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**Reconstructing the Social Sciences to Reconstruct Societies**

We’re going once again through “dark times” that test our most cherished assumptions about the social sciences and societies. This intensive, five-day course in critical social theory is animated by a sense of urgency and a conviction that we have to rebuild the social sciences to rebuild societies. Trying to reflect at the same time on the philosophical presuppositions of a reconstructive social theory and on the contours of a critical analysis and diagnosis of the present, we will move back and forth between metatheory, social theory and sociological theory.

The course will start with an exercise in sociological reflexivity. Through an analysis of some texts by the course convener, we will show how social theory is directly affected by, and connected to, the social, cultural, political and personal context of its formulations. On the second day, we will analyse three traditions of critical theorizing (British critical realism, German critical theory and French anti-utilitarianism) that offer philosophical, normative and anthropological guidance for the reconstruction of the social sciences we propose. On the third day, we will read two provocative texts by Ulrich Beck and François Dubet that show how the changing conditions of late modern societies put in question some of the most basic concepts of the social sciences (society, nature, culture, individual). On the fourth day, we will try to reactualise Karl Polanyi’s multidimensional analysis of the collapse of liberal market societies under fascism. On the fifth day, we will develop the concept of the ontology of the present and try to join conjunctural and structural analyses of the present. At a later moment, shifting from English to French and from Belgium to Brazil, we will have a public debate about the catastrophic situation in Brazil and the responsibility of intellectuals in troubled times.

**1) Reconstructing the Social Sciences to Reconstruct Societies**

Vandenberghe, F. (2009) “Metatheory, Social Theory, Sociological Theory. Postscript to the English  translation”, pp. 290-303 in Vandenberghe, F.: *A Philosophical History of German Sociology*. London: Routledge.

Vandenberghe, F. (2018): “Principles of Reconstructive Social Theory”, in Steinmetz, G. and Rutzou, T. (eds.): *Critical Realism, History, and Philosophy in the Social Sciences* (Political Power and Social Theory, vol. 34), pp. 73-88. Bingley: Emerald Books.

Vandenberghe, F. (2018): “The Tunnel at the End of the Light”, *Theory. Newsletter of RC 16* (winter), pp. 11-14.

**2) Critical Theories**

Bhaskar, Roy (1989): “Realism in the Natural Sciences”, pp. 11-25 in *Reclaiming Reality. A Critical Introduction to Contemporary Philosophy*. Londres: Verso.

Habermas, J. (2015): "Espace public et sphère politique publique – les racines biographiques de deux thèmes de pensée”, *Esprit*, 8-9, pp. 12-25.

Caillé, A. (1996): “Ni Holisme ni individualisme méthodologiques. Marcel Mauss et le paradigme du don”, *Revue Européenne des Sciences Sociales*, vol. 34, no. 105, pp. 181–224.

**3) Late Modernity**

Dubet, François (2009): “La société des sociologues”, in *Le travail des sociétés*, pp. 15-47. Paris: Seuil.

Beck, Ulrich and Willms, Johannes (2004): “Postmodernity or Second Modernity”, in *Conversations with Ulrich Beck*, pp. 11-61. Cambridge: Polity Press.

**4) Late Capitalism**

Polanyi, K. (1983): *La grande transformation.* *Aux origines politiques et économiques de notre temps*, chaps. 6, 11, 18 & 21. Paris: Gallimard,

Fraser , N.(2017): “Why Two Karls are Better than One: Integrating Polanyi and Marx in a Critical Theory of the Current Crisis”, *Working Paper der DFG-Kollegforscher\_innengruppe Postwachstumsgesellschaften*, Nr. 1/2017, Jena 2017.

**5) The Ontology of the Present**

Kaplan, R. (1994): “The Coming Anarchy. How scarcity, crime, overpopulation, tribalism, and disease are rapidly destroying the social fabric of our planet”, *The Atlantic*, February.

https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1994/02/the-coming-anarchy/304670/

Latour, B., Stengers, I., Tsing, A. & Bubandt, N. (2018): “Anthropologists Are Talking – About Capitalism, Ecology, and Apocalypse”, *Ethnos*, 83, 3, pp. 587-606

Streeck, W., Calhoun, C., Toynbee, P., Etzioni, A. (2016): “Does capitalism have a future?”, *Socio-Economic Review*, 14, 1, pp. 163-183.

Alexander, J. C. (2019): “Frontlash/Backlash: The Crisis of Solidarity and the Threat to Civil Institutions”,  *Contemporary Sociology*, 48, 1, pp. 5-11.

**Scéance supplémentaire: Débat public: Le Brésil en péril: néolibéralisme, anthropocène, populisme.**