

UC-4: "Capitalist State, Labour, and Beyond" [in English]

Saturday 15 October, 15.15–16.30, Hedén

Esben Bøgh Sørensen: "Capitalism and labour"

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This paper will explore the role of labour in capitalism by combining a social historical approach to the concept of labour with recent discussions within the critique of political economy.

In contrast to the Weberian standard narrative, recent critical studies indicate that the changes in ideas of labour in early modernity were based more on political and economic changes in that period than religious ideas. Drawing on the work of Robert Brenner and Ellen Meiksins Wood, this paper suggests that it was the emergence of capitalism in England in the 16th-17th Century that caused the unique transformation in the concept of labour that is still prevalent today. The paper suggests that this was due to specific social form that labour assumes in capitalism.

The paper will explore the relationship between capitalism and labour by drawing on recent discussions within the critique of political economy. Specifically, it will discuss the concept of "impersonal" or "objectively mediated" social relations of domination as developed by the Neue Marx-Lektüre as well as Moishe Postone's notion of the centrality of labour to the impersonal form of domination in capitalism. In capitalism, labour becomes an abstract principle that replaces traditional and personal ties as the dominant form of social mediation. It comes to be regarded primarily in economic terms as an effort that is only deemed worthy if validated on the market.

The paper will conclude that in capitalism, labour increasingly becomes a one-dimensional economic and abstract principle that in an objective way dominate our lives. Therefore, in order to challenge capitalism, it is necessary to understand and challenge the specific social form that labour assumes in capitalism and how this is reflected in dominant ideological, political, and economic thought.

Mathias Hein Jessen: "The Corporate State: State, Ideology, Corporation"

(Post doc, Department of Business and Politics, Copenhagen Business School)

Today it has become commonplace to claim the demise of the sovereign, democratic nation-state due to globalization, neoliberal policies and the increasing power of transnational entities (UN, EU, IMF, WTO, The World Bank) and multinational corporations. This was recently exemplified by the overturning of the Greek OXI-referendum by the Troika, which was seen as the proof of the loss of national sovereignty in face of economic interests.

Such a view, however, prevalent in both public discourse and political debates on the left, rests on a misguided conception of the nature of the state and the sharp demarcation between state/corporation and the political/the economic. To Marx(ism), the state is an ideological construct which serves to manage the common affairs of the ruling class and a central part of this ideological construct is the state as a political entity separate from the economic sphere. These demarcations are fundamental to the functioning of state power, capitalism, neoliberalism and the upholding of existing political and economic power relations, but are continually reinforced and perpetuated by the constant claims of the encroachment of economic and corporate interests on the political-democratic-sovereign state.

This paper claims that the state is itself a corporate entity which through history has achieved a privileged position in our political understanding as the repository of sovereignty and the sole legitimate claimant to political allegiance. In doing so, it has excluded all other corporate bodies and collective entities as legitimate claimants on political authority. This paper argues that we must understand the corporate nature of the state in order to repoliticize intermediate corporate bodies and collective entities both to understand how the political and economic system functions today, but also because they represent political alternatives beneath, beside and beyond the (liberal, capitalist) state.

Jara Handala: “Communising and the Need for the Mode of Ruling Concept: From Ruling through Anti-Ruling to Integral Living”

(Non-academic, Koblenz, Germany)

1) It is perverse that Marxists, given their preoccupations and intent, have significantly under-conceptualised the political dimension of human living. This can be rectified to an extent by building on the ruling class concept. Just as a scientific understanding of economic life requires the mode of production concept, that of political life needs the mode of ruling concept. This improves upon Mouzelis’ mode of domination concept, as demonstrated, in part, by Therborn’s account of subjugation and qualification. The latter forms the basis of a typology of sub-modes of ruling, freeing analysis from both an unwarranted focus on power and the constrictions of frameworks such as hegemony/domination, consent/force, consensus/legitimacy/force, false/true consciousness.

2) The principal political practical imperative is control – of access to valued entities, and over the quality of relations. Human political history is a management struggle, the management of control. The continual capitalising of people’s lives is opposed by their communising, the anti-force. The mode of ruling idea allows recognition that, in political terms, communising is developing anti-ruling at the expense of ruling, with the former harbouring a dynamic of re-ruling and de-ruling, and de-ruling itself hosting a dynamic of co-governing and self-governing. This complements Marx’s largely economic remarks on the Gotha programme. Freedom is lived less as freedom-from, emancipation, and more as freedom-to, liberation. De-ruling is the only political process and form with the capacity to realise, through communising, the universal class for-itself. As each of these necessary dynamics marks a phase in the prospective history of communising, they provide a meta-

strategic framework. This contrasts with talk of seizing power, smashing the state, and the leading role of the party.

3) If systematic exploitation and oppressions can be ended, the hitherto content of ruling, that is, governing-over, then politics is reduced to co- and self-governing, namely to participation in deciding, implementing, monitoring, and back to devising, revising and deciding. This is the sublation of the mode of ruling as the mode of governing, and, in using forms of the latter, everyone becomes a governor, manager, administrator. With the sublating of ruling as governing, of alienation as authenticity, the universal class for-itself comes into being and the integral is its form, and so the form of communist society. In being anti-ruling, scientific communists are anti-political; it makes them integral, not political.

4) An unnecessary conceptual barrier is relying on politics and political theory – a practical and epistemic narrow conception of governing and governing theory, this an aspect of integral living and integral theory. Scientific communists should become accustomed, where appropriate, to formulating ideas in terms of governing rather than politics, and ruling rather than the less general such as power and hegemony. Discourse concerning the three modes of ruling, governing, and integral living is a reminder of the aim and purpose of emancipatory and liberatory activity.

Link to paper: <https://thrutheeyesofcorpses.wordpress.com/2015/11/18/whats-the-nature-of-politics-an-argument-for-the-mode-of-ruling-concept/>