NAVIGATING THE EMERGING NEW WORLD
Social Dynamics between Human Rights
and Digitalized Power

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ABSTRACTS

Organizers:
Harry F. Dahms (University of Tennessee - Knoxville)
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Co-Organizers:
Daniel Krier (Iowa State University)
Christopher Schlembach (University of Vienna)
Krešimir Žažar (University of Zagreb, Croatia)

PAPER PRESENTER:

NAME:	Claude Barbre, M.S., M.Div., Ph.D., L.P.		Distinguished Full Professor, The Chicago School of Professional Psychology; Board and Faculty Member, The Chicago Center for Psychoanalysis (CCP).
Address	3813 N. Alta Vista Terrace, Chicago, IL 60613		
Tel	212-865-0435		
E-mail	claudebarbre@earthlink.net		

Cerberus Unbound: Social Media and the Psychological Underpinning of Vigilantism

In Greek mythology, Cerberus, often referred to as the hound of Hades, is a three-head dog that guards the gates of the Underworld. His duties are to prevent the dead from leaving their appropriate realm, and to guard against perceived living interlopers who may seek to enter its domain. The creature is often depicted as ravenous, rapacious, patrolling the riverbanks of the Styx, ever vigilante to maintain the allotted boundaries of earth and afterlife, always peripatetic when fulfilling its steadfast gatekeeping role. The Greek gods of mythology thought that without this liminal order, chaos would befall the worlds. The image of Cerberus unbound can serve as a metaphor for the breakdown of social order, and in this presentation we will discuss the emergence of vigilantism as a blurring of cultural ambits, especially in regard to the phenomena of group militias, private policing, and the role of social media that rationalize such emergences. In short, a vigilante is often defined as a "civilian or organization acting in a law enforcement capacity (or in pursuit of self-perceived justice) without legal authority". Thus, "vigilante justice" is "often rationalized by the concept that proper legal forms of criminal punishment are either nonexistent, insufficient, or inefficient. Vigilantes normally see the government as ineffective in enforcing the law; such individuals often claim to justify their actions as a fulfillment of the wishes of the community" (Harris, 2001) As Segal (2013) notes, in societies where there is a loss of external, central control twinned with the rise of multiple conflicts between various communities, there is a declining ability of customs to regulate conflict: "In sum, in a society where the threats of danger appears on all sides, and the legal system retreats before these dangers, violent trauma is likely to promote a never-ending spiral of aggression…The result is a great rise in post-traumatic stress disorder, and the consequent increase of institutionalization of vigilante behavior." In this presentation we will explore the causes of vigilantism, in particular the psychosocial roots that forge these destructive frames of social character, in particular looking briefly at the underpinning of social media determinants. Drawing from the writing of Vamik Volkan and Sabby Sagall, we will explore not only the political and economic influences that divide communities and activate vigilante justice, but also the links between digital platforms and cultural propoganda that influence the psychology of vigilante actions, while also examining the objective and subjective reasons for vigilantism, the causes of despair and humiliations that seek their own justice through murderousness and self-hate, as well as the forces of irrational dehumanization of the other that often emerges from intergenerational conflict and unresolved, unspeakable suffering and injustice.

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this educational activity the participants will be able to:
1) Define and interpret the psychosocial meaning of the term "vigilantism" by exploring historical roots of its principles and ideas applied to individual and cultural examples.
2) Recognize and recall the psychosocial causes of vigilante creation and activity (e.g. social media, economic, political, cultural, psychological) from an examination of multicultural examples of individual and group aspects of vigilantism in specific, concrete situations.
3) Analyze creative interventions toward addressing and treating violent vigilante ideologies through psychosocial approaches and treatment initiatives.
4) Understand the impact of social media on the institutionalizing of vigilante phenomenology.

From tactics of public opinion to strategies of The Political: graft, rackets, blackmail.

Thomas F. Bechtold
University of Tennessee Knoxville
4/30/2022

This is a study of the movement from 'micropolitics' to Politics writ large as The Political Institution. The focus is typographical of the attitudes towards the latter (Politics) from a disposal to positions in the former: politics as micrological and vulnerable to psychologistic 'public opinion' and its focus groups, market sub-segments, and issue-voters.

The purpose of this study is to chart multiple pathways backwards through governance and sovereignty by the unexceptional politics of decisively irreflexive and irresponsive conversions of 'non-political' experience most typically (yet not exclusively) performed in practiced naivete. Further, to attribute these naïve performative characteristics to the inversion of modes of externalization to internalization, or interiorization to exteriorization, as the saturnalia of 'moods' that are public opinion, however engineered.

The study culminates in how graft, rackets, and blackmail are founded in the formative and nominative glossemes of the 'non-political', and of unexceptional politics; practiced in de-politicized discourses, spectacle, and consumption of the material of media and ordinary commodities. This foundation for systemically distorted social relations traces the contours of social structures corroded through increasingly anesthetized politics as a sociological form of dynamic stabilization.

Adele Bianco

The Sixth Continent:
Space exploration and exploitation and the role of new technologies

Since the beginning of this century the (outer) space, i.e., the universe, has acquired a growing importance also from the "social" point of view. This is the reason why a new sub-discipline of sociology has been formed, the Astrosociology, at the beginning of this century.

Sociology indeed has an established tradition of studies devoted to space, starting with Simmel (1992, chp. 9) and Durkheim (2013) and focusing on the social and material constitution of spaces. The peculiarity of Astrosociology is that it looks at (outer) space not just as a scientific topic reserved for a few specialists, but because it gets increasingly relevance for our daily life. In fact, the way we use the space today affects our lives, e.g., the communication satellites and their (disruptive) impact on how we communicate each other and worldwide.

The race for space began over half a century ago, during the Cold War. At that time the two superpowers were engaged in the struggle for supremacy. At that time, however, the (outer) space was not intended as the extension of a Nation State, even if the military and business complex had their own relevance (Wills, 2016). The novelty today is that the confrontation involves not only the superpowers but also a set of emerging powers, such as China and Europe, and regional i.e., medium-level ones (WEF 2022, p. 72).

Moreover, the exploitation of space in recent years from the economic and commercial point of view has undergone an acceleration and intensification, also thanks the new technologies (Dickens 2016). This leads to an international competition in order to privatize and economically exploit the (outer) space. Until now it used to be a common space. The phenomenon is analogous to the appropriation of common land enclosures in Elizabethan England, when the common people were deprived of the traditional rights of access.

Commercial exploitation of space has triggered increased private investment in communications satellites and related internet services. This fact entails the claims of governments especially for Low Earth Orbit (LEO) or Medium Earth Orbit (MEO) and generates a growing risk of excessive traffic and collisions.

Space is also seen in terms of possible new other places to colonize and from which to draw resources, exactly as it was after the discovery of the New World, as if it were a sixth continent.

As we can see, space is increasingly considered an extension of our planet. In this sense it can be said that the social order resulting from globalization is now being extended beyond the planet, with both advantages and risks of each new "great conquest".

The paper is structures as follows. Starting from the traditional sociological definition of space, the first part is devoted to the profile of this new topic: the Astrosociology. The second one deals with the research areas of the Astrosociology, particularly focusing on the commercialisation of space and on the possibility of human civilizations beyond Earth. Lastly, I'm going to consider the increasing risk concerning crowding and competition in space.

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Prof. PhD. Adele Bianco
University "G. D'Annunzio" Chieti-Pescara
Department of Philosophical, Pedagogical and Economic-Quantitative Sciences
Via dei Vestini I - 66013 CHIETI
Mail: *adele.bianco@unich.it*
https://www.unich.it/ugov/person/1861
Tel. +39 333 26 76 040
Skype: adele.bianco4
www.profadelebianco.wordpress.com
https://unich-it.academia.edu/AdeleBianco

The Standpoint of the Proletariat Today

Arthur Bueno (Lecturer and Research Fellow, Goethe University of Frankfurt)

Whoever intends to actualize Lukács' notion of 'the standpoint of the proletariat' today will face significant challenges. The idea that the proletariat could become the 'identical subject-object of history', restoring the unity of a world disintegrated by capitalist reification, has been subject to harsh criticisms. Many recent approaches to reification have thus attempted to avoid the problems associated with Lukács' proposal by abandoning altogether the assumption that the proletariat could play such a role in history. Yet this puts the critique of reification in a paradoxical situation: abstaining from relying on the proletariat or any other specific social group as the bearer of a radical transformation of society, these perspectives tend to build a "*hiatus irracionalis*" between reified and non-reified forms of life in a way that obfuscates the question of how one could collectively move from one to the other in actual social reality. In this paper, I claim that a reinterpretation of Lukács' arguments concerning the transition from reified to revolutionary consciousness provides crucial elements to move beyond that paradox. Furthermore, I argue that such a reconstruction of Lukács' phenomenology of (de)reification responds not only to conceptual problems associated with his essay but also to practical issues posed by the capitalist social order today – in particular, the dissemination of precarized 'entrepreneurs of the self' through a process of simultaneous bourgeoisification and proletarianisation.

An Analysis of Political Awareness among the Faculty Members of Different Colleges In Indore (India)

Prof. (Dr.) Mamta Chandrashekhar D.Litt.

Head

Department of Political Science,

SABV Government Arts and Commerce College, Indore (Madhya Pradesh) INDIA

Email: dr.mamtac@yahoo.com

India is a largest democratic country in the world and political awareness is the key to its success. Educational institute specially colleges are the hub of knowledge. The main focus of the study will be on Political awareness, understanding and attitude. So this research paper will explores the level of political awareness of the faculty of different educational Institutions specially colleges of Indore (Madhya Pradesh) India. This paper draws on structured questionnaire with respondents who identified as Lecturers, Assistant Professors, Associate Professors and Professors. Objects of Political Awareness and their contribution to the components of political awareness, experienced by respondents, including the objects of awareness, political structures, political processes, and political cleavages. Political roles and political issues while facets of awareness, political attentiveness, political knowledge, political participation and political discussion will be the central part of the study. The results will be analysed. The research will be fruitful to make further policies and a strong nation.

Keywords: Political awareness, participation, knowledge, understanding

The Jews killed Moses. Sigmund Freud, Jewish identity and antisemitism

Daniel Chernilo
(**Daniel.Chernilo.S@uai.cl**; **D.Chernilo@lboro.ac.uk**)

Professor of Sociology, School of Government, Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez, Chile
Visiting Professor of Social and Political Thought, Loughborough University, UK

Published soon before his death in 1939, Freud completed his last book on *Moses and Monotheism* while already living in exile, in London. Freud was painfully aware of the unhappy timing of this publication, given that two of the book's main theses could be interpreted as a form of Jewish self-hatred. The first claim questions the Jewish origins of Moses and contends instead that the founder of the Jewish faith was in fact an Egyptian; the second suggests that, in order to hide this impure origin, the Jews killed Moses and then created the myth of Moses the liberator as a way of concealing their terrible deed. In addition to countless books and academic articles, Freud's *Moses* has continuously attracted the attention of a way range of leading intellectuals– from Martin Buber to Peter Sloterdijk via Leo Strauss, Hans Blumenberg and Edward Said. In this paper, I offer three main arguments: (1) against the early reactions to the book, several of Freud's contentious claims have held the test of time rather well; (2) the book offers an plausible argument on the nature of Jewish identity in general and what it means to be Jewish in the modern world, in particular, and; (3) the most problematic of the book's argument is Freud's thesis on the obduracy and the obstinacy of antisemitism in Western culture.

Portsmouth Politics as Praxis: Applying Theory as Mayor of Portsmouth, Ohio

Sean Dunne

I began my first four-year term on Portsmouth City Council in January, 2018. After winning reelection in 2021, I have served as the Mayor of Portsmouth since January 2022. While sitting through city council meetings can sometimes make residency in a Grand Hotel Abyss seem desirable, this experience has provided multiple opportunities to apply and test social theory. Furthermore, social theory was explicitly incorporated into the processes behind community development projects and the advance of new legislation, which provided insight into how social theory can become a central point of discussion during the practice of local politics. In approximately four and a half years, we have been able to pass legislation to support the LGBTQ+ Community and the African American community in the city. Our city was the 32nd municipality in the State of Ohio to extend anti-discrimination protections to the LGBTQ+ community in the areas of housing, accommodation and employment and we advanced legislation to address issues of racism in high school sport that attracted the attention of other municipalities and states. A critique of previous media discourses and production of new ones highlighted the influence of language in the social construction of reality. This was demonstrated in the reviews of national media discourses and in the collaboration with community members in the creation of more locally produced narratives. Finally, attention to the social construction of space led to the transformation of a number of spaces within the downtown.

Ven Egesi Jonathan .C
Imo State Polytechnic, Umuagewo- Ohaji P.M.B 1472, Owerri.
E-Mail: Joegesi2001@Yahoo.Com.
Phone: +234(080)36733482, +234(080) 35536713.

X-Raying Human Rights In Contemporary Nigerian Society.

The challenge and issue of human right abuses in Nigeria is now unbecoming as people who were considered as bonafide citizens of the country has now been reduced to the level of lower animals. The basic universal fundamental human rights declaration of 1948 is fast becoming a scam in Nigeria. The rights, benefits and privileges of Nigerians are not observed, respected or upheld. The Government seem to be so tyrannical to the extent that the people have become helpless and hapless that when they speak out at all, their opinions does not count at all. That in essence means that the future of the people is not guaranteed as leaders over the years have come up with empty promises that does not hold water. Various data collection techniques as interviews, questionnaire, and the internet were used to garner data for analysis. The structural- functionalist theory was adopted as theoretical framework for analysis, thereafter, conclusion was drawn.
Keywords: X-Raying, Human Rights, Contemporary, Nigerian Society.

Some Issues of Logical Quantification in Parsons' Reconstruction of Marx's Class Theory

Prof. Dr. Daniel Fanta
UFMT, Cuiabá, Brazil

The article focuses on the brief reconstruction of Marx's class theory in Talcott Parsons' *Structure of Social Action* and his article *Social Classes and Class Conflict in the Light of Recent Sociological Theory* (in Parsons 1954). The main aim of this analysis is not to evaluate the soundness of Parsons reconstruction, but to investigate how the quantification used by Parsons may have influenced his appraisal of class theory in general. In other words, the paper will try to understand why Parsons considers Marx's theory "fundamentally, a version of utilitarian individualism" (Parsons 1949: 110) and why, in his essay for the centenary of the Communist Manifesto, the concept of class is reduced to an issue of individual status (afterwards shared by the wife and the children). Hence, the problem is not primarily an appraisal of Parsons position in view of the dichotomy order/conflict, but rather to reconstruct Parsons' concept of class regarding the logical quantification used therein. The hypothesis that leads the inquiry is that Parsons difficulty with the concept of class is not only an ideological issue, but roots in his methodological approach, that is, in a quantification which reduces all different kinds of social groups to the two quantifiers of modern logic, the existential and the universal.

The paper is related to a larger metatheoretical investigation dealing with *the logical quantification in social theory*. The main problem consists in identifying the effects of the shift in quantification, from the syllogistic threefold universal-particular-individual scheme to the twofold existential-universal model. Alcoforado, addressing modern logicians, said: "Even today the same misunderstandings reign in this field concerning the question of how to interpret the particularizing "some" and, consequently, how to evaluate the question of the existential import" (Alcoforado 1991, p. 40). In this sense, this metatheoretical research is concerned with the way in which different social theories deal with the *particular* quantification ("some"). It is important to stress, that the intention is not to provide an outline or a critique of Parsons' social ontology, but rather to investigate the logical instruments used to describe this social ontology and its consequences for the social theory.

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Hope in Knowing Our Past: Exploring the Relevance of Graeber and Wengrow's *The Dawn of Everything* for a Sustainable Future

Robert Garot
Associate Professor
John Jay College and CUNY Graduate Center

Our current anthropocene era forces us, as humans, into a dire confrontation with our relationship to nature. Graeber and Wengrow's, *The Dawn of Everything*, poses profound questions for the future of humanity and social scientific theorizing, derived from a reframing of our past based on the most recent archaeological evidence. Through developing a deeper, more grounded understanding of such questions as the state of nature, we find a new appreciation for indigenous modes of thought, their influence on the enlightenment, and the possibilities for survival they might provide in light of our current civilization's gradual collapse. Living in small, interlinked bands may be our best hope following the ravages of climate change; this talk will explore how the findings of Graeber and Wengrow provide a possible roadmap to a future of successful, sustainable, and harmonious living with nature.

From Democracy to Dictatorship: Understanding Societal Trends in the 21st Century

Charles Gattone

The 21st century has generated a qualitatively new set of global social dynamics and these require empirically-grounded and theoretically-informed analysis. Older conceptual frameworks do offer some insight into these changes, but there is also a clear need to develop fresh perspectives to better understand these developments. One recent trend is the ongoing fragmentation of public discourse into highly compartmentalized silos, often detached from empirical reality and generally intolerant of diverse perspectives. In addition, there is an ongoing drift toward autocratic forms of leadership in various regions of the world, where authoritarian leaders have in many instances managed to find popular support. Understanding these transformations requires a global orientation that draws on the strengths of a range of theoretical perspectives. This paper seeks to make this connection by building on the theoretical work of the past while also considering new ways to comprehend these changes. Durkheim, Marx, Weber, Veblen, Freud, Mannheim, Schumpeter, Arendt, Galbraith, Mills, Wallerstein, Bourdieu, Fraser, Habermas and others offer a wealth of insight into these trends. Identifying key ideas of these authors and applying them to current trends provides an essential springboard for innovative social analysis and has the potential to shed new light on contemporary realities. Technology, social conditions, consciousness, and identity formation are examples of factors that are considered in this analysis and offer a comprehensive conceptual foundation for further discussion.

Living beyond Governance in the Posthuman convergence: Anarcha-feminist insights on moving outside the limits of the Schizo-Society

Stephanie Gibb-Clark
PhD Student
Iowa State University

What is one's role, as an academic and activist, in the struggle for self-determination, liberation? How can those of us yet concerned with the massive, rising inequalities of power and resources stake a claim in the fight for liberation from the complex assemblage of social-cultural-material institutions that continuously, cryptically re/order the present social-material reality? In this paper, I suggest that rather than provide proscription for "liberation" and its ends, academic-activists should provide tools – tools for assessing the power at work, for imagining beyond the current power regimes, for intentional action – which may then also be taken up in practice. Tracing a line from Deleuze and Guattari's Schizophrenic Capitalist society introduced in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* through conceptualizations of the social in the Posthuman Convergence, particularly in the work of Rosi Braidotti, I lay out a theoretical framework that characterizes the current moment as an arborescent system ordered through the schizophrenic logics of white supremacist, imperialist, cis-heteropatriarchy- the schizo-society. However, this conceptualization of the social seemingly lacks a praxeological dimension for disrupting the continuous hierarchical re/ordering. It is here I turn to the anarcha-feminist tradition to engage the schizo-society beyond the limit of governance to both highlight the promise of engaging plateaus of pure difference and desire and offering insights into building the Steppes between while avoiding the reuptake of micro-fascisms of representation. In other words, by engaging the schizo-society with the anarcho-, I provide a step toward building a conceptual tool which can be deployed by activist-academics to re/figure the present through the folding of a prefigurative praxis within the ethical imperatives of liberatory social research: an axio-praxeology of anarcha-feminism.

Technologies Independent of Political Will: The Danger AI Poses to Liberal Democracy, Anticipated Already in Marx's Late Theory

Benjamin Gregg | University of Texas at Austin | bgregg@austin.utexas.edu

Marx's scholarship leads from an early devotion to emancipatory political activity to the economic determinism of the mature theory, that is, to a determinism that undermines emancipatory activity. This path offers a cautionary tale about the possible future relationship between artificial intelligence (AI) and democratic political community. Just as Marx's study of nineteenth century capitalism ends with a loss of freedom to a self-regulating economic system that has made itself independent of the will of the workers, so the rapid development of artificial intelligence may one day replace the normative practice of liberal politics with an AI-directed administration of humans. I analyze (A) Marx's warning about modern technology and then (B) show the possibility of a similar political danger in the possible future deployment of AI: the technological abandonment of liberal politics.

Social Sustainability in the City Context: Is Smartness a Propulsive Condition?

by **Romina Gurashi**
Research Fellow in General Sociology at the Department of Political Sciences of the Faculty of Political Sciences, Sociology and Communications of "Sapienza" University of Rome

There is a concern that can be identified in classical sociology (Simmel 1995; Weber 1958; Park, Burgess and McKenzie 1999; Wirth 1938; Mumford 1961) and that represents an extremely topical problem even today: how do we live in cities? Is the city context linked to an improvement in living conditions and wellbeing?

Contemporary societies have produced profound changes in the administration of the cities, in popular participation and in the way cities interface with citizens. Because of technological advances like digitization, platformization, big data and sensors, a shift toward "smart" cities has been possible and is being constantly facilitated (Bria and Morozov 2018). In this sense smart cities are cities that also strive to become sustainable in the three pillars of sustainable development outlined in the 2030 Agenda, namely: environmental, economic and social sustainability pillar.

Given this framework, the question this presentation addresses is: Is the social sustainability of cities a variable dependent form smartness?

To answer this question and avoid entering the debate on the environmental and economic pillars on which extensive literature has already focused, this presentation will focus on social sustainability to explore how this specific area of development can be further developed (Griessler and Littig 2005; Opp 2017).

Since looking at social sustainability means trying to read the way in which individuals, communities and societies live with each other and aim to achieve common goals, the presenter will try to draw some scientific evidence from the analysis of the case studies of Sydney and Okayama. By observing their social sustainability development plans, the presenter will try to understand whether and to what extent the dimension of smartness (along with the enhancement of the use of technology for the delivery and use of services in the city context) is important.

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Discussing Avant-garde Art & Non-Repeatability, Theorizing Sociality through Brown's "The Course of Activity"

Jeffrey A. Halley
The University of Texas at San Antonio

This presentation comes out of my encounter with Michael E. Brown's book, *The Concept of the Social in Uniting the Humanities and Social Sciences*, and his notion of a "course of activity" in sociality. I want to focus on the idea of a "course of activity" in order to locate his work in and clarify its importance to the development of dialectical reason from Heraclitus through Hegel and beyond. Of special importance is the bearing of his research on the arts and humanities. In particular, this refers to art and its avant-garde moments. Here I will discuss my work on dada and to Brown's account of two avant-garde theatrical performances. Brown's course of activity is generative and non-repeatable. The course of activity and non-repeatability are linked to avant-garde practice, such as the avant-garde of dada and surrealism, and can be contrasted to Adorno's notion of the "culture industry." We can relate the course of activity and "being in the middle" to theoretical notions that reframe our temporal understandings. These include and the reformulations of bourgeois time of Jean Duvignaud, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, and Jean-Paul Sartre. The question raised here is that of a teleological understanding – how we link the present course of activity with future events.

Machina Mundi
Eugene Halton
University of Notre Dame

"But lo! men have become the tools of their tools." Henry David Thoreau

Ancient myths celebrated the myriad vitalities of life as the sources of religious phenomena and general worldview, yet the rise of the modern world represents a complete and systematic inversion, from a living earth and universe to a clockwork machine. The machine and its principle of entropy formed a new foundation for the modern world-view and its scientific counterpart to traditional religious belief.

In the name of "enlightenment," rational, scientifically informed thought would free humans from the false mystifications of myth. Yet as the mechanical philosophy conquered the minds of European thinkers, and diffused more generally throughout society, it elevated a mythic anti-myth, the myth of the machine, a view of the universe as a vast clockwork machine out of which life somehow grew and into which, through science, all things human and cosmic are ultimately reducible.

The upsurge of quantifying precision (in money and its measures, bureaucracy, and mechanized manufacture and science) symbolized by the mechanical clock, led to a skewed worldview where quantity displaced the qualitative aspects of experience, where the model of the mechanical machine displaced the model of organic life. These changes reflected the transformation of Western and now global consciousness toward one that I characterize as *machine-centric mind*. With the outlook that all is reducible to a vast computational device complex now institutionalizing itself globally, it has become possible to become fully automatized avatars of *machine-centric mind*, out of touch with the living earth.

The Internet Democracy, Post-structuralism and Marxism in the Mass Society -- a Critique of Poster's Mode of Information

Felix Chun Huang,
National Taiwan Ocean University

The technical means or platform of the Internet has affected the democratic political participation of the mass. Besides, in the economic field, the traditional space of working shifts from factories and workshops to computers and mobile phones.

The term " the mode of Information" by Mark Poster borrows from Marx. Marx's "mode of production" has two meanings. The first, as a historical dynamic force, it divides the past according to changes in the mode of production which consists of means of production and the adaptive production relations. Secondly, as a metaphor of the period, it emphasizes economy as the "ultimate determinant" as Althusser said. The same implication is implied in the way Poster uses information. For him, on the one hand, history may be divided into periods by structural changes in the sign-exchange situation. If the mill was associated with feudalism, and the steam engine was associated with capitalism, electronic means of communication are now associated with means of information. On the other hand, culture today gives information the significance of fetishism, like what Marx presented in the analysis of commodities.

After reviewing the post-industrial social theory, Marxist theory, Weberian theory and neo-Marxist theory. Poster chooses to introduce the post-structuralist theory to explore the relationship among language, subject and electronic media communication. In the formation era, language is no longer regarded as a tool for rational and autonomous subjects, not even for the pursuit of a higher degree of freedom, but refers to language itself. Therefore, language acts on the subject with a new way of constructing the world and democratic communication. Yet Poster fails to go deep in Marxism and post-Marxism, whose struggling for communicative freedom means that people can decide their own way of labor and devote to the relevant democratic communication. The people's strategy of struggling against hegemonic structure in some post-Marxist theory might also be used to fight against some violent forms of internet democracy.

Resurrecting Locke for the Twenty-First Century

Kerry Hunter

"*Natural rights* is simple nonsense: natural and imprescriptible rights, rhetorical nonsense—nonsense upon stilts. But this rhetorical nonsense ends in the old strain of mischievous nonsense: for immediately a list of these pretended natural rights is given, and those are so expressed as to present to view legal rights. And of these rights, whatever they are, there is not, it seems, any one of which any government *can*, upon any occasion whatever, abrogate the smallest particle." (Jeremy Bentham, *Anarchical Fallacies* found in Jeremy Waldron, 2015, p. 53).

The COVID 19 pandemic revealed that Jeremy Bentham's eighteenth-century critique of natural-rights thinking remains relevant to twenty-first century America. Bentham would have undoubtedly perceived the American fetish for individual-rights as an alarming hinderance to governmental attempts to implement a rational, public-based response to the virus. But America's pandemic response is just one example supporting Bentham's position. Limited ability to address gun violence and climate change also come to mind, so too does the difficulty of limiting corporate spending in U.S. elections. Bentham would most likely find it no mystery, therefore, that even as Americans continue to be animated by the ideal of natural-rights, there is a (perhaps increasingly) strong attraction toward authoritarian solutions to what have come to feel like intractable political problems. Perhaps we should not be surprised that even as individuals on the right, for example, rejected what was viewed as *authoritarian* over-reach by liberal "experts" regarding vaccine and mask-wearing mandates, some of these same individuals find Donald Trump's (and even Vladimir Putin's) authoritarianism appealing.

Echoing Jeremy Bentham, Alasdair MacIntyre reminds us that believing in natural rights is no less "superstitious" than believing in witches and unicorns. To put it differently, contrary to Friedrich Nietzsche's god-is-dead proclamation, Enlightenment faith in "reason" has proven an elusive wish in the United States. But Nietzsche also understood that the Enlightenment was not necessarily enlightened. Figures as diverse as Plato, Kant, and Kierkegaard all understood what Nietzsche would characterize as the inevitable nihilism, or 'reign of nothingness,' that comes from relying on rational logic alone. Perhaps faith in the superstitious notion of natural rights could prove vital in fending off the appeal of authoritarian, and perhaps even more importantly, totalitarian, solutions. The question is: Can Americans find a way to embrace their rights-based superstition and prove Bentham wrong? That is, can Americans cling to their nonsense-upon-stilts notions of natural rights and discover a *democratic* ability to govern in the interest of the public good?

My thesis is that the possibility does exist, at least theoretically. But, I argue, contrary to Bentham's position, it is possible only through an even more *consistent* commitment to natural-law rights thinking. I understand Bentham's argument that society is held together by the ability to convince individuals that personal sacrifice is necessary. I also understand his argument that emphasizing imprescriptible rights is highly problematic. However, the ideal of natural-law rights does not necessarily require the embracing of "imprescriptible" rights in civil society. It certainly did not require this in the eyes of John Locke, the person responsible for initially articulating the "classic liberal" ideal of natural-law rights.

In this paper, I develop my thesis by arguing that the Lockean roots of American idealism need to be revisited, contemporized, and ultimately, more thoroughly embraced in order to satisfactorily address the tension between natural-law rights and governance. To make this argument, however, I differentiate Locke's thesis from the *individualism* that plagues the U.S. I contend that the defining characteristic of Locke's theory is *not* individualism. Nor can Locke be blamed for the American commitment to the particular individual rights articulated in the U.S. Bill of Rights. Rather, what most distinguishes Locke's political philosophy is his commitment to the broad natural-law right to *equal consideration* with regard

to life, liberty, and property within a societal context where scarcity is a given. What this means is that Lockean liberalism has not failed in the way some have recently argued.

In *Why Liberalism Failed*, for example, Patrick Deneen's misunderstanding of Locke's theory leads him to the following wrongheaded conclusion that American liberalism failed:

> A political philosophy conceived some 500 years ago, and put into effect at the birth of the United States nearly 250 years later, was a wager that political society could be grounded on a different footing. It conceived humans as rights-bearing individuals who could fashion and pursue for themselves their own version of the good life. Opportunities for liberty were best afforded by a limited government devoted to "securing [individual] rights," along with a free-market economic system that gave space for individual initiative and ambition. Political legitimacy was grounded on a shared belief in an originating "social contract" to which even newcomers could subscribe, ratified continuously by free and fair elections of responsive representatives. Limited but effective government, rule of law, and independent judiciary, responsive public officials, and free and fair elections were some of the hall marks of this ascendant order and, by all evidence, wildly successful wager (2018, pp. 1-2).

One could question the "all evidence" portion of Deneen's "wildly successful" claim. The government, has never been *that* devoted to securing individual rights for *all* Americans.[1] The market has never been *that* "free."[2] Nor has government been *that* limited.[3] The social contract has never been entirely unforced, nor have elections been *that* fair, nor have representatives always been *that* responsive to majorities, nor has the contract included all members of the society on an equal footing. The list goes on. However, as important as these objections may be, they are not the primary concern I'm raising in this paper. Rather, I am suggesting that classic liberalism—at least as it was articulated 500 years ago by John Locke, was never given a real chance in America. Moreover, contrary to what Deneen's conclusion might imply, Locke very much understood that any society allowing individuals to freely "fashion and pursue for themselves their own version of the good life" was doomed to fail. Deneen has joined a host of critics of "Lockean liberalism" who for years have argued that Locke's *Second Treatise* fails to provide contemporary America with the guidance needed for meeting contemporary political challenges. It is this argument that I am challenging.

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[1] See for example, Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract*, 1997.

[2] See for example, William A. Williams, *Contours in American History*, 1961

[3] Ibid.

Analyzing smart community. A new social order?

The covid-19 pandemic has stressed the use of the *smartness* category and it has highlighted even more the importance of the concept of "community". But what does being a 'smart community' mean? When can the community be truly smart? What dimensions and processes does the smartness allude to? Can we speak about a new social order?

The starting point of reflection can be constituted by the analysis of the conceptual category of the *community*, from which the conceptualization and the phenomenon of the *smart community* should start. The conditional is here mandatory, since the *smart community-community* relationship, as it will be possible to highlight, cannot be taken for granted.

Is *smart community* smart, compared to the classical community, exclusively because it has within itself the use of previously non-existent technologies? And how does the *smart community* fit with the classic categorization that sees the *community* as opposed to *society*? Which of the two poles should the *smart community* be located in?

Placing the smart community totally at the pole of the *community* could seem to be the operation most responsive to reality, since, in both cases, it is a matter of *community*. However, if we understand the *community* as an expression of opposition to *society*, we note that this approximation involves some problems.

The concrete challenge that the *smart community* therefore seems to face is not so much its identification with the pole of the community or with that of society, but rather its insertion along the continuum represented by the two poles.

In this paper we try to reflect on criticalities about *smart community*, with the aim to discuss them with a sociological point of view and we do not intend to outline a decisive outcome on the smart community, but food for thought, starting point for further possible future research.

Keywords: smart community; community; society; technology.

Ilaria Iannuzzi, Ph.D.
Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Department of Political Sciences, Sapienza University of Rome
ilaria.iannuzzi@uniroma1.it

"With What Must Social Theory Begin?": An Outline of Critical Ontology of the Present.

Reha Kadakal*

Abstract

The emergence of theory of knowledge that replaced metaphysics in the nineteenth century marked the last phase in the historical transformation of the conception of truth that resulted in a great body of disciplinary knowledge and development of scientific paradigms in alignment with material, managerial and technological advancements. The success, however, has been at the expanse of the relationship of knowledge, truth and normativity, and it has resulted in internal fragmentation of social theory in regard to concepts, the ontology the entail and their normative implications—fragmentation that still characterizes different brands of mainstream social theory today. In this paper, I offer an outline of critical ontology as an alternative form of social theory as a way to apprehend structural and ontologically determinate processes of the historical present, and expand on their normative implications: To what extent is it still meaningful to speak of the subject? Is what is real also rational? Can social theory apprehend the difference between the objective and the absolute? The goal is not to furnish new terms by way of nominalizing what is already plainly observable in the contemporary collective life but rather to offer an account of onto-genesis of the categories of social being, explain their transformation, and articulate on their mediated outcomes as the totality of collective life within which the subjectivity comes into being.

* Associate Professor of Sociology
California State University Channel Islands
reha.kadakal@csuci.edu

Human Rights in an Age of Digital Power

Dr. Vivek Khanna (Shiv Nadar University)

Dr. Prabhjot Dutta Khanna

The contemporary age is a digital age and digital power is something which is increasingly gaining significance over other (more conventional) forms of power. Now, power, in whatever form it has been exercised in the past, has had profound implications for human rights. According to the United Nations, human rights are universal and inalienable rights of a person just because he/she is a human being irrespective of all the aspects of diversity in the population of humans across the planet.

Companies like Google which have an unprecedented reach and power across the globe have been the powerhouse of the emerging form of capitalism termed as surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2019). Surveillance capitalism relies on 'behavioral surplus', the capture of excess information about customers beyond what is required for the transaction which is then sold off to other businesses who have a commercial interest in the behavior of these people. It essentially converts human beings into mere commodities. A phrase encapsulating this state of affairs, which may be vividly seen in the world of social media, says that *if you are not paying for the product, you are the product.* This transformation of human beings into commodities is one of the most basic transgressions of human rights.

A related transgression is the infringement of the right to privacy (Diggelmann & Cleis, 2014). This paper will highlight these transgressions on human rights and advance some arguments on what should be done to salvage them.

Thorstein Veblen on Radical Turn: Can the Crisis truly act as a Trigger for Self-Organising a New Resilient Systems of Digital Platform?

Mu-Jeong Kho
University College London
m.kho@ucl.ac.uk
khomujeong@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract

In the context of contemporary social and economic inequality of income and instability of employment deepening in capitalism, we currently face challenging times: Covid-19 pandemic and economic crisis. Major adaptations are necessary. The fundamental challenge should be social and institutional: existing social institutions are inadequate, and a greater period of experimentation is necessary. This is why we should look at the basics of social and institutional theory in economics, particularly of heterodox literature including Marxist traditions, stepping outside the ruling neoliberal consensus. However, the vulnerability of most social and institutional theories in Marxist traditions hampering their affluent capability seriously to challenge the ruling consensus is their weak integration to radical theory, particularly of Veblen (albeit Veblen must not be stranger to Marxists), on the question unaddressed hitherto, can the crisis such as Covid-19 Pandemic act as a trigger for self-organising a new resilient systems of digital platform? This question in turn can lead to the sub-questions: (1) in pre-Covid Times, how capitalist systems of digital platform get to organisation and structuration in real-world, (2) what the origin of disorder is in such system of digital platform at the Pandemic, (3) during this time 'Pandemic,' how the crisis itself acts as trigger for self-organisation in digital platform, possibly by the social and institutional variations: on the one hand, market vs. non-market; on the other, pro-capital vs. anti-capital (by those categories of structuration, we can make up an social and institutional matrix), (4) whether or not the crisis *truly* acts as a 'trigger' to self-organising a new resilient system of digital platform on the philosophical value 'social justice' (5) if untruly possibly as locking-in the trigger in value and history, what the normative solution can be envisioned, addressing the duality of reformism to make the capitalistic systems of digital platform work better *within* it versus radicalism looking *beyond* it by reclaiming an evolution. This paper, defining respectively (a) 'order' as 'structure,' (b) 'self-organisation' as social process of reorganising, reconstituting and restructurating an 'order out of disorder,' (c) 'capital' as 'result of the laws and institutions' rooted in capitalist relations-of-production and (d) 'evolution' as 'self-organising change for survival,' seeks to answer the questions through deeper understanding on Thorstein Veblen, with its application to an empirical case study in Republic of Korea since 2007-2008 financial crisis to the current period of Covid-19. In doing so, this paper argues: beyond superficial issues of Private versus Public, State versus Market, or Keynesianism versus Neo-liberalism, there is a deeper issue of structuration of capitalist systems of digital platforms in Korea, which can be addressed well by most social and institutional theories in Marxist traditions. But this in turn is *only valid* if it is connected with radical theory, particularly of Veblen, looking beyond such capitalistic system (most social and institutional theories in Marxist traditions fail to do so); such connection to Veblen is also a pre-condition of deepening Marx.

Keywords: Veblen, Social and Institutional Theory, Structuration, Self-Organisation, Radical Theory, Marxist traditions, Digital Platform Capitalism, Covid-19 Pandemic, Republic of Korea.

Automation, Employment, and Public Policy: A Comparison of the U.S.A. and Germany

Anthony J. Knowles

The purpose of my dissertation is to illuminate the social, economic, and political dynamics surrounding automation and technological displacement in the United States and Germany from the late 19th century to the present. In order to understand how processes of automation emerge and unfold in these two countries, I am pursuing a comparative-historical analysis of the both distinctive and similar circumstances at work in each country. Furthermore, my objective is also to develop and advance a *sociological* as well as *critical* theory of automation in modern societies. To that end, I am examining both the US and Germany as two value regimes (Harvey 2017) that represent two distinct models of political, economic, and social convergency, focusing on three specific dimensions: (1) business structure and practice, (2) labor organizing and struggles, and (3) government policy. To illuminate these dimensions, focusing on the automobile industry in each country will facilitate two case studies to highlight the relevant dynamics. From the analysis of these dimensions, my effort is directed at examining whether (and if so, how) the distinction between "exceptional" or "pure" American-style capitalism and the "Rhine" or "social market" model of capitalism in Germany (e.g., Albert 1993) still provides a useful reference frame. To the extent that these distinctions continue to entail the potential of illuminating how each paradigm of integrating business, labor, and government has historically fared in response to the dynamics of automation and technological displacement, does it provide us with a basis for how this dynamic is likely to play out in the emerging global capitalist market system of the 21st century?

Capitalism's Ugly Sublime, Psychoanalysis, and Critical Social Theory

Daniel Krier

This paper aims to conceptualize the uncannily heavy weight of immaterial capital. Recent developments in global capitalism — the omnipresence of screens, social media data mining and algorithms that micro-target consumers, massive financial speculation on dark pools, and intangible assets as the primary determinate of corporate valuation — suggest an accelerated flight from the tangible assets of material capital (industrial property with physical plant and equipment) into increasingly symbolic and imaginary forms of production and accumulation. Under immaterial capital, commodities are produced and consumed through direct cybernetic connection to worker and consumer consciousness, speeding up the circulation of capital while overcoming physical limitations and material constrictions. In our time, capital no longer presents itself as Marx's vast accumulation of tangible commodities or Debord's vast accumulation of spectacles, but rather as a vast imaginary-symbolic pooling of alienated collective consciousness. Comprehending immaterial capitalism's "ugly sublime "is a primary task confronting psychoanalytic critical theory.

<u>Mind, Self, and the Internet: The Role of Mead in a Digital Age</u>
Reiss Kruger

Abstract & keywords:
The digital age we currently inhabit is one which is often represented in a dichotomous fashion. It either is painted in a profoundly negative fashion – representing an end to human community, morality, or mental health (Haidt, 2020) – or it is a continuation of human overcoming and progress, even to the point of representing the divinity in humanity (Fuller and Lipinska, 2014). Such approaches demand and entail radical theorical formation: either in a reactionary fashion or sketching out a future we are on the cusp of. The author proposes a more balanced position. The digital age and its aspects such as the Internet, video games, social media, etc., represents something new in the history of humanity, but not something radically new, at least as it relates for the question of selfhood. It impacts questions of social and moral psychology, but not in the manner or intensity which opposite ends of the common debate claim. As such, pre-existing theory can be re-invigorated and applied to help answer very pertinent questions about the impact the digital age has on the formation and maintenance of selfhood. The author proposes a re-engagement with George Herbert Mead (2015, 2002) in the digital age, noting the applicability of various concepts of his, including the necessity of taking oneself as an object, the reflexivity required for the full formation and maintenance of self, the multiplicity of selfhood, and the role that his 'I'/'me' and 'play'/'game' distinctions can serve in our digital age. Recognizing that dialogue requires adaptation to circumstance, Mead will be brought into conversation with several 'theories of the background' (Polanyi, 2009; Adolf and Stehr, 2014; MacIntyre, 2017, 2014, 2012, 2008a, 2008b) to help strengthen his ontological, epistemological, and ethical grounding, and articulate what 'goes on behind the scenes' of selfhood. From here Mead will be adapted to specific questions raised in the context of a digital age dominated by communication and interaction unimaginable at the time of his own writing.

Themes: selfhood, objectivity, video games, digital communication, theories of the background, interactionism, the self as an ontological and epistemic nexus, the Internet, social psychology, moral psychology.

Lauren Langman

The Clash of Social Movements

The current political mobilizations can be seen as a dialectic of progressive versus reactionary movements in which groups, or coalitions of groups, seek to advance a particular political agenda to realize a particular view of what a "desirable" society might look like. Social movements are typically located within a particular historical context; the last half-century has seen rapid political economic, social and cultural change, beginning of course the rise of globalization, then it's neoliberal expressions, advanced technologies, growing levels of education and of course illusionary changes in the nature of mass media especially Internet communication/social media, growing levels of education, and a variety of social movements that advances the causes of racial minorities, women, LGB QT, and growing secularism. But social movements do not "just happen." Human actors join together to educate, organize, mobilize and either influence government policies and/or in some instances become parts of the government and seek to implement certain agendas. But that said, the bifurcation of the political is clearly evident in vastly different identities, values, and visions of what a society might be. But it should be noted that these identities and values, are themselves shaped by an underlying "social character" that as Erich Fromm pointed out, was largely shaped by adaptation to social circumstances. This view was first evident in the appeal of Nazism that had an "elective affinity" was underlying authoritarian character disposed to view the world in terms of domination/ subordination, radical bifurcation of in group-outgroup, and legitimate anger and aggression toward the out groups. Just as certain circumstances have foster conservative reactions, often the same circumstance have led to of cosmopolitan values, equality, toleration for difference and growing secularism. While today we face particularly dark times, the growing cohorts of the young, the Z generation, has become the spearhead of progressive social change, and give us hope for a better future

Consolidating a Fractured Diaspora: Collective Action and Shared Priorities in the New York Haitian-American Diasporic Community

Dayoung (Grace) Lee

Starting in the late 1970s, the New York Haitian diaspora has maintained ties through a variety of political, community, and relief organizations. The recent developments in Haiti have raised concerns about the nation's stability. In response, the diaspora has attempted to use its abilities to achieve a larger presence in politics. Barriers to the diaspora's successful organizational coordination limited the success of these attempts. This paper aims to address the obstacles that limited the diaspora's success in executing collective objectives in response to the political and economic unrest, as well as to examine whether recent events have caused deviations in the accustomed means of organization. Questions were posed to leaders of Haitian organizations concerning the interviewees' experience on organizations, especially as pertaining to community ties formed in response to support efforts taken after recent developments. Additionally, questions addressing the evolution of long-standing patterns of organization in response to recent events were raised. The data collected suggested that distrust over shared finances, resources, and disparate organizational capacities constitute the principal obstacles to implementing collective objectives. Contrastingly, the data points to a shift wherein the recent wave of instability in Haiti has motivated the diaspora to overcome fractures by implementing solutions to recent crises. Highlighting the lack of foreign response as a principal cause of renewed diasporic unification, this paper argues that the Haitian diaspora is focusing on collective solutions to discrete problems, taken in order of priority, turning away from its historical tendency to address multiple problems in conjunction.

Cigdem Manap
Brandenburg University of Technology
Visiting Scholar

Refugee as Stranger: An Analysis of Refugees' Situation in Turkey
This study tries to analyze the local community's hospitality towards and hostility against refugees and of the distinction between "us" and "them". For these analyses, I will use the concept of "the stranger", which is theorized from different perspectives and attributed with different names and characteristics by various philosophers. In the literature on 'the stranger', Simmel has the certain authority in defining the sociology of strangerhood. It is possible to say that the basis of Park's 'marginal man', Siu's 'the sojourner' and Bauman's stranger are the Simmelian stranger.

Refugee as a stranger is "near and far at the same time" to host society. Refugees rent houses from the host society, do shopping with them, and work in their working places. Though they cannot always establish neighbor relations, there is a necessity for these two communities to establish a relationship at a minimum, and it is observed that they did it. The situation of the refugees is as Simmel's "stranger", "who come today stay tomorrow" in Turkey. It is not certain how long these people whose position is often emphasized as temporary, and who are expected to return home, will stay in Turkey. Like Simmel's "stranger", the refugees in Turkey have a temporary position in the society, which welcomes them. "Humanitarian residence permit" granted to the Iraqi refugees is a temporary status. Again, "temporary protection status" granted to the Syrian refugees is another one given to them, if they will return home when the confusion in their homeland ends. The other refugees, who are neither Syrian nor Iraqi, wait for being transferred and settled into a third country. The fact that all these people wait for an undetermined period causes a perception of transience to emerge.

* I am planning to attend online.

Performance and surveillance in the society of the selfie

Jeremiah Morelock
Boston College

Felipe Ziotti Narita
São Paulo State University

Being 'on' for the camera is a ubiquitous state of being in the time of Instagram and TikTok. This is true at both ends – on the level of performance and the level of surveillance. There is a merging of the two elements, especially when it comes to the imperative of 'authenticity,' whereby the social media influencer must invite an invisible audience of thousands virtually into their home, in order to see images of their living room and family events. Much surveillance occurs through the willing and active participation of the social media user, whether in the literal form of the selfie or self-revealing video, or in the form of the traces of the users' actions – traces which are amassed and funneled into algorithms for a coalescence of improving the user experience and maximizing advertisers' effective placement of surfaces. Enjoyment and participation require self-disclosure before an invisible audience and a panoptic techno-ecology contoured for business interests. In the society of the selfie, the distinction between self-promotion and social engagement dissolves, along with the distinction between personal branding and personal intimacy (MORELOCK; NARITA, 2021b). The joy of participating in the social world is inextricable from the management of the impressions of oneself delivered in very public virtual spaces, where everything that happens is eternally welded into the deep reservoir of digital memory in the big data para-dimension. We have discussed this elsewhere at greater length, but to sum up in short: we have articulated a phenomenon as 'neoliberal impression management,' denoting the compounding of the dramaturgical aspects of everyday social existence by the neoliberal fixation on building human capital. Here Goffman's (1978) work on presentation of self meets Foucault's (2008) work on neoliberal subjectivity. Yet along with the sort of 'governmentality' whereby the neoliberal human capitalist 'buys in', there is also an element of disciplinary power (FOUCAULT, 2012). The 'buy-in' is not only in terms of conformism/individuation out of self-interest that serves the status quo; it is also now in terms of the active partnership with the all-seeing eye. Here it is not even an issue of never being able to know one is not being watched, and thus internalizing the sense of surveillance. It is not a resignation in this way so much as an animated partnership. The prisoners in the panopticon love the central tower, and eagerly deliver their selfies to the invisible watcher.

William Outhwaite

Internal emigration revisited

The term 'innere Emigration' seems to have become current in Germany, for obvious reasons, around 1933. In the years following World War Two, it was the focus of acrimonious exchanges in West Germany between exiles and those who had remained in Germany or Austria. This paper examines these dilemmas and the broader sense of dissociation from political regimes seen as irremediably flawed or evil, with particular attention to the current situation in Russia.

Kent Palmer
http://kdp.me
https://independent.academia.edu/KentPalmer

Title: Emergence of Primordial Sociality

Abstract: How to understand Primordial Sociality and its emergence philosophically in relation to Fundamental Ontology and Existentialism. Primordial Sociality is based on Wild Being. This is distinguished from Existential Sociality based on the Emergent Meta-system. The various kinds of Being such as Pure, Process, and Hyper Being gives rise to different kinds of basic sociality which are Pure Sociality, Process Sociality, and Hyper Sociality prior to the arising of Wild Sociality that then appears on the surface of Ultra Sociality that is completely transcendent (height) or is represented by the utterly unconscious (depth). Wild Being is a surface phenomena of the expression of Sense differentiated from Nonsense. Wild Sociality appears within the Transcendental field as the intra-penetration of what Merleau-Ponty calls Tacit Cogitos.

Stelios Panageotou
Political Economy
The College of Idaho

Caught in a Bind: The State, The Great Reset, and the Tyranny of the Present

The emerging world has no guardian ensuring its survival. Conventionally attributed to the state whose legitimacy and monopoly of violence have historically delegated to this institution great power in mobilizing the forces of society to achieve collective goals, the state's ability to look out for the long-term prospects of capitalism, humans, or life in general is increasingly futile. The state can no longer articulate or advance a vision for the future, as it is constantly embroiled in the short-term horizons of politicians seeking re-election by waging a cultural war. Donning the mantle of corporate governance, the new ideologues of the future are the transnational capitalists—the World Economic Forum "Great Reset" and the Blackrock CEO Larry Fink—who fear that the unstable and crisis-ridden world pose great threats to the long-term prospects of profit-making. These capitalist leaders are telling shareholders and CEOs that profit can only be guaranteed by creating a sustainable world. However, corporations are trapped between maximizing short-term profit through extraction and exploitation, and the long-term viability of profit that is threatened if the short-term strategy persists. Finally, people themselves are caught in the same temporal bind. Caught in the immediacy of accumulating capital and all that it entails to survive in the 21st century perilous economy, long-term mobilization to shape the future is beyond the horizon of most. The great actors of our age, the state, corporations, and people are all bound to the tyranny of the present and hurtling towards a future that has no future.

Where has the end of history gone? The western social model in the mirror of war

Onofrio Romano
Associate professor of Sociology
Department of Humanities
University of "Roma Tre"
Italy
onofrio.romano@uniroma3.it

The Russian invasion of Ukraine and the conflict it has engendered between the post-soviet regime and Western world allows us to reconsider the real meaning –regarding the social system– of the passage from the bipolar world, dominating the second half of the twentieth century, to neoliberal globalization. From opposite political standpoints both Francis Fukuyama (1992) and Serge Latouche (1989) prophesied in that juncture the "westernization of the world", i.e. the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government. The specter of a third global conflict contradicts the prophecy. But equally incongruous appears today the opposite post-colonial narrative that bets on the emergence of a "pluriverse" (Kothari *et al.* 2019). Our hypothesis is that both narratives are well-founded but they contain only a part of truth. The first, in particular, considers the Western model as a single block that imposes itself on the outside as such. On the contrary, as I have sustained by a field research in the nineties ("Albania in the TV age. The ways of demodernization", 1999), adopting the West by the inhabitants of the former socialist countries has fundamentally meant only adopting its consumer culture side, characterized by a values' syndrome almost opposite to the one required by the liberal democratic regime: in this sense, a syndrome of "demodernization". This original fracture inside the Western social model adds to another one emerged in the last decades between cultural integration and systemic integration. It means that the Western lifestyle continues to inflame and to seduce the imagination of people all around the world (cultural integration), but it fails in the reproduction of the organizational conditions allowing people to effectively enjoy the promised lifestyle (systemic or functional integration). This cleavage, as Merton teaches, is at the origin of "relative deprivation", both inside Western countries (between centers and peripheries) and outside. The global "horizontal" (Romano 2014) regime of self-regulating market (Polanyi 1944) doesn't assure the realization of the western dream. This circumstance gives rise to a multiplicity of cultural reactions (including religious radicalization) that may generate the optical effect of a "pluriverse". Both Usa and Russia (the two revived contenders), are reacting to the same impossibility shifting form market valorization to different forms of political grabbing. Paradoxically the only country that succeeds in the realization of western dream is China, by adopting a "vertical" political regime. Anyway, current global fibrillations reveal the nature and the huge contradictions of western social model.

Backfilling the iron cage: Radical anti-modernism, militant antisemitism, and Gerald B. Winrod,
the "Jayhawk Nazi" of Kansas
by Pam Rooks
Ph.D., University of Kansas Sociology, April 2022

Abstract

In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism,* Weber suggested that as the religious rationales of Calvinist workers were forgotten under the urge to acquisition, capitalist society would become a steel-hard casing holding only the "ghosts of dead religious beliefs" and racing toward a soulless dystopia. Gerald Winrod agreed, although for different reasons, and feared for the future. Born in 1900, Winrod was a fundamentalist who responded with stringent anti-modernism and anti-feminism to the loosening of the traditional social hierarchy that accompanied industrialization and the rise of the urban lifestyle. In 1926, as an effort to turn back time, Winrod led a movement opposing evolution curricula in schools. It failed, however, and he became a proponent of the conspiracy theory that accelerating modernism reflected Jews' plans to enslave non-Jews by distracting them with licentious entertainment while hijacking the economic machinery of their nations. As Winrod watched his Christian idyll slip away, he endeavored to backfill the emptying iron cage with dangerous religious fictions in the hopes that consensus would help reinstate social solidarity and the privileges of white, Christian men. He escalated his appeals to ethnocentrism, militant conspiracism, and biblical apocalypticism, calling out to Christian duty in his effort to rally support for traditional patriarchy. Many of the tropes that Winrod promoted are resurgent among the far right today. This paper elaborates three elements of Winrod's defensive theology, including the marriage of Calvinist biblical literalism with premillennialist superstition, the belief in Christian conversion as the foundation of economic success, and the selective syncretism of Arminian grace and Calvinist duty to ensure the complicit subservience of women and blacks.

Covid Pandemic and Anti-vaccionation actors: between rationality and recognition need.

Massimiliano Ruzzeddu- University Niccolò Cusano in Rome
massimiliano.ruzzeddu@unicusano.it

One of the most relevant phenomena that have characterized the 2020 COVID pandemic, is the huge number of citizens that have refused vaccination and blatantly claimed for their right to skip vaccination.

This position of reject of a welfare provision is unprecedented in the history of modern, democratic societies and needs adequate reflections. Namely, while this phenomenon has been the object of social psychology studies, the aim of this paper is to draw a sociological model of the possible causes of such behavior, by setting a hypothetical link with social actors and their social and cultural backgrounds.

The work I am proposing is the presentation of a research I am carrying out for European Academy of Sciences and Arts, in which I am analyzing the data that Eurobarometer reports on this subject.

Within this framework, I will show the findings that are emerging from the analysis of the Eurobarometer data, which imply:

-the dimensions of the anti-vax phenomenon within the European Union

-the main motivations that the antivax provide about their choices

-the relationship between the antivax choice and some sociological characters, the nationality especially, but also gender and age.

Through the analysis of those data, I will try to set a link between the Antivax choice and the main political and cultural traumas that, in the last decades, have molded European social actors' visions of the world and have jeopardized the model of rational action, typical of the Western culture.

The Free Market Bites Back: A Case for Combatting Alt-Right Radicalism

Author: Dr. Christian A.I. Schlaerth, Waldorf University

Introduction

       "Cancel Culture," "being cancelled," "woke-ism" are phrases that have moved beyond the realm of television. They became synonymous with fighting back against racial injustice and sexism for quite some time. Since Donald Trump's election in 2016 and the rise of the #MeToo movement, these phrases have morphed. They have become rallying cries of the alt-right movement, often sarcastically, when one of their members loses a business deal, a media platform, or a political position. It is a similar metamorphosis as was seen in the 1990's regarding political correctness: it became a joke used against being politically correct. The interesting phenomenon here, though, is that actors in the free market, namely businesses and other private entities, are the ones doing the cancelling of the party that has, traditionally, supported the free market. While the motives of the private entities cancelling others can be questioned, in that it is not suddenly growing a conscious but rather a protection of profits, that does not seem to matter, the results are the same. The anti-woke movement also highlights a contradiction in those who claim to be supporters of freedom, that they want to suppress freedom of thought and speech.

Thou, Algorithm! On the Structure of Mediatized Social Action

Christopher Schlembach

In the mathematical frame of reference, algorithms do not describe the world of society and history, but of space and time. However, algorithms can also be analysed in terms of the action frame of reference. In this presentation, I venture to develop a sociological interpretation of the term algorithm from the perspective of interpretive sociology. The starting point is the fact that the social world is built up in constitutional processes of individual consciousness and thus represents both the basis of social action and the object of scientific analysis.

These processes are modified by algorithms which pervade the the technicised life-world. The concept of algorithm is not part of sociological theory. It is a mathematical and computer-scientific concept based, for example, in mathematical set theory (Donald Knuth) or in the theory of Turing machines (Oswald Wiener). In a first approximation, algorithms can be understood as procedural actions in the sense of formalising steps of goal-directed processes (cooking recipes or routines). In this vague sense, modern societies have been algorithmic for a very long time, establishing "patterns" (Armin Nassehi). But also in the narrower sense, we often encounter algorithms in everyday life, or we are dealing with objects that allow interaction and are the result of (ongoing) algorithmic processes. The interaction partner is not always another person (alter ego), but can also be a computer, i.e. a system of algorithms realised in a device, and this fact changes the meaningful structure of the digitally mediatised social world in which interaction between a human egos and alter-egos is one possible case among others. With reference to this context, the algorithmic structure of time and the accompanying memory structure is one aspect of the ideal-typical structure of meaning that guides human action. With reference to Schütz concept of layers of meaning (Sinnschichten), this implies that the interaction partner (alter ego) does not have to be an ideal-typical thou. It can also be an algorithmic thou, experienced by a human actor as an 'ideal-typical algorithm'. The argument is developed in three steps. In the first step, the mathematical-computational concept of the algorithm is outlined. In the second step, I use Oswald Wiener's introspective studies to argue that algorithms can be understood as a structure of time consciousness and linked to (biographical) meaning of action. In the third step, I will address the interaction between algorithmic and ideal-typical memory, resulting in a new form of algorithmically extended time consciousness.

Name: Patrizia

Last name: Sergio

Position: Third-year Ph.D. student in Semiotics and Culture Studies

Affiliation: Department of Semiotics – University of Tartu (Estonia)

Contact: patrizia_sergio@libero.it

Title of the article: Social Relationality in the Digital Age: Diffracting the Politics and Semiotics of Techno-Social Routines.

I am planning to attend in person.

SOCIAL RELATIONALITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE:

DIFFRACTING THE POLITICS AND SEMIOTICS OF TECHNO-SOCIAL ROUTINES.

Over the last decades, social and political theory has demonstrated a renewed theoretical interest on the social order under the pressure of economic, political, environmental crises. This topic persists as a fault-line within critical and social theory, addressed or avoided through a variety of conceptual strategies attempting to regard the politics of 'affect' (Papadopoulos 2008; Ahmed 2014; Mouffe 2018) and 'vulnerability' (Nussbaum 2013; Hirsh 2014) as essential concepts for unfolding the contemporary political dynamics and dimensions of social lives (Fraser 2009; Fox and Alldred 2017;). The study advances a socio-semiotic framework to offer an alternative perspective to these prevailing appraisals. What is often undertheorized is how techno-social routines (human/machine interaction) take a central role in social change. As new technological artifacts - designed to be interactive, customizable, and sympathetic – proliferate in ordinary life, it is argued that this lack of knowledge cannot pinpoint how and what distinctive paradigms (de)construct social relations. Drawing upon Félix Guattari's political semiotics and New Materialist social theory, the proposed framework sheds light on the problematic constitution of the social relationality to come as highly embedded with performative power relations. It is showed 1) How the material response translates routines into a set of actions induced by technoscientific arrays in the context of daily activities; (2) The socio-semiotic paradigms that re-signify the content and expression of social ontology.

Keywords: political semiotics, politics of performativity, post-structuralist political theory, social change, relational sociology.

How Smartness affects Society. A critical discourse about smart society.
Melissa Sessa
Sapienza University of Rome

In recent years, the concept of smartness (Iannone *et al*. 2019) has changed the landscape of social relations and the spatial contexts in which our society is immersed. To the great innovative and decisive drive that they bring with them, the idea of smartness is also accompanied by numerous critical issues. The concept of smart society is an example of the practical implication of these criticalities. This contribution aims to focus precisely on criticalities, taken as a starting point to try to find solutions. Four different criticalities will therefore be explained. The first critic is about the efficiency of smart technologies in the smart society: we are in the presence of a true and proper automatism as far as effectiveness is concerned. It is automatically, and as such, warranty of inclusion, sustainability and cultural development. In practice, however, this automatism shows all its weakness. The second critic is about the morphology of the smart society, that is not shaping in the social context, but, indeed, it is just a technological phenomenon (Hollands 2008). The third critic focuses on how the smartness modifies the geometries of power (Meijer 2016), and therefore of conflict and political participation, reducible to mere negative feedback sent to services by citizens. The last critic - related to the first one - focuses on the high tech utopias of the smart society where technology seems to betray its social functions as a means to become an end in itself, becoming more and more completely detached from social experience. In this sense, the crisis between smartness and sustainability (Beretta 2011) will be an example. In light of these crises, it is clear that not so much the reasoning on the merits, but then the analysis of the defects of the smartness could serve as a tool for continuous deepening of the criticalities and potentials.

Critical Theory in the '20s

David Smith

This summer marks the centenary of what was, in effect, the founding meeting of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research. That meeting, the *Erste Marxistische Arbeitswoche,* featured previews of seminal books by Lukács, Korsch, Wittfogel and others who were to remain central to the left-critical movement of the interwar period. The themes they raised and the warnings they sounded -- with respect to alienation, reification, fetishism, and authoritarianism -- were forged in the heat of struggles that have reverberated ever since. Fascism, communism *qua* Bolshevism, and Social Democratic ruling parties were new to the world. Max Weber's posthumous publications on charisma had just begun to appear when Felix Weil and Korsch brought Lukács and the others together to reimagine critical theory and practice. The concepts they elaborated -- and the ills they opposed -- have lost little of their relevance or urgency in the ensuing century.

Critical and democratic theorists, today as in the prior '20s, confront a world divided between charismatic, ethnocentric authoritarianism on the one hand, and anti-authoritarian humanism on the other. In this paper, I suggest a few directions for contemporary rethinking, building on the empirical research I reported in "Authoritarianism Reimagined" (*The Sociological Quarterly,* 2019) and on the historical perspective I offered with respect to the Weimar-era Frankfurt School in "Anti-Authoritarian Marxism" (in *Erich Fromm's Critical Theory,* ed. Kieran Durkin and Joane Braune, 2020).

The Role of (Quasi) Money in Socialism

Tony Smith
Professor of Philosophy (emeritus)
Iowa State University
tonys@iastate.edu

The paper/presentation defends six claims. 1) A main theme of the first Volume of *Capital* is that generalized commodity production and exchange is *capitalist* production and exchange. C-M-C circuits (where a commodity is sold for money in order to purchase a second commodity that better meets the wants and needs of the purchaser) are subordinated under M-C-M' circuits (where money is invested to produce commodities to be sold for profit). 2) Those accepting Marx's thesis have a reason to be wary of proposals for market socialism. Ownership of units of production and distribution is more egalitarian in models of market socialism than in capitalist market societies. Authority relations within these units are more democratic, and public policies for the social good are more extensive. But monetary returns from commodity production remain the driving force, making market socialism a form of "capital without capitalists." 3) The other main type of socialist model, based on democratic centralized planning of production for social needs, faces what can be termed "the Hayek problem": consumers know there wants and needs in a concrete context better than any central planner; producers know the sorts of products they can most effectively produce in a concrete context better than any central planner. (Advances in information technologies and predictive algorithms do not remove the problem.) 4) The most defensible model of socialism incorporates indicative socialist planning, where priorities among general categories of social needs are democratically determined, all investment is (planned) social investment, but decisions regarding specific product lines and production processes are decentralized, made by units of production (Worker Collectives), and decisions regarding the acquisitions of final goods are decentralized, made by the users of that output. 5) Something *like* money is required as an accounting unit in the model of socialism defended here. But this "quasi-money" is not analogous to capitalist money in the most crucial respects. 6) The contrast between capitalist money and the "quasi-money" of socialism illuminates both the contributions of Modern Monetary Theory and the limits of its reformist proposals.

The theory of the "Great Reset": myths, prophecies and reality

(Abstract by Emanuela Susca, University of Urbino – Italy)

The "Great Reset", an expression created in reference to the strategies and analyses elaborated by international political elites and big magnates to reform societies in the post-pandemic era, has aroused the interest and often the indignation of quite a few scholars and opinion leaders. From many directions, the "Great Reset" has been criticized as a project formulated by the global giants to take over the whole world and annihilate any resistance.

My contribution aims first to offer some elements of reflection on those criticisms, pointing out that many of them come from conservative, nationalist or ultraliberal personalities, inclined to brand as "Marxist" or "socialist" any attempt to change things or to mitigate inequalities. Moreover, many alarmed analyses are not free from an anti-scientific view, or even from Judeophobia and anti-Semitism.

Having obviously distanced myself from those analyses, I intend to draw attention to some elements of reality regarding the "Great Reset": in short, the scarce or inexistent democratic involvement of populations, the hypocritical appeal to environmental sustainability, and an opaque and questionable recourse to philanthropy.

To conclude, I would like to make a few remarks about the post-pandemic framework in light of the recent conflict in Ukraine, which seems to be leading to a new cold war or even a new world war. The scenario that is unfolding profoundly endangers what good there may be in globalization, putting at risk both the "great reset" projects and, unfortunately, the possibilities for dialogue and cooperation among peoples.

Abstract

Religious Conversion and Kandhamal riots

Tripathy, Apratyasita
apratyasita@gmail.com
Sociology/Indian Inst. of Tech. Kanpur
Research scholar

The state of Odisha in India has witnessed several social movements and communal conflicts based on religion. The religion-based riots that occurred in 2008 can be considered one of the significant events to have impacted people's lives in the Kandhamal region. The communal violence led to approximately 118 casualties, vandalization of infrastructure, and property loss, leading to more than 50,000 people being displaced from their homes. The history of the conflict can be traced back times to before the independence of India, when many Tribals and SCs (Scheduled Castes) people started adopting Christianity after the arrival of missionaries in the region, and people following Hinduism opposed this conversion. The majority of people who converted to Christianity in the region were SCs.

Based on field research, the paper has two primary objectives

1) to investigate the issue of religious conversion in the occurrence of the Kandhamal riots
2) to explain the process and impact of re-conversion (re-converting from Christianity to

Hinduism) on affected people in the post-riot situation in the region. The research design used in this study is exploratory. Data was gathered from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected through in-depth interviews with the affected people staying in rehabilitation colonies. Secondary data was collected from articles, books, and journals published on religious conversion and the Kandhamal riots. A theoretical framework based on social constructionist theory is adopted for the study. The data collected from the field shows that religious conversion was a significant factor in the eruption of violence in Kandhamal.

Keywords- Communal Riot, Kandhamal riot, Social constructionist theory, religious conversion

Human Dignity and National Identity in Times of New Tribalism.

Rafał Paweł Wierzchosławski

In considering forms of social bonds classical sociology oscillates between the two categories of 'community' and 'society' (Tönnies). This distinction stresses the contrast between the traditionally understood community [top-down totalizing collectivity] and the modern society, where free individuals interact and build bottom-up ties (myth of civil society). In my paper I refer to the concept of *Bund* developed by Herman Schammalenbach as the third understanding of social bonds in addition to *Gemmeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*.

The basic question of my presentation can be formulated as follows: do the perspectives outlined by the classics of German interwar sociology enable a better grasp and understanding of the sociologically given phenomenon of the struggle of political tribes (M. Maffesoli), which might be found in many political communities, also in liberal democracies?

This issue seems to be particularly important in the context of the ongoing war in Ukraine. Both Putin's Russia and the defending Ukraine refer (albeit in different ways) to communitarian categories, whether in the case of (a) the claim to impose (in the spirit of imperialism) a "true" national dimension (the idea of the "Russky mir"), which (b) is contrasted with the Ukrainians' right to 'dignity' both on an individual level (personal dignity and human rights) and on a collective level (right to self-determination).

It seems that the experience of the ongoing war already poses a certain 'theoretical' challenge and forces to rethink of liberal understanding of categories such as: 'human rights', 'nation', 'state' or 'empire', in the face of 'history let off the chain' (Gustaw Herling) and the bio-political experience of 'naked power'.

Author: Krešimir Žažar, PhD
Academic Position: Assistant Professor
Affiliation: University of Zagreb, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences,
            Department of Sociology
Postal address:
Krešimir Žažar, PhD
University of Zagreb
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Department of Sociology
Ivana Lučića 3
10000 Zagreb
CROATIA

Phone number: +385 98 1979 849
E-mail address: kzazar@ffzg.hr

Title: Conspiracy Theories and Democracy – Will They Terminate or Facilitate It?

Albeit 'conspiracy theories' looking historically definitively are not novel phenomenon, recently we have witnessed their steady rise of popularity. This is not surprising as studies indicate that their growing widespread taking place especially in times of insecurity and severe challenges, such as recent COVID-19 pandemics, global warming, ongoing war crisis in Eastern Europe, etc., indisputably are. The rise of the phenomenon requires its detailed scientific inquiry and this paper is contribution to a more comprehensive understanding of conspiracy theories, origins of the term, their attributes, features of social context favourable to their emergence and spreading, and overall consequences which they have on a general society. Particular attention is paid to their impact on democracy. While *negative consequences* which severely jeopardize and undermine contemporary democratic institutions, such as polarisation of a society, discrimination of particular social groups, rise of populism, can easily be recognized, it is suggested that they might also exhibit some *positive implications*. Namely, they contribute in articulating dissent, opposing, discourses and conceived in this manner they may serve as the counterbalance to concentration of political power, enrich stock of ideas, represent "as alarm systems for weak groups" (Uscinski, 2017:6). Furthermore, focus is given also to the analysis of a role of social media in spreading conspiracy theories dynamics. Social institutions such as science, universities, educational system, governmental bodies, have an epistemic monopoly in producing conventionally accepted knowledge, but as they might be conceived as the part of the governing power elites' establishment (Levy, 2007), to our standpoint it is crucially important to elevate level of individual *epistemic competency* of citizens capable to autonomously estimate the level of validity of any claim, belief, statement and deduce about their empirical grounding. Efforts in this direction should be integrated in school curricula and on the success of elevating level of epistemic competency (even epistemic literacy) of our citizens depends the future of democratic political orders.
Key Words: conspiracy theories, power elites, ideological delegitimation, role of social media, epistemic authorities, epistemic competency

The Expert of Self-Betterment:
Cultural Re-embedding in the Commercial Market
Yikun Zhao, York University

Abstract:
Against the sociohistorical backdrop of the emergence of the malleable self along the individualization process in modern China, this paper examines a distinctive professional function of etiquette experts in mainland China that was observed through ethnographic fieldwork: acting as the expert for self-betterment. To further analyze this professional role that differentiates these etiquette professionals in the mainland market from their peers elsewhere, this analysis closely examines the feature of functional integration and cultural differentiation characterizing their professionalization process. It is shown through articulating and comparing two archetypical images of the ideal self in five representative personal etiquette businesses: gentleman with sprezzatura and junzi with moral virtues, dividing these etiquette professionals into two segments showing varied vicinities to the order of the market versus that of the state. This analysis further argues that these two apparently different images of the ideal self are in fact more similar than different, for embracing a collectivist notion of "I" and for projecting an ideologically-charged partial image of the social structure that is dominated either by the market or by the party-state. This paper seeks empirically-based theoretical contribution to the thesis of individualization in a party-state social context where lifestyle politics is further distanced from emancipatory politics. Commercial agents, like etiquette professionals, function to re-embed individuals with the freedom of choice into two ideologized sociocultural systems as simulacrum of individual freedom.