class struggles. But the concept of class is bound up with the emergence of the proletariat. . . . If all the oppression that man has ever inflicted upon man culminates in the cold inhumanity of free wage labor, then . . . the archaic silence of pyramids and ruins becomes conscious of itself in materialist thought: it is the echo of factory noise in the landscape of the immutable. . . . This means, however, that dehumanization is also its opposite. In reified human beings reification finds its outer limits. . . . Only when the victims completely assume the features of the ruling civilization will they be capable of wresting them from the dominant power. . . . Even if the dynamic at work was always the same, its end today is not the end.[18]

Lukács:

> [As Hegel said,] directly before the emergence of something qualitatively new, the old state of affairs gathers itself up into its original, purely general, essence, into its simple totality, transcending and absorbing back into itself all those marked differences and peculiarities which it evinced when it was still viable. . . . [I]n the age of the dissolution of capitalism, the fetishistic categories collapse and it becomes necessary to have recourse to the "natural form" underlying them. . . . As the antagonism becomes more acute two possibilities open up for the proletariat. It is given the opportunity to substitute its own positive contents for the emptied and bursting husks. But also it is exposed to the danger that for a time at least it might adapt itself ideologically to conform to these, the emptiest and most decadent forms of bourgeois culture.[19]

Why still "philosophy?"

The problem today is that we are not faced, as Lukács and Korsch were, with the self-contradiction of the proletariat's struggle for socialism in the political problem of the reified forms of the working class substituting for those of bourgeois society in its decadence. We replay the revolt of the Third Estate and its demands for the social value of labor, but we do not have occasion to recognize what Lukács regarded as the emptiness of bourgeois social relations of labor, its value evacuated by technical but not political transcendence. We have lost sight of the problem of "reification" as Lukács meant it.

As Hegel scholar Robert Pippin has concluded, in a formulation that is eminently agreeable to Korsch's perspective on the continuation of philosophy as a symptom of failed transformation of society, in an essay addressing how, by contrast with the original "Left-Hegelian, Marxist, Frankfurt school tradition," today, "the problem with contemporary critical theory is that it has become insufficiently critical:" "Perhaps [philosophy] exists to remind us we haven't gotten anywhere."[20] The question is the proper role of critical theory and "philosophical" questions in politics. In the absence of Marxism, other thinking is called to address this—for instance, Arendt (or worse: see Carl Schmitt[21]).

Recognizing the potential political abuse of "philosophy" does not mean, however, that we must agree with Heidegger, that, "Philosophy will not be able to bring about a direct change of the present state of the world" (*Der Spiegel* interview). Especially since Marxism is not only (a history of) a form of politics, but also, as the Hegel and Frankfurt School scholar Gillian Rose put it, a "mode of cognition *sui generis*."[22] This is because, as the late 19th century sociologist Emile Durkheim put it, (bourgeois) society is an "object of cognition *sui generis*." Furthermore, capitalism is a problem of social transformation *sui generis*—one with which we still might struggle, at least hopefully! Marxism is hence a mode of politics *sui generis*—one whose historical memory has become very obscure. This is above all a practical problem, but one which registers also "philosophically" in "theory."

The problem of what Rousseau called the "reflective" and Kant and Hegel, after Rousseau, called the "speculative" relation of theory and practice in bourgeois society's crisis in capitalism, recognized once by historical Marxism as the critical self-consciousness of proletarian socialism and its self-contradictions, has not gone away but was only driven underground. The revolution originating in the bourgeois era in the 17th and 18th centuries that gave rise to the modern philosophy of freedom in Rousseauian Enlightenment and German Idealism and that advanced to new problems in the Industrial Revolution and the proletarianization of society, perverting "bourgeois right" into a form of domination rather than emancipation, and expressed through the Bonapartist state's perversion of democracy, which was recognized by Marxism in the 19th century but failed in the 20th century, may still task us.

This is why we might, still, be reading Lukács. | **P**

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1. See Marco Torres, "Politics as a Form of Knowledge: A Brief Introduction to Georg Lukács," *Platypus Review 1* (November 2007), available online at < http://platypus1917.org/2007/11/01/politics-as-a-form-of-knowledge-a-brief-introduction-to-georg-lukacs/>.
2. *Weekly Worker* 987 (November 21, 2013), available online at <http://www.cpgb.org.uk/home/weekly-worker/987/luk%C3%A1cs-the-philosophy-trap>.
3. *Weekly Worker* 869 (June 9, 2011), available online at <http://www.cpgb.org.uk/home/weekly-worker/869/the-philosophy-of-history>.
4. *Weekly Worker* 878 (August 11, 2011), available online at <http://www.cpgb.org.uk/home/weekly-worker/878/defending-marxist-hegelianism-against-a-marxist-critique>.
5. *Platypus Review* 21 (March 2010), available online at <http://platypus1917.org/2010/03/15/gillian-roses-hegelian-critique-of-marxism/>.
6. See my "The relevance of Lenin today," *Platypus Review* 48 (July–August 2012), available online at: <http://platypus1917.org/2012/07/01/the-relevance-of-lenin-today/>.
7. Quoted in Detlev Claussen, *Adorno: One Last Genius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 48.
8. "Idea for a universal history from a cosmopolitan point of view" (1784), available online at: <http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/kant/universal-history.htm>.
9. "Address to the Central Committee of the Communist League" (1850), available online at:<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/communist-league/1850-ad1.htm>.
10 "Late capitalism or industrial society?" AKA "Is Marx obsolete?" (1968).
11. "The authoritarian state" (1942).
12. *The Human Condition [Vita Activa]* (1958).
13. *Economic Philosophy* (1962).
14. See Mike Beggs, "Joan Robinson's 'Open letter from a Keynesian to a Marxist'" (July 2011), which quotes in full Robinson's letter from 1953 to Ronald Meek, available online at <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2011/07/joan-robinsons-open-letter-from-a-keynesian-to-a-marxist-2/>.
15. *The End of Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Joan Stambaugh (University of Chicago Press, 2003), 87.
16. *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 433.
17. 1966 interview in *Der Spiegel*, published posthumously May 31, 1976.
18. "Reflections on class theory" (1942).
19. "Reification and the consciousness of the proletariat," *History and Class Consciousness* (1923).
20. "On Critical Inquiry and critical theory: A short history of non-being," *Critical Inquiry* 30 (Winter 2004), 416–417.
21. See Schmitt's *The Concept of the Political* (1927/32).
22. Review of the English translation of Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* (1973) in *The American Political Science Review* 70.2 (June 1976), 598–599.

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man population, where the KPD had no chance.

MK: The criticisms of the transport workers' strike, or "the Schlageter affair," must not only relate to the forms of action, but must be understood politically. It was an attempt to take nationalism and the outrage over the treaty of Versailles, i.e. moods, and turn them to the Left.[3] I do not think it was well conceived, but you have to understand it in that context. | **P**

Transcribed by Jerzy Sobotta. Translated by Richard Rubin.

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1. Kellner here is referring to the German edition of Trotsky's writings entitled *Schriften Uber Deutschland*, but the English volume likewise contains Mandel's introduction.
2. Leon Trotsky, "What is National Socialism?" in *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971), 405, also available online at <<http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/germany/1933/330610.htm>>.
3. For the Schlageter Affair, see Karl Radek "Leo Schlageter: A Wanderer into the Void" available online at <<http://www.marxists.org/archive/radek/1923/06/schlageter.htm>>. For a sympathetic discussion of the Schlageter line, see Uli von Hagen, "Rosa Luxemburg's Legacy: A Reply to Jerzy Sobotta" in the *Platypus Review* #20 (February 2010).

Why still read Lukács? The place of "philosophical" questions in Marxism

Chris Cutrone

The following is based on a presentation given on January 11, 2014 in Chicago. Video recording available online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FyAx32lzC0U>; audio recording at <https://archive.org/details/cutrone_lukacsteachin011114_201401>.

The role of "critical theory"

Why read Georg Lukács today?[1] Especially when his most famous work, *History and Class Consciousness*, is so clearly an expression of its specific historical moment, the aborted world revolution of 1917–19 in which he participated, attempting to follow Vladimir Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg. Are there "philosophical" lessons to be learned or principles to be gleaned from Lukács's work, or is there, rather, the danger, as the Communist Party of Great Britain's Mike Macnair has put it, of "theoretical overkill," stymieing of political possibilities, closing up the struggle for socialism in tiny authoritarian and politically sterile sects founded on "theoretical agreement?"

Mike Macnair's article "Lukács: The philosophy trap"[2] argues about the issue of the relation between theory and practice in the history of ostensible "Leninism," taking issue in particular with Lukács's books *History and Class Consciousness* (1923) and *Lenin* (1924), as well as with Karl Korsch's 1923 essay "Marxism and philosophy." The issue is what kind of theoretical generalization of consciousness could be derived from the experience of Bolshevism from 1903-21. I agree with Macnair that "philosophical" agreement is not the proper basis for political agreement, but this is not the same as saying that political agreement has no theoretical implications. I've discussed this previously in "The philosophy of history"[3] and "Defending Marxist Hegelianism from a Marxist critique,"[4] as well as in "Gillian Rose's 'Hegelian' critique of Marxism."[5] The issue is whether theoretical "positions" have necessary political implications. I think it is a truism to say that there is no sure theoretical basis for effective political practice. But Macnair seems to be saying nothing more than this. In subordinating theory to practice, Macnair loses sight of the potential critical role theory can play in political practice, specifically the task of consciousness of history in the struggle for transforming society in an emancipatory direction.

A certain relation of theory to practice is a matter specific to the modern era, and moreover a problem specific to the era of capitalism, that is, after the Industrial Revolution, the emergence of the modern proletarianized working class and its struggle for socialism, and the crisis of bourgeois social relations and thus of consciousness of society involved in this process.

Critical theory recognizes that the role of theory in the attempt to transform society is not to justify or legitimate or provide normative sanction, not to rationalize what is happening anyway, but rather to *critique*, to explore conditions of possibility for change. The role of such critical theory is not to describe how things are, but rather how they might become, how things could and should be, but are not, yet.

The political distinction, then, would be not over the description of reality but rather the question of what can and should be changed, and over the direction of that change. Hence, critical theory as such goes beyond the distinction of analysis from description. The issue is not theoretical analysis proper to practical matters, but, beyond that, the issue of transforming practices, with active agency and subjective recognition, as opposed to merely experiencing change as something that has already happened. Capitalism itself is a transformative practice, but that transformation has eluded consciousness, specifically regarding the ways change has happened and political judgments about this. This is the specific role of theory, and hence the place of theoretical issues or "philosophical" concerns in Marxism. Marxist critical theory cannot be compared to other forms of theory, because they are not concerned with changing the world and the politics of our changing practices. Lukács distinguished Marxism from "contemplative" or "reified" consciousness, to which bourgeois society had otherwise succumbed in capitalism.

If ostensibly "Marxist" tendencies such as those of the followers of Tony Cliff have botched "theory," which undoubtedly they have, it is because they have conflated or rendered indistinct the role of critical theory as opposed to the political exigencies of propaganda: For organizations dedicated to propaganda, there must be agreement as to such propaganda; the question is the role of theory in such propaganda activity. If theory is debased to justifying propaganda, then its critical role is evacuated, and indeed it can mask opportunism. But then it ceases to be proper theory, not becoming simply "wrong" or falsified but rather *ideological*, which is a different matter. This is what happened, according to Lukács and Korsch, in the 2nd/Socialist International, resulting in the "vulgarization" of Marxism, or the confusion of the formulations of political propaganda instead of properly Marxist critical theorization.

"Proletarian socialism"

The "proletariat" was Marx's neologism for the condition of the post-Industrial Revolution working class, which was analogous metaphorically to the Ancient Roman Republic's class of "proletarians:" The modern industrial working class was composed of "citizens without property." In modern, bourgeois society, for instance in the view of John Locke, property in objects is derived from labor, which is the first property. Hence, to be a laborer without property is a self-contradiction in a very specific sense, in that the "expropriation" of labor in capitalism happens as a function of society. A modern "free wage-laborer" is supposed to be a contractual agent with full rights of ownership and disposal over her own labor in its exchange, its buying and selling as property, as a commodity. This is the most elementary form of right in bourgeois society, from which other claims, for instance, individual right to one's own person and equality before the law, flow. If, according to Marx and Engels, the condition of the modern, post-Industrial Revolution working class or "proletariat" expressed a self-contradiction of bourgeois social relations, this was because this set of social relations, or "bourgeois right," was in need of transformation: the Industrial Revolution indicated a potential condition beyond bourgeois society. If the workers were expropriated, according to Marx and Engels, this was because of a problem of the value of labor at a greater societal level, not at the level of the individual capitalist firm, not reducible to the contractual relation of the employee to her employer, which remained "fair exchange." The wage contract was still bourgeois, but the value of the labor exchanged was undermined in the greater (global) society, which was no longer simply bourgeois but rather industrial, that is, "capital"-ist.

The struggle for socialism by the proletariat was the attempt to reappropriate the social property of labor that had been transformed and "expropriated" or "alienated" in the Industrial Revolution. Marx and Engels thought this could be achieved only beyond capitalism, for instance in the value of accumulated past labor in science and technology, what Marx called the "general (social) intellect." An objective condition was expressed subjectively, but that objective condition of society was itself self-contradictory and so expressed in a self-contradictory form of political subjectivity, "proletarian socialism." For Marx and Engels, the greatest exemplar of this self-contradictory form of politics aiming to transform society was Chartism in Britain, a movement of the high moment of the Industrial Revolution and its crisis in the 1830s–40s, whose most pointed political expression was, indicatively, universal suffrage. The crisis of the bust period of the "Hungry '40s" indicated the maturation of bourgeois society, in crisis, as the preceding boom era of the 1830s already had raised expectations of socialism, politically as well as technically and culturally, for instance in the "Utopian Socialism" of Fourier, Saint-Simon, Owen et al., as well as in the "Young Hegelian" movement taking place around the world in the 1830s, on whose scene the younger Marx and Engels arrived belatedly, during its crisis and dissolution in the 1840s.

One must distinguish between the relation of theory and practice in the revolutionary bourgeois era and in the post-Industrial Revolution era of the crisis of bourgeois society in capitalism and the proletariat's struggle for socialism. If in the bourgeois era there was a productive tension, a reflective, speculative or "philosophical" relation, for instance for Kant and Hegel, between theory and practice, in the era of the crisis of bourgeois society there is rather a "negative" or "critical" relation. Hence, the need for Marxism.

As the Frankfurt School Marxist Critical Theorist Theodor Adorno put it, the separation of theory and practice was *emancipatory*: it expressed the freedom to think at variance with prevailing social practices unknown in the Ancient or Medieval world of traditional civilization. The freedom to relate and articulate theory and practice was a hallmark of the revolutionary emergence of bourgeois society: the combined revolution in society of politics, economics, culture (religion), technique and philosophy—the latter under the rubric "Enlightenment." By contrast, Romantic socialism of the early 19th century sought to re-unify theory and practice, to make them one thing as they had been under religious cosmology as a total way of life. If, according to Adorno, Marxism, as opposed to Romantic socialism, did not aspire to a "unity of theory and practice" in terms of their identity, but rather of their articulated separation in the transformation of society—transformation of both consciousness and social being—then what Adorno recognized was that, as he put it, the relation of theory and practice is not established once-and-for-all but rather "fluctuates historically." Marxism, through different phases of its history, itself expressed this fluctuation. But the fluctuation was an expression of crisis in Marxism, and ultimately of failure: Adorno called it a "negative dialectic." It expressed and was tasked by the failure of the revolution. But this failure was not merely the failure of the industrial working class's struggle for socialism in the early 20th century, but rather that failure was the failure of the emancipation of the bourgeois revolution: this failure consumed history, undermining the past achievements of freedom—as Adorno's colleague Walter Benjamin put it, "Even the dead are not safe." Historical Marxism is not a safe legacy but suffers the vicissitudes of the present. If we still are reading Lukács, we need to recognize the danger to which his thought, as part of Marxism's history, is subject in the present. One way of protecting historical Marxism's legacy would be through recognizing its *inapplicability* in the present, distancing it from immediate enlistment in present concerns, which would concede too much already, undermining—liquidating without redeeming—consciousness once already achieved.

The division in Marxism

The title of Lukács's book *History and Class Consciousness* should be properly understood directly as indicating that Lukács's studies, the various essays collected in the book, were about class consciousness as consciousness of history. This goes back to the early Marx and Engels, who understood the emergence of the modern proletariat and its political struggles for socialism after the Industrial Revolution in a "Hegelian" manner, that is, as phenomena or "forms of appearance" of society and history specific to the 19th century. Moreover, Marx and Engels, in their point of departure for "Marxism" as opposed to other varieties of Hegelianism and socialism, looked forward to the dialectical "*Aufhebung*" of this new modern proletariat: its simultaneous self-fulfillment and completion, self-negation, and self-transcendence in socialism, which would be (also) that of capitalism. In other words, Marx and Engels regarded the proletariat in the struggle for socialism as the central, key phenomenon of capitalism, but the symptomatic expression of its crisis, self-contradiction and need for self-overcoming. This is because capitalism was regarded by Marx and Engels as a form of society, specifically the form of bourgeois society's crisis and self-contradiction. As Hegelians, Marx and Engels regarded contradiction as the appearance of the necessity and possibility for change. So, the question becomes, what is the meaning of the self-contradiction of bourgeois society, the self-contradiction of bourgeois social relations, expressed by the post-Industrial Revolution working class and its forms of political struggle?

Marx and Engels regarded the politics of proletarian socialism as a form of bourgeois politics in crisis and self-contradiction. This is what it meant for Marx and Engels to say that the objective existence of the proletariat and its subjective struggle for socialism were phenomena of the self-contradiction of bourgeois society and its potential *Aufhebung*.

The struggle for socialism was self-contradictory. This is what Lukács ruminated on in *History and Class Consciousness*. But this was not original to Lukács or achieved by Lukács's reading of Marx and Engels, but rather mediated through the politics of Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg: Lenin and Luxemburg provided access, for Lukács as well as others in the nascent 3rd or Communist International, to the "original Marxism" of Marx and Engels. For Marx and Engels recognized that socialism was inevitably ideological: a self-contradictory form of politics and consciousness. The question was how to advance the contradiction.

As a participant in the project of the Communist International, for Lukács in his books *History and Class Consciousness* and *Lenin* (as well as for Karl Korsch in "Marxism and philosophy" and other writings circa 1923), the intervening Marxism of the 2nd or Socialist International had become an obstacle to Marx and Engels's Marxism and thus to proletarian socialist revolution in the early 20th century, an obstacle that the political struggles of Lenin, Luxemburg and other radicals in the 2nd International sought to overcome. This obstacle of 2nd International Marxism had theoretical as well as practical-political aspects: It was expressed both at the level of theoretical consciousness as well as at the level of political organization.

2nd International Marxism had *become* an obstacle. According to Luxemburg, in *Reform or Revolution?* (1900) and in Lenin's *What is to be Done?* (1902) (the latter of which was an attempted application of the terms of the Revisionist Dispute in the 2nd International to conditions in the Russian movement), the development of proletarian socialism in the 2nd International had produced its own obstacle, so to speak, in becoming self-divided between "orthodox Marxists" who retained fidelity to the revolutionary politics of proletarian socialism in terms of the Revolutions of 1848 and the Paris Commune of 1871, and "Revisionists" who thought that political practice and theoretical consciousness of Marxism demanded transformation under the altered historical social conditions that had been achieved by the workers' struggle for socialism, which proceeded in an "evolutionary" way. Eduard Bernstein gave the clearest expression of this "Revisionist" view, which was influenced by the apparent success of British Fabianism that led to the contemporary formation of the Labour Party, and found its greatest political support among the working class's trade union leaders in the 2nd International, especially in Germany. In Bernstein's view, capitalism was evolving into socialism through the political gains of the workers.

Marxism of the Third International

Lenin, Luxemburg, and Lukács and Korsch among others following them, thought that the self-contradictory nature and character—origin and expression—of proletarian socialism meant that the latter's development proceeded in a self-contradictory way, which meant that the movement of historical "progress" was self-contradictory. Luxemburg summarized this view in *Reform or Revolution?*, where she pointed out that the growth in organization and consciousness of the proletariat was itself part of—a new phenomenon of—the self-contradiction of capitalism, and so expressed itself in its own self-contradictory way. This was how Luxemburg grasped the Revisionist Dispute in the Marxism of the 2nd International itself. This self-contradiction was theoretical as well as practical: for Luxemburg and for Lenin the "theoretical struggle" was an expression of practical self-contradiction. Leon Trotsky expressed this "orthodox Marxist" view shared by Lenin and Luxemburg in his 1906 pamphlet *Results and Prospects*, on the 1905 Revolution in Russia, by pointing out that the various "pre-requisites of socialism" were self-contradictory, that they "retarded" rather than promoted each other. This view was due to the understanding that proletarian socialism was bound up in the crisis of capitalism which was disintegrative: the struggle for socialism was caught up in the disintegration of bourgeois society in capitalism. For Luxemburg, Lenin and Trotsky, contra Bernstein, the crisis of capitalism was deepening.

One of the clearest expressions of this disintegrative process of self-contradiction in Luxemburg, Lenin and Trotsky's time was the relation of capitalism as a global system to the political divisions between national states in the era of "monopoly capital" and "imperialism" that led to the World War, but was already apprehended in the Revisionist Dispute at the turn of the 20th century as expressing the need for socialism—the need for proletarian political revolution. Lenin and Luxemburg's academic doctoral dissertations of the 1890s, on the development of capitalism in Russia and Poland, respectively, addressed this phenomenon of "combined and uneven" development in the epoch of capitalist crisis, disintegration and "decay," as expressing the need for world revolution. Moreover, Lenin in *What is to be Done?* expressed the perspective that the Revisionist Dispute in Marxism was itself an expression of the crisis of capitalism manifesting within the socialist workers' movement, a prelude to revolution.

While it is conventional to oppose Luxemburg and Lenin's "revolutionary socialism" to Bernstein et al.'s "evolutionism," and hence to oppose Luxemburg and Lenin's "dialectical" Marxism to the Revisionist "mechanical" one, what is lost in this view is the role of historical dynamics of consciousness in Lenin and Luxemburg's (and Trotsky's) view: This is the phenomenon of historical "regression" as opposed to "progress," which the "evolutionary socialism" of Bernstein et al. assumed and later Stalinism also assumed. The most important distinction of Luxemburg and Lenin's (as well as Trotsky's) "orthodox" perspective—in Lukács's (and Korsch's) view, what made their Marxism "dialectical" and "Hegelian"—was its recognition of historical "regression:" its recognition of bourgeois society as disintegrative and self-destructive in its crisis of capitalism. But this process of disintegration was recognized as affecting the proletariat and its politics as well. Benjamin and Adorno's theory of regression began here.

Historical regression

The question is how to properly recognize, in political practice as well as theory, the ways in which the struggle for proletarian socialism—socialism achieved by way of the political action of wage-laborers in the post-Industrial Revolution era as such—is caught up and participates in the process of capitalist disintegration: the expression of proletarian socialism as a phenomenon of *history*, specifically as a phenomenon of crisis and regression.

This history has multiple registers: There is the principal register of the post-Industrial Revolution crisis of bourgeois society in capitalism, its crisis and departure from preceding bourgeois social relations (those of the prior, pre-industrial eras of "cooperation" and "manufacture" of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, in Marx's terms); but there is also the register of the dynamics and periods within capitalism itself. Capitalism was for Marx and Engels already the regression of bourgeois society. This is where Lukács's (and Korsch's) perspective, derived from Luxemburg and Lenin's (and Trotsky's) views from 1900-19, what they considered an era of "revolution," might become problematic for us, today: the history of the post-1923 world has not been, as 1848–1914 was in the 2nd International "orthodox" or "radical" Marxist (as opposed to Revisionist) view, a process of increasing crisis and development of revolutionary political necessities, but rather a process of continued social disintegration of capitalism without, however, this being expressed in and through the struggle for proletarian socialism.

It is important to note that Lukács (and Korsch) abandoned rather rapidly their 1923 perspectives, adjusting to developing circumstances of a non-revolutionary era.

Here is where the problematic relation of Tony Cliff's political project to Lukács (and Korsch), and hence to Lenin, Luxemburg and Trotsky, may be located: in Cliff's perspective on his (post-1945) time being a "non-revolutionary" one, demanding a project of "propaganda" that is related to but differs significantly from the moment of Lenin et al. For the Cliffites and their organizations, "political practice" is one of propaganda in a non-revolutionary period, in which political action is less of a directly practical but rather of an exemplary-propagandistic significance. This has been muddled by their strategy of "movement-building."

This was not the case for Luxemburg, Lenin and Trotsky, whose political practice was directly about the struggle for power, and in whose practical project Lukács's (and Korsch's) "theoretical" work sought to participate, offering attempts at clarification of self-understanding to revolutionaries "on the march." Cliff and his followers, at least at their most self-conscious, have known that they were doing something essentially different from Lenin et al.: They were not organizing a revolutionary political party seeking a bid for power as part of an upsurge of working class struggle in the context of a global movement (the 2nd International), as had been the case for Lenin at the time of *What is to be Done?* (1902), or Luxemburg's *Mass Strike* pamphlet and Trotsky in the Russian Revolution of 1905. Yet the Cliffites have used the ideas of Lenin and Luxemburg and their followers, such as Lukács and Korsch as well as Trotsky, to justify their practices. This presents certain problems. Yes, Lenin et al. have become ideological in the hands of the Cliffites, among others—"Leninism" for the Stalinists most prominently. So the question turns to the status of Lenin's ideas in themselves and in their own moment.[6]

Mike Macnair points out that Lukács's (and Korsch's) works circa 1923 emphasized attack and so sought to provide a "theory of the offensive," as opposed to Lenin's arguments about the necessities of "retreat" in 1920 (as against and in critique of "Left-Wing" Communism) and what Macnair has elsewhere described as the need for "Kautskyan patience" in politically building for proletarian socialism (as in the era of the 2nd International 1889–1914), and so this limits the perspective of Lukács (and Korsch), after Lenin and Luxemburg (and Trotsky), to a period of "civil war" (circa 1905, and 1914/17–19/20/21). In this, Macnair is concerned, rightly, with "theory" becoming a blinder to proper political practice: "Theoretical overkill" is a matter of over-"philosophizing" politics. But there is a difference between active campaigning in the struggle for power, whether in attack or (temporary) retreat, and propagandizing, to which Marxism (at best) has been relegated ever since the early 20th century.

However, in raising, by contrast, the need for a conscious openness to "empirical reality" of political experience, Macnair succumbs to a linear-progressive view of history as well as of political practice, turning this into a matter of "Lessons learned:" It becomes a quantitative rather than qualitative matter. Moreover, it becomes a matter of theory in a conventional rather than the Marxist "critical" sense, in which the description of reality and its analysis approach more and more adequate approximations.

Lenin, Luxemburg and Trotsky, and so Lukács (and Korsch), as "orthodox" as opposed to "revisionist" Marxists, conceived of the development of consciousness, both theoretically and practically-organizationally, rather differently, in that a necessary "transformation of Marxism," which took place in the "peculiar guise" of a "return to the original Marxism of Marx and Engels" (Korsch), could be an asset in the present. But that "present" was the "crisis of Marxism" 1914–19, which is not, today, our moment—as even Cliff and his followers, with their notion of "propaganda" in a non-revolutionary era, have recognized (as did Lukács and Korsch, in subsequently abandoning their circa-1923 perspectives).

So what is the status of such ideas in a non-revolutionary era?

Korsch and the problem of "philosophy"

Karl Korsch, Lukács's contemporary in the 3rd International, whose work Macnair deliberately and explicitly puts aside, offered a pithy formulation in his 1923 essay on "Marxism and philosophy," that, "a problem which supersedes present relations may have been formulated in an anterior epoch." That is, we may live under the shadow of a problem that goes beyond us.

This is a non-linear, non-progressive and recursive view of history, which Korsch gleaned from Luxemburg and Lenin's contributions to the Revisionist Dispute in the 2nd International (e.g., *Reform or Revolution?*, *What is to be Done?*, etc.; and Trotsky's *Results and Prospects*). It has its origins in Marx and Engels's view of capitalism as a regressive, disintegrative process. This view has two registers: the self-contradiction and crisis of bourgeois social relations in the transition to capital-ism after the Industrial Revolution; and the disintegrative and self-destructive process of the reproduction of capitalism itself, which takes place within and as a function of the reproduction of bourgeois social relations, through successive crises.

Marx and Engels recognized that the crisis of capitalism was motivated by the reproduction of bourgeois social relations under conditions of the disintegration of the value of labor in the Industrial Revolution, producing the need for socialism. The industrial-era working class's struggle for the social value of its labor was at once regressive, as if bourgeois social relations of the value of labor had not been

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