

MARX AND EUROPE

*International seminar with the presence of Etienne Balibar,
Albena Azmanova and Raúl Fornet-Betancourt*

Louvain-la-Neuve, 11th and 12th of June 2020

“The Marx we need today is like the ‘knife of Jeannot’ that remains the same even after changing one after the other the handle and the blade, which means that it still serves to cut even though ‘nothing’ of its initial composition has been conserved.
Let us get to work!”
Etienne Balibar¹

This encounter seeks to seriously consider two questions traversing the field of social sciences during the last two decades:

1. On the one hand, the emergence of *post-colonial studies* that interrogate the sources and the foundations of *critique in the social sciences*. Because its principal authors have been European, this critical posture would be enmeshed in a colonial spirit. In a subtler manner, several colonialist presuppositions would continue to haunt it. Beyond the effects of fashion, the questions are real. On a global scale, the principal authors of reference are Western – the Latin American, African or Asian authors are significantly less read, studied, discussed. The fact of coming from peripheral regions makes it difficult for categories of non-Western thought to clear a path through the numerous scientific discussions. And the Western attachment to universality – even to abstract universalism – is often experienced as a means, if not to impose particular categories (of rights, norms, etc.), then at least to silence the social relations that render these references inapplicable on a global scale and that privilege dominant interests. However, these questions may also miss an essential point: are we certain that the Western sources of social critique are homogenous? Do post-colonial studies not risk caricaturing the diversity of any scientific field? In the same way, is it not extremely risky to call into question the very idea of universality, in particular from the point of view of a theory – and a practice – of emancipation?

¹ Balibar, Etienne. “Marx : tout est à refaire”, text to be published.

Above all, these questions are to be addressed to one of the author-sources of critical thinking, Karl Marx. Was Marx “too” European in his work, treating non-Europeans with a certain condescension in believing that they had first and foremost to move beyond the “state of feudality” before engaging in the global revolution? But how then to understand the echoes of Marx’ work on the peoples of the world, especially in the period of decolonization?

2. On the other hand, the debates and controversies concerning the *European construction* and, more generally, the *trajectories of the European societies* in the beginning of the 21st century. We will not evoke here the numerous juridical and institutional difficulties that characterize the situation of the European Union (EU). These are obviously important, but will not be an object of thorough debate in this seminar. It is rather the political, cultural and ideological features of the European construction that will be interrogated. Born on the base of a double motive (the need to make peace between former enemies and the will to set up a social market economy spanning the continent), the European construction seems to have been progressively dominated by the demands of liberal monetary and budgetary politics, by the absence of ambitious and shared social aims (protection of workers, politics against poverty, etc.) and, more recently, by an unprecedented brutality towards refugees and migrants. The “Greek crisis” and the “rejection of migrants” constitute two emblematic figures of a profound European crisis, the gravity of which is underlined by the growth of nationalism. This poses several questions. Should this situation lead us to reject the European construction as such? Does it not also incorporate undeniable assets? Even in the name of the “social question”, the will to fall back on the national level does it not risk deepening the competition between national economies and political spaces? Is the problem not rather the incapacity of lodging social critique inside of the European project? But again, such debates cannot exclude the thinker who, all while being an author-source of social critique, was European in identity and internationalist in project. 30 years after the fall of the Berlin wall, is not Marx lacking in the European construction for this construction to offer a credible alternative to capitalism and to the deviations of the rule of law?

Marx *too*... or *not enough* European? These questions again call for other questions: what was missing in order for Marx to take stock of a *plural world* and of emancipatory strategies that are not conform to a single analytical schema? Conversely, is it not a certain connection to Marx that is lacking in order to confront the challenges of today and to invent responses to the current state of *degradation of the world*? These questions are related to other concerns. For example: in order to confront these challenges, do the feminist and ecological critiques not need to further clarify their relation to certain key questions left by Marx’ analyses of capitalism, the State, work, right, etc.?

These are the interrogations that lay at the root this initiative. Bringing these two terms together (“Marx” and “Europe”) is not an attempt to produce technical or specialized exchanges, but rather to provoke discussion, to nourish intercultural and interdisciplinary exchanges, and to create a space of debate. The spirit of this seminar is *diversity*. It is also to make time for an *encounter* between persons, perceptions and perspectives.

In this spirit, the program of these two days include:

- three introductory and conclusive conferences, given respectively by Etienne Balibar, Ablena Azmanova and Raúl Fonet-Betancourt, which will be followed up by a short dialogue as a way of opening the collective exchanges;

- a series of 30 minute communications in plenary, taking the time to listen to each other and to dialogue;
- a specific place given to several members (professors, researchers) of UCLouvain.

Organized with the support of the Fund “Démocracy, Cultures and Action” and the Centre de recherches interdisciplinaires Démocratie, Institution et Subjectivité (CriDIS) of the IACCHOS institute, this seminar will take place the 11th and 12th of June 2020 in the Salle Jean Dabin, Collège Thomas More, Place Montesquieu, Louvain-la-Neuve. The conference proceedings will be published².

Participation is free, but inscription is obligatory.
If you would like to participate, please send a mail to Médiatrice Nkurunziza :
mediatrice.nkurunziza@uclouvain.be
before the 15th of April 2020.

² We plan to publish them at Presses Universitaires de Louvain (PUL) under the direction of Matthieu de Nanteuil and Anders Fjeld.

TEMPORARY PROGRAMME

Thursday 11th of June 2020

9.00 – Welcome

9.20 – The spirit of an encounter, by Matthieu de Nanteuil

9.30-10.30 – Marx and Europe (*title to be confirmed*)

Introductory conference, by Etienne Balibar, philosopher,

Université Paris X Nanterre and University of Columbia

Followed by: questions to initiate the debate, by Raúl Fornet-Betancourt

11.00 – 11.30 – Pause

1ST PART – MARX OUTSIDE OF EUROPE, THE MISSING PART? (French and Spanish, with oral translation)

11.30-12.00 – Marx, Europe and Latin America: back and forth (*title to be confirmed*)

by Victor Manuel Moncayo, political analyst, former rector of National University of Colombia

12.00-12.30 – The factory of neoliberal subjectivity: some examples outside of Europe

by Aymar Nyenyezi Bisoka and Cécile Giraud, sociologists, researchers at UCLouvain (DVL P, IACS)

Debates

13.00-14.15 – Lunch, LLN

14.15-14.45 – Mariategui: a Latin-American Marxist during the 1920s... and the decolonization of Marxism (*title to be confirmed*)

by Alfredo Gomez-Muller, philosopher, professor at Université François Rabelais de Tours

14.45-15.15 – Marx, Socialism and African modes of production: the limits of a capitalist analysis

by Thierry Amougou, economist, professor at UCLouvain (CriDIS, IACS)

Debates

15.45-16.15 – Pause

2ND PART – FEMINISMS, ECOLOGY, ISLAM: QUESTIONS TO MARX (French)

16.15-16.45 – On Ecofeminism: its relation to social protection and the European construction (*title to be confirmed*)

by Pascale Vielle, jurist, professor at UCLouvain (CIRTES, IACS)

16.45-17.15 – Marxism and Islam, the results of a research project in Belgium (*title to be confirmed*)

by Lionel Rémy, sociologist, researcher at UCLouvain (CISMOC, IACS)

17.15-18.00 – Reactions

by Etienne Balibar, Albena Azmanova and Raúl Fornet Betancourt

Friday 12th of June 2020

3RD PART – MARX IN EUROPE, THE NECESSARY PART? (English)

9.00-10.00 – The European Green Deal: class struggle or counter-hegemony? (*title to be confirmed*)

Introductory conference, by Albena Azmanova

Followed by: questions to initiate the debate, by Anders Fjeld

10.30 – 11.00 – Pause

11.00-11.30 – The European construction and Ordoliberalism (*title to be confirmed*)

by Cécile Barbier, sociologist, independent researcher (CriDIS, IACS)

11.30-12.00 – The European construction and the international division of labor: critical readings

Jean-Christophe Defraigne, economist, professor at USL-B and UCLouvain

(title to be confirmed)

12.00-12.30 – (*title to be confirmed*)

by Fabienne Brion, jurist, professor at UCLouvain (PJPC, JUR-I)

Debates

13.00-14.15 – Lunch, LLN

4TH PART – MARX IN QUESTION: INTERSECTING PERSPECTIVES AND CONTEMPORARY INTERPRETATIONS (French)

14.15-14.45 – Work, life and death in Marx: the perspective of a psychoanalyst (*title to be confirmed*)

by Bertrand Ogilvie, philosopher, professor at Université Paris VIII

14.45-15.15 – Work, exploitation, capitalism: the point of view of pronominal perspectivism

(title to be confirmed)

by Marx Hunyadi, philosopher, professor at UCLouvain (Europé, ISP)

15.15-15.45 – Marx and alienation, new readings? (*title to be confirmed*)

by Andres Felipe Para, philosopher, National University of Colombia (TEOPOCO)

Debates

16.00-16.30 – Pause

16.30-17.30 – Beyond Marx, beyond Europe (*title to be confirmed*)

Conclusive conference, by Raúl Fonet Betancourt, philosopher, University of Breme

To go further, by Etienne Balibar, Albena Azmanova and Raúl Fonet Betancourt