
SUPERMODERN CAPITALISM AND THE CHALLENGES OF THE FUTURE

This issue is experimental – just like the emergency situation we have been living in since 2020 (a situation marked by supermodern capitalism which can metaphorically be thought of as a virology laboratory – although we seem to have forgotten about the virus itself). Perhaps what is happening now will place unexpected emphases in Weber’s aphorism of modern capitalism as “the most fateful force in our modern life”. That is why we will be very brief, letting this issue’s structure itself show *the logic we have followed*. Yet, in order to understand our motives for choosing this particular structure, a little background is necessary.

In 2018, the Institute for Critical Theories of Supermodernity celebrated its third anniversary. For this occasion, we planned a session on *Labor and Capital in Supermodern Capitalism* which, however, was split into two by practical circumstances: the session itself was held in July, and was followed in November by a session on *Formal Rationality and Disenchantment*, which reflected on the previous one by staging an imaginary historical dialogue between Marx and Weber in a non-Marxian and non-Weberian time. Hence our motive: in the issue of *Sociological Problems* of 2021, we wanted to *restore this unexpectedly split unity*; hence the dedication of the issue to the 150th anniversary of *Capital*. After going through various metamorphoses of structuring the issue, we decided to return to the sessions themselves and – as far as possible – to follow their structures. We think this will retain the critical dialogue as it was back then. A critical dialogue *of like-minded people who do not think alike but can strive to think together*; perhaps even a critical dialogue *in vivo*. That is why in some of the articles we left visible the traces of the conference papers they originally were; that is also why we left some conference papers almost in their original version.

Perhaps here we should thank those of our fellow-thinkers who responded to our invitations to the session that split into two and who helped us take this critical dialogue beyond the theoretical walls of the Institute. We won’t list them here, but their names alone testify to *who* they are, while the titles of their articles and papers testify to *what* they thought back then about the problematics of supermodern capitalism. We cannot, however, refrain from mentioning the names of those who – besides being fellow-thinkers with whom we think together – have given us *an impetus to turn to new problematics*: Rastko Močnik and Johannes Weiss. (From the time of the Marxian Seminar, from the early 1980s until today, we have shared not one but several beginnings.)

As for ourselves, we may say the following: working on this issue, we came to the conclusion that *the theory of structures of mediation as a critical theory of supermodern capitalism has advanced to the point of making us realize how far we have lagged behind*. We aren’t being unduly modest; we mean how far we have lagged behind our theoretical subject, which is moving in some direction – we can’t yet say in which – with amazing acceleration (this applies to our thoughts not only back then

but also now). If the concept that we followed has forced us to largely abandon one of the problematics we hold dear, it is *the non-classical logic of the dialectical*. (In itself, as a code, it is perhaps a methodological luxury; but for us, it is invaluable as an organon of *the critical theory of supermodern capitalism*; an organon that gives us more chances to think our subject through historical limits, *from the viewpoint of the future*. But we decided you wouldn't regret our depriving you of the opportunity to encounter a superabundance of syllogistic schemes and diagrams. Moreover, the non-classical logic of the dialectical has left quite a few traces in its functions if not of an organon, then of a heuristic; and as a heuristic, it also has much to offer.)

So: by and large, it's been difficult; let's hope we've kept the balance.*

The editors
Translated by Elitza Stanoeva

* In this special issue in English, we have preserved the structure of the 2021 issue, but we have left out some articles and added several new ones (including an unpublished manuscript from the early 1980s). However, this does not diverge from the profile of the 2021 issue, it only gives more substance to its theoretical concept. Finally, we wish to thank the translator Elitza Stanoeva and the English language editor Katerina Popova for their tremendous professionalism; and above all – the then editor-in-chief of the journal, Kolyo Koev, without whom this issue would have been impossible.