

The Human World in the Climate Catastrophe - Quo Vadis?

After a two-year pandemic-induced interval, the *Berliner Institut für kritische Theorie* hopes to once again gather authors, editors, fellows and guests at its annual conference in Berlin-Wannsee. The 24th edition marks the bridging of another interval, that between volume 9/II (Mitleid-Nazismus) and the start of concentrated work on volume 10 (Negation der Negation-Philosophie der Praxis) of the *Historisch-Kritisches Wörterbuch des Marxismus*. Yet it is not merely a thematic-conceptual thread, but indeed an urgent existential one that links both volumes; namely, the need for a renewed confrontation with the dialectic of nature and the set of problems it raises from the standpoint of the current climate catastrophe. This rootedness in the present emergency has served as orientation for the HKWM's tackling of the >Naturkomplex< –the articulated set of nature-related entries– in vol. 9/II; the effort at collective reflection, like the crisis that propels it, is ongoing and shall now grapple with the issues of Ökologie and its contiguous terms in volume 10. While a long way from Z, the vessel of critical(re)appraisal that is the HKWM had already sailed beyond the alphabetical ports of the >Anthropocene< and >Capitalocene< before they became central categories of the discussion on *human-nature-relations*, not least among Marxists. The roundabout route the project is compelled to take to ^catch up^^ with these and other terms of the recent ecological debate enables its editors and authors, in turn, to approach it through a crucial entry point: praxis. The question of the human world's fate in the ecological catastrophe cannot be addressed from an emancipatory perspective if praxis, understood as > being consciously active in the world, under the fundamental inclusion of nature< (Haug 2020,110), does not take a structuring role in the framework of debate. Yet, it remains a mostly underdeveloped – if not missing – concept in many ecological Marxist contributions of recent years.

The HKWM-project's central task of acting as critical mediator between the questions raised by the present and the reception of Marx's living thought – reexamining almost a century and a half of plural Marxist legacies in the process – comes into sharp focus in this evocation of a praxis-centered approach to the ecological crisis. Marx's historical-materialist shift of perspective towards social relations was, namely, founded on the gesture of leveraging praxis into the central cog of a new form of philosophical conscience and relationship to reality. By grasping the real world (Wirklichkeit) >as sensuous human

activity, practice; [...] subjectively< (MECW 5/3 [3/5]) in his eleven Theses on Feuerbach, Marx was able to, in the words of Wolfgang Fritz Haug, >pierce through the dualistic enclosure of cognitive activity and its counterpart, ^outside^^-objects, in the form of contemplation<, which >all previous materialism< had adhered to thus far (2020,99).

Recognising the revolutionary core inherent in the >philosophical grammar< of Marx's Theses, Antonio Labriola, in turn, >inscribed its programme into emerging Marxism under the name ^philosophy of praxis^^< (2020, 98). A relevant element of Labriola's - mostly forgotten - synthesis, consists in the fact that, within it, >nature was no longer opposed to humans as an Other with which they first have to enter into a relationship< (Ebd.). He thus foreshadowed a similar effort by recent ecological readers of Marx, and in particular of Jason W. Moore, to recast the place of nature and its dialectics in the framework of historical materialism. What unites Labriola's >eversion of the theory of knowledge< and Moore's no less Copernican turn on human-nature-relations, is that >they cast us as thinking actors and acting thinkers from a Cartesian standpoint of contemplation on an outside-world Other into the dynamic richness of a real-world inter-active relationality< (93). Yet, Moore's failure to recognize the fundamental asymmetry that governs this relationality or, to paraphrase Ernst Bloch, the fact that humans can strive for an alliance with nature, but nature cannot strive for an ^alliance with humanity^^, is symptomatic of the subaltern place of praxis in contemporary ecological paradigms more broadly. Hence, the indications of eco-socialist thought on the question of >what is to be done<, have so far fallen short of their considerable theoretical contributions.

In the framework of the HKWM, Philosophy of Praxis should hence not only serve the role of closing term for its upcoming volume, but, beyond any alphabetical convenience or coincidence, consciously demarcate the horizon for contiguous entry-complexes such as Ökologie and Politik. The same premise applies to the proceedings of the 24th InkriT Conference, whose central question reads: what is the role of praxis - understood as the fundamental mediating element in the >bidirectional< yet >asymmetrical< human-nature-relationship- in averting ecological catastrophe? Because this is the vantage point that not only sets Marxism - if grasped as philosophy of praxis - apart from a broad spectrum of critical outlooks on the ongoing crisis, but one that can help overcome recent divides within eco-socialist debate as well as galvanize social movements and other political forces engaged

in making the ^green transition^^ one that reaches beyond capitalism.

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