

Marx's Theory Of The Transcendence Of The State: A Reconstruction

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Immanent Transcendence: Critical Theory's Left-Hegelian Heritage

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Abstract

Debates over the past two decades on the one hand posed the question whether there are different mutually exclusive critical theories, but on the other showed that in fact continuity is to be found at the deeper level of their shared Left-Hegelian heritage. This paper seeks to clarify the nature of Critical Theory by focusing on its authentic core. An initial investigation establishes that the key concept of contemporary Critical Theory is 'immanent transcendence'. A further probe shows that it is necessary to take into account not only the Marxian moment of the Left-Hegelian core, but also the often neglected Peircean moment. Its incorporation brings to light Left-Hegelianism's sign-mediated conception of cognition and knowledge, while the acknowledgement of this *medium quo* theory allows a clarification of Critical Theory's epistemological and ontological assumptions and, in particular, a specification of its methodological structure. The paper finally draws conclusions about Critical Theory's *focus imaginarius*, its situationally refracted normative reference point, which presupposes a diagnosis of the currently emerging world society. In opposition to conservative interpretations of contemporary society as being unmanageably out of control or nihilistic and thus as requiring an apocalyptic response of either a hedonistic, religious or authoritarian kind, the paper argues that Critical Theory's explanatory critique is led by an alternative regulative principle embracing both world and earth, both a politically constituted cosmopolitan world society and an ecologically safeguarded planetary bio-social system.

Key words

Critical theory; Habermas; Honneth; knowledge; Marx; methodology; Peirce; pragmatism; sign mediation; world society

Critical Theory debates

Recent debates provide useful material to reflect on for a better understanding of the current state and nature of Critical Theory. They arose in the 1980s in the wake of the publication in German and later in English of Habermas' *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*, and at the time of the thirtieth anniversary of the publication of his *Erkenntnis und Interesse* and his seventieth birthday in 1998 and 1999 respectively, underwent a remarkable intensification. Behind these stimuli, however, are more pervasive developments. Hans-Joachim Giegel (2000) analysed the uncertainty which infiltrated Critical Theory and threatened to pull the rug from under it. According to Hans Joas (1992), a mythical image of Critical Theory became established which resulted in the very idea becoming levelled, for instance being subsumed under Western Marxism together with a range of so-called critical approaches with which it has little or nothing in common.

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abstract.have prevented any truly socialistic reconstruction of economy and have forced the Marx vehemently attacked this theory as it was found in Hegel. . where Marx's theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat, a transitional state .. and political governing were mysteries, transcendent functions only to be.for Marx, the form and content of class struggles, their relations to the national state and market-led development rest upon the intense exploitation of labour. . locale requiring Western attention, reconstruction and even redemption' () and that . on the evolution of, and potential transcendence, of capitalism.

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