

Summaries

Göran Therborn: From Civilizations to Modernity: Divisions and Connections of the World – a Historical Social Geology

The part, the region, of the world we are living in today was moulded long before yesterday, constituting a historical background which shapes (virtually) all of us. A major task of the social sciences, then, is to excavate the socio-cultural geology of our lives. In order to understand society and the culture of one's region and its relation to the rest of the world, one must grasp the major socio-cultural geological formations of the contemporary world: the civilizations; the family emerging from these civilizations, their evolution and their encounters; the waves of globalization, or more precisely, trans-polity, trans-continental diffusion; and their routes to modernity.

Andreas Gehrlach: Life on the Fringes of Capitalism

This article intends to demonstrate the conflicting double lines of Enlightenment emerging from Voltaire and Rousseau. The first of these lines tends to work on a premise of humanity's dominance over nature, whereas the other focuses more strongly on the human as a part of nature. Both these lines of thought are taken up by Marx, who describes the productivity of capitalism, as well as its proclivity towards destroying any place it touches upon in a complex process of reproduction as private property and the extraction of resources. Yet, these devastated spaces can still be used in an economy of gathering and collecting, as is shown in reference to Anna Lowenhaupt-Tsing's *The Mushroom at the End of the World*.

Vesa Oittinen: The New Thinking of Enlightenment

Lately, there has been some renewed interest in the tradition of Enlightenment thought. One of the main reasons for this is the downfall of postmodernist discourse, which had dismissed the ›grands récits‹ as irrelevant. However, the aggravating ecological crisis poses problems which the epistemic relativism and constructivism inherent in most postmodernist theories cannot adequately answer. Marxism, on the other hand, has generally been regarded as an heir to the Enlightenment, despite the fact that the actual relation between Marxism and the Enlightenment tradition is problematic. It can nevertheless be argued that Marxism and the Enlightenment have a common ground in the field of ›generally human‹ values. In this respect, the present actuality of Enlightenment ideas concurs with the demands of the ›New Thinking‹ launched by the Soviets during the Perestroika in the mid-80s.

Tamara Dlugatsch: On the Dialectic of Diderot's Paradoxes

Enlightenment philosophes, especially the representatives of the materialist current, such as d'Holbach and Helvétius, have mostly been dismissed as non-dialectical thinkers. However, Denis Diderot is clearly an exception. He was not a professional philosopher, but in his dialogues, Diderot was able to disclose the inherent contradictions of Enlightenment materialism and present them in a dialogical form, resulting in "paradoxes". The most important of these revolved around the relationship between what is natural and what is social. In this sense, one can say that Diderot was a dialectical – or rather, Socratic – thinker, with the proviso, however, that he did not attempt at syntheses – as Hegel later did – but left the contradictions hanging.

Gerhard Schweppenhäuser: Enlightenment without Dialectics: From Humanism to Luhmannism

According to Luhmann, Enlightenment is not a critique of domination but a critique of sociology's alleged »usual preoccupation with domination and exploitation«. Social domination slips through systems theory's descriptive grid. Habermas has criticized Luhmann for ignoring the actors who push and co-determine autopoietic processes. In this light he sets out a normatively overloaded concept of communication. Against this backdrop, the article takes a look at their debate on mass media. The thesis is: »deregulated« mass media can be described to some extent with Luhmann's post-realist media theory and Habermas's theory of ambivalence; what both approaches miss, however, is the dialectic of the culture industry.

Jeremy Lent: Progress for Whom? A Critique of Steven Pinker

By falsely tethering the concept of progress to free market economics and centrist values, Steven Pinker has tried to appropriate a great idea for which he has no rightful claim. His book *Enlightenment Now* provides incontrovertible evidence for centuries of progress on many fronts that should matter to all of us: an inexorable decline in violence of all sorts along with equally impressive increases in health, longevity, education, and human rights. It's precisely because of the validity of much of Pinker's narrative that the flaws in his argument are so dangerous. They're concealed under such a smooth layer of data and eloquence that they need to be carefully unravelled. Lent's response to Pinker meets Pinker on his own turf: in each section, like him, he rests his case on hard data exemplified by graphs.

Robert Cohen: The Poet as an Agitator: On Ernst Toller's Letters 1915–1939

»Politicians called him an excellent writer but a bad politician, writers called him an excellent politician but a bad writer«. This formula, quoted in a letter by the famous expressionist dramatist Ernst Toller (1893–1939) about a fellow writer is often applied to Toller himself. It is far too narrow as his impact both on literature and on politics endures. Since his recently published 1700 letters focus mostly on his politics, this paper will investigate two of his most notorious political activities: his leading involvement in the Bavarian revolution of 1919 and his political activities on the side of the Spanish Republic during the civil war. It reveals both the extent as well as the limits of one writer's impact on the course of history.

Stephan Pabst: The Child, the Rogue, the East German: Ingo Schulze's Critique of Capitalism

Ingo Schulze has repeatedly appeared as a critic of capitalism and its totally inadequate political regulation over the past 10 years. While he first expressed this criticism in speeches and essays, it has now become the subject of his most recent novel. In both cases the criticism is presented by intellectually limited figures – a child and a rogue. This diminution of the critical speakers also takes into account the reservation that exists over a criticism of capitalism from the East. By leaving this reservation to the naivety of his characters, Schulze, however, also distorts his critical concern.

Carolin Krahl: »From then on, I've walked faster« – Manja Präkels' Re-Appropriation of the Narrative Space-Time of German Reunification

Manja Präkels' novel tells the story of adolescent Mimi who is confronted with the rising presence of and threat posed by neo-fascists after German reunification. The article contextualizes the novel in the context of German literature focusing on the transformation period and the ideological limitations of literary voices from the East in the 1990s. It traces signs of current moves towards a re-appropriation of the subject of the German transformation, which no longer keeps quiet on its uncomfortable aspects and does so from a leftist and Eastern perspective. Präkels' novel is examined as an example of such a shift – 30 years after the fall of the wall.

Steffen Mensching: Illuminated Chaos: Robert Cohen's New York Diary

Robert Cohen, a Swiss national who has been living in Manhattan for 35 years, begins his diary with a confession reminiscent of what Karl Kraus writes in *The Third Walpurgis Night*. In Kraus's essay just as in Cohen's diary, the chronicler expresses doubts as to whether he can live up to his subject. How can one assert oneself against a man who is only capable of bragging about himself and condemning everything that contains a trace of critical judgement as fake news? Is Cohen's project a kind of therapy, a stubborn insistence on a self-imposed chronicler's duty, or a successful attempt to »continuously historicize the history that is happening«? In the daily attempt not to lose ground, the recourse to literature serves as an encouragement to continue working. The result is a book of questions that encourages the reader to avoid demoralization, to remain alert to current events, and to take a critical stance.

Adrian Brauneis and Tobias Lambrecht: Milo Rau's Theatrical Tribunal

Though his body of work is already as extensive as it is complex, our essay tries to pin down some points that seem essential to Milo Rau's theatre. We argue that Rau's intention is less to inform his audience about socio-political problems dealt with abundantly in the media, but rather to stimulate his audience to engage itself with those problems. While the need to act should become all the more urgent when Rau's audience is forced to confront these problems on the ›stage‹ – a term only partly suited to describe what Rau as a director produces – we suspect Rau makes his audience feel especially uncomfortable by enlisting those as actors who are actually affected by certain socio-political issues. One meets, so to speak, people who really suffer, without getting a feeling of closure. Yet, a stirred-up audience is not left behind by Rau without a moderately optimistic outlook. Rau not only presents actually affected people, he also empowers them to speak up and act on their own behalf. This should make the need to give them more than an imaginary forum all the more urgent.

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