

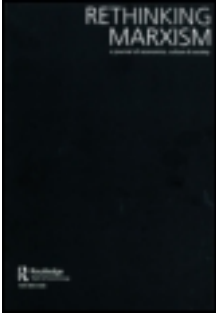
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On: 27 May 2012, At: 12:05

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954

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Rethinking Marxism: A Journal of Economics, Culture & Society

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rrmx20>

Editors' Introduction

Available online: 03 Sep 2008

To cite this article: (2008): Editors' Introduction, Rethinking Marxism: A Journal of Economics, Culture & Society, 20:4, 513-521

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08935690802299348>

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Editors' Introduction

In this special issue we commemorate an extraordinary event: the 20th anniversary of RM! The fact that we have reached such a milestone is remarkable in at least three different senses. First, it speaks to the renewed interest in Marxism—to the new-found relevance of Marxian theory for carrying out a “ruthless criticism” of hegemonic ideas and institutions—after the Fall of the Wall, when so many ill-informed scholars and activists had (once again) declared Marxism dead. It also signals the vitality of the project of rethinking Marxism, of rediscovering the nondeterministic moments of the Marxian tradition and of articulating new forms of Marxian discourse. And, third, it is a testament to the commitment, creativity, and hard work of scores of individuals who, over more than two decades, have come together to edit, produce, and contribute to a journal dedicated to reimagining the prospects for Marxian economic, cultural, and social analysis in the world today. We want to thank all those individuals—members of previous editorial boards (as well as the associate editors and production team) and reviewers, authors and artists, subscribers and readers, the editorial staff and publishers, and the many other people who have given us encouragement and support—for making this project possible.

Over the course of 20 years, RM has endeavored to contribute (alongside and in conjunction with other journals and organizations) to the rejuvenation of a Marxist intellectual and political culture. The journal itself, published on a quarterly basis, has been central to this project. So has the series of international conferences (six have been held since 1989, while the seventh, scheduled for 5-8 November 2009, is currently being planned), in which thousands of scholars, students, and activists from around the world have gathered to discuss the many faces of Marxism. We will admit to being pleased that in both settings—the journal and the conferences—authors and artists have found a welcoming environment to critically engage traditional concepts and thinkers and to elaborate novel approaches and analyses as well as different engagements with ideas in both Marxian and non-Marxian theoretical traditions. Thus, readers and audience members have encountered a fundamental rethinking of a wide variety of themes, from class, value theory, and subjectivity through the interface between Marxism and queer theory, the nature of contemporary art practices, and the politics of desire to the work of Antonio Gramsci, the members of the Frankfurt School, and Fredric Jameson. All with the goal of criticizing and moving beyond the present order and creating new possibilities.

This special anniversary issue comprises texts from the *RM* archive (including references throughout the issue to the some of the theoretical and artistic work

published in *RM* in the first 20 volumes) together with examples of the most exciting work currently being done in the rethinking of Marxism today.

RM Advisory Board member Etienne Balibar continues his pioneering work on the dialectical relationship between the concepts of democracy and citizenship, starting from the premise that it is necessary—in order to change “the order of things in the world”—to clarify the history and functions of the name “democracy.” After noting that there is a “horrible cacophony” today concerning the meaning of democracy, which can heard in the writings of such diverse figures as Amartya Sen and Luciano Canfora, Balibar credits Jacques Rancière with providing a “fundamental clarification” in the use of the category: democracy not as the name of a regime but, instead, as the name of a process of struggle, of the “democratization of democracy itself.” What this means is that democracy is not something one can have or that can be imposed but, rather, something that is created or recreated collectively, something that is not achieved but, like certain notions of citizenship, a process that is always coming or becoming. Balibar complicates Rancière’s scheme by noting that “official democracy” is practically restricted or denied to many and, therefore, by proposing insurrection as the “general name for a democratic practice which constructs universal citizenship.” For Balibar, such struggles for the “democratization of democratic citizenship” are present in at least three domains: internal exclusion (for example, in the case of the young immigrants in the French *banlieues* who were subjected to both class and racial discrimination and thus excluded from the public sphere), diasporic citizenship (such as when the crossing of borders by refugees and workers is regulated in a repressive form, which calls for a new kind of “citizenship in the world”), and social rights (particularly when, today, the dismantling of various forms of welfare has created a generalized “social insecurity” and, as a result, many political subjects are excluded from the possibility of active political participation). Balibar’s conclusion is that actual democracy is necessarily conflictual and that class struggles, collective insurrections, are the necessary prerequisites “for the institutional recognition of collective rights and the emergence of social citizenship.”

After two intense years of discussion and planning (and many more years of imagining what it would be like to produce a journal), *RM* was finally launched in early 1988. In the first issue, the editorial board published a general introduction to the *RM* project, which we include here as the first item from the archive. The founding idea was that there had been a rekindling of interest in Marxism in the United States—and, along with that resurgence, many different kinds of Marxian thought had emerged. The reasons for this proliferation of Marxisms included the minority status of Marxist theory and political activity (which made it difficult for Marxists to develop distinct intellectual, cultural, and political traditions), the emergence of new civil- and equal-rights struggles (within which Marxist notions of class and political strategy were variously adopted, rejected, and transformed), the changing nature of the U.S. labor movement (where Marxist ideas were, at different times, attacked and greeted with renewed interest), the growth of peace and other internationalist movements (which led to widespread debates on such themes as imperialism and national liberation), and, of course, Marxist cultures outside the United States (from reactions to the multiple experiences of constructing socialism to new currents of Western Marxism). Among these diverse traditions, *RM* dedicated itself to showcasing and

developing a particularly nondeterminist approach to Marxian theory—both as philosophy and as social analysis—in which class was considered to be a central (but not essentialized) object of analysis. The editorial board also committed itself to expanding both the participants in producing and discussing Marxist theory (beyond well-known university professors) and the forms of Marxist discourse (in addition to the usual scholarly articles). That is how, 20 years ago, the *RM* editorial board understood the context and formulated the challenge of creating a new Marxist journal.

During *RM*'s first decade, Stephen Resnick and Richard Wolff (in collaboration with Harriet Fraad) produced a new Marxian class analysis of households, which was published as a special issue (along with commentaries from leading Marxist and feminist thinkers, in Winter 1989) and then as a book (*Bringing It All Back Home*). Here, they extend their analysis to a variety of new topics and themes, including parents' rearing of children, the relationship between feudal households and capitalist wages, and the household labor performed by husbands. Starting with the idea of a feudal household (in which wives perform surplus labor akin to serfs, which is appropriated by husbands as lords), the arrival of children can have a variety of effects. One possibility is that feudal exploitation increases, as more surplus labor is performed and appropriated and the time wives spend engaged in activities other than performing labor is decreased. If at the same time the husband (who is assumed to be earning wages in the capitalist economy outside the household) uses some of his wages to support the feudal household structure, the reproduction of the commodity labor power (an important condition of existence of capitalism) may be threatened. Such a situation may, in turn, require a reorganization of the feudal household's budget, which may imperil the reproduction of the feudal household structure. And, as Resnick and Wolff continue their analysis, solving one set of contradictions in the feudal-capitalist nexus may create new tensions and struggles within households as well as in their relations with capitalist enterprises. One possible outcome is a changed household division of labor, in which husbands participate in household production. How can Marxian class categories be used to analyze such a situation? For Resnick and Wolff, husbands' increased household labor often (but not always) represents a non-class act of generosity rather than a new form of surplus, thereby leaving unchanged the feudal structure of the household. However, in the context of other class structures—individual (or what they refer to as ancient) and communist households—husbands' activities can generate surplus labor. Finally, Resnick and Wolff examine the possibility of children's household serfdom—when, for example, they are tied to an exploiting father (who now appropriates surplus labor from his wife and children) or a mother who appropriates their surplus labor (even when she herself is performing surplus labor) or both parents (who jointly exploit their children). Beyond the specific features of their analysis, Resnick and Wolff argue both that Marxian class analyses “must always include households within their purview” and that the solutions to the tensions within contemporary households “may well require class transformations” in households as well as in the capitalist enterprises with which they are intertwined.

At the most recent international conference, Rethinking Marxism 2006, Kojin Karatani participated in the plenary session on “Rethinking Communism.” Here, in a

revised version of his presentation, Karatani seeks to address the “questions of capitalism, state, and nation” by abandoning the architectural metaphor of base-superstructure that has come to define classical Marxism—without abandoning Marxism *per se*. In its place, Karatani proposes to start from another category he believes is crucial to Marx’s theory of social formations, exchange, and to consider the state and nation as “derived from the modes of exchange.” He then outlines four basic forms of exchange: reciprocity (a type of exchange that exists not only within archaic societies but also in various types of contemporary community), plunder (which involves redistribution and takes place between communities), commodity (which, while based on mutual consent, does not necessarily entail equality), and the reciprocity of freedom (which, in his view, exists “only as an idea”). Karatani sees the fourth mode not just as a utopian idea but also as a regulative idea, a radical intervention—which, following Kant, is both ethical and economic—in societies that are already constituted by the other three modes of exchange and thus the state, community, and market economy. The next step is to reconceptualize the various “precapitalist” social formations demarcated by Marx (tribal, Asiatic, Greco-Roman, and feudal) in terms of the predominant mode of exchange, after which Karatani focuses on capitalism: a social formation that, in his view, is based not only on commodity exchange but also on reciprocity (whence the nation, once communities were undermined) and plunder (which serves as the origin of the sovereign state). On Karatani’s reading, Marx was never a statist, advocating a socialist revolution that would strengthen the state-nation, but remained close to Proudhon’s associationism, according to which a free association would eventually replace the state. Today, Karatani concludes, such a position (representing Marx’s critique of capitalism) “requires the creation of a non-capitalist alternative economy based upon reciprocal exchange at the level of transnational networks,” which in turn (returning to Kant) requires a confederation of states that supersedes the state.

We decided to commemorate *RM*’s 20th anniversary by asking existing members of the editorial board to interview Jack Amariglio and David F. Ruccio, the two main editors *RM* has been able to rely on since its founding. Kenan Erçel, Maliha Safri, and S. Charusheela stepped forward to formulate the questions and conduct the interview, which took place over email in several sets of queries in which the two interviewees were unaware of each other’s responses. The interview ranges over a wide variety of topics, from the initial decision about the journal’s title (focusing on and joining together “Marxism” and “rethinking”) and the politics of how the journal is edited and produced to the intellectual content of the journal (both the dimensions formulated by the editorial board and, in the case of “postmodern Marxism,” the content assigned by others) and the future of the *RM* project. It thus presents a history (actually, a pair of overlapping histories) of the journal, which will be of interest to readers who have discovered *RM* somewhere along the way and remain oblivious to what the members of the journal—the elected editorial boards and the sponsoring organization, the Association for Economic and Social Analysis—have sought to accomplish and what they have understood to be the challenges and problems they faced. The interview also probes some of the “difficult” political issues surrounding the editing of the journal, including the relationship with commercial publishers and the production of the journal as a capitalist commodity,

in what ways the editorial board operates (or, alternatively, doesn't function) as a collective or communal activity, the attempt to foster artistic expression and to create a truly interdisciplinary forum, and how changes in the world—in capitalism as well as in the form of new information technologies—affect both the content of work that can be found in *RM* and the way that *RM* functions as a quarterly journal. We want to thank all five of the participants for the time and energy they devoted to creating this new piece of the *RM* archive.

Gayatri Spivak and Ben Conisbee Baer engaged in a parallel, one-on-one conversation, and we are pleased to publish here the transcript of their autobiographical and theoretical reflections on the rethinking of Marxism. Shifting between continents (as well as decades), Spivak and Baer begin by describing their first encounters with *RM* and, more generally, with Marxist ideas—she with the Communist Party of India in West Bengal, the left-wing weekly *Frontier*, and the parliamentary socialism of India; he through the peace movement in Britain, especially the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. In Spivak's case, these experiences challenge accepted views about the role of the Soviet Union, what “post-colonial” means, as well as her own “lack of credence in revolution” as an engine of state formation. What Baer finds in some of the work that has been published in *RM* over the course of the past 20 years is a rethinking of capitalism and socialism (and, of course, the relationship between them)—a stress on treating them as “processes not as regimes or fixed entities.” For both Spivak and Baer, then, the rethinking and redoing of Marxism involve a rethinking of the state: in terms of the “practices of historical anarchism” (Baer) and the necessity of “reinventing the state in the Global South,” in the sense that it serves to “protect us against the sheer moralism of the servants of corporatism calling themselves international civil society” (Spivak). At the same time, both Spivak and Baer express their concerns about state-centered, top-down, nationalist forms of development and the consequent reinscription of “feudality.” Their conversation thus turns to the importance of education and epistemological preparation, based on the difference between “need” and “making,” and the possibility of thinking “human capital with the subaltern.” The idea is that, as human beings “actually learn to use this difference,” human capital emerges beyond value and the realm of necessity, and moves into the realm of freedom.

Susan Jahoda has been the editor (and now coeditor, with Jesal Kapadia) of the arts section of *RM* for fifteen years. Here, in a version of a work in progress, *Excerpts from Serenade to the Photosphere*, she explores the complex dynamic of human and natural ecology occasioned by the “great yellow dust clouds” that currently cross national boundaries and have come to encircle the globe. Of course, it is only possible to see the polluting dust as clouds, together with the widespread agricultural and industrial practices that cause them, in photographs from NASA spacecraft. And perhaps it is only over time that we can measure the accumulating effects of the yellow dust on and in our bodies. But to ignore the clear signals of how the two are intertwined—of how human activities create a “sky that is rotting a malignant milk” and how the “chemical hum of tomato yellow” is destroying the air we breathe and seeping into our torsos and limbs—leaves the existing political economy of environmental destruction unchallenged. It has the effect, therefore, of allowing the entire planet to be covered in a “mustard yellow of sour.”

At the beginning of Volume 10, Jack Amariglio stepped down as editor and David Ruccio and Stephen Cullenberg began their one-year coeditorship. We decided to reproduce the introductory essay from that issue, in which the editorial board at that time sought to take stock of where the journal had been and where it was going, as another piece of the *RM* archive. The editorial board noted the seeming untimeliness of the initial venture, amidst the “distant rumblings that would eventually lead to the fall of the Wall,” and, at the same time, the idea that the “Marxian tradition was far richer and more diverse” than many on the Left were willing to recognize. What that meant was that there was “untapped potential” within the Marxian tradition, the possibility of new engagements with other theoretical and political discourses, and a desire to create a space within which the nondeterministic elements of the Marxian tradition “could be brought to the fore.” Looking back over the first decade, the board was struck by the diversity of topics covered in the journal as well as the new activities that had been spawned, including a series of regional and international conferences, a book series, and a web site (which was still a novelty in those days). Perhaps most important, the board shared the details of the collective project of creating and producing *RM* and recognized the “unstinting commitment and labor” of, as well as the wide range of responsibilities and the “many large and small tasks” taken on by, Amariglio as the first editor. Finally, the board expressed its hope that the continued existence of *RM* had given notice that the “time of Marxism” had changed and that the strategy of opening theoretical spaces in and around Marxism would contribute to the emergence of new liberatory social practices.

The *Remarx* essay in this special issue is appropriately contributed by J. K. Gibson-Graham (the pen name for Julie Graham, a member of the Advisory Board and current managing editor, and Katherine Gibson), who derive a politics of local economic transformation from the “new revolutionary imaginary” they glimpse in a wide variety of movements, especially the Zapatista uprising in Mexico and second-wave feminism. What they find distinctive about this new place-based global imaginary is the combination of “expansive and proliferative spatiality” and “compressed temporality,” in other words, the way a global movement for economic and social transformation envisions “place as a site of becoming” not according to some grand historical narrative but within the rhythms of everyday life. In their view, second-wave feminism proceeded in a similar manner, deemphasizing formal organization at the global scale and cultivating new practices of the self according to the public and private modalities of the everyday. What the two sets of discourses suggest to Gibson-Graham is that transformation can take place within local economies in the present—as against “waiting for the revolution” to create a new economy and system of governance on a world scale. Thus, they posit two different orientations to transformative politics: one, a “politics to dismantle and replace,” is characterized by an “exhaustively theorized and depicted” positivity (such as Empire or global capitalism); the other starts with a negativity (e.g., a place that fails to be fully capitalist) and involves a politics that emphasizes “articulation and resubjectivation” or an ethical practice of becoming. It is the latter approach to politics—“not simply a potential or actual movement but an alternative logic of politics”—that, for Gibson-Graham, is capable of cultivating new economic subjectivities in the here and now.

RM has featured many articles and reviews on the work of Antonio Negri (most notably, the special double issue on *Empire*, in Fall-Winter 2001), plus an interview about his experience in exile (in July 2006). We are fortunate to include in this issue a conversation between Negri and Gabriele Fadini, on the occasion of the English translation of Negri's book *Thirty-Three Lessons on Lenin*, in which they explore the question of theology in relation to his ontology and political views. The conversation begins with a discussion of theology and revolution (connecting Thomas Müntzer and the Peasant War in Germany to today's liberation theology in Latin America), which allows Negri to make a distinction between poverty as a flat and desperate situation that "only the transcendental can redeem" and poverty as a form of power that makes love operational and that alone is capable of creating a relation between theology and politics. But a theology based on evil and sin serves as an obstacle to the conception of poverty that "unfolds through love," which implicates "a common openness and a collective disposition." So, it is love (along with charity) that brings about a "paradoxical convergence" between materialism and theology in the sense that love represents a praxis of the common, a source of energy and innovation that changes the conditions in which it was born. Another theological theme that runs through Negri's recent work is exodus. For him, it represents the "refusal to stay under the order of capitalism." It can thus be counterposed to a reformist stance that "pretends to know the direction the revolution will take" since exodus is premised on "total and absolute risk," and is therefore more open and radical. Finally, Fadini inquires about Negri's reflections on Lenin and the apparent convergence between messianism and revolution in terms of "who will start?" For Negri, the question is not who will start but who will fulfill the mission of exiting from capitalism, in the absence of a messiah. He therefore prefers to think of messianism as a collective and immanent logic that can be found within the multitude. And, in his view, it is "Lenin [who] is still and will always be an image of the multitude."

Longstanding editorial board member Stephen Cullenberg, along with Anjan Chakrabarti and Anup Kumar Dhar, take up the problem of the contradictory existence of Marxism and poverty. Why contradictory? Because while Marxism's ethical imperative is to eliminate exploitation, a world free of exploitation does not necessarily mean the eradication of poverty; nor, for that matter, does the elimination of poverty entail the erasure of exploitative class structures. Their goal, therefore, is to develop a specifically Marxist discourse of poverty by utilizing two different notions of surplus: production surplus (which is distributed to secure the conditions of existence of the class structure) and social surplus (which serves to reproduce other conditions of existence, those related to need). Their point is that the eradication of poverty requires both more social surplus and a different allocation of the social surplus—and is thus "very much a class question." They define the amount of social surplus necessary to eliminate poverty in terms of a "poverty eradication condition" or the difference between the basket of goods and services needed in a nation for the fulfillment of basic needs and the actual basket of goods and services received by the poor. Whether or not the amount of social surplus available is sufficient to satisfy this condition depends both on class struggles (how much surplus is performed and appropriated and how much is distributed to reproduce the class structure) and nonclass struggles (how much of the social surplus

is allocated to the poor and how much goes to other uses). This framework allows them to develop a notion of “expanded communism” that involves both class justice (the elimination of exploitation) and development justice (zero tolerance of poverty). And it is this vision that frames what they see currently taking place in Hugo Chavez’s revolution in Venezuela, where the war on poverty is accompanied by class struggles to change both the appropriation and distribution of surplus labor, thereby moving in the direction of realizing both forms of justice.

Duplicating, copying, the same as what has been said—in short, ditto. For Jesal Kapadia, coeditor (with Susan Jahoda) of the *RM* arts section, this apparently “insignificant sort of word” has both a long history (with its root in the Latin *dictus*) and a haunting significance when it serves to connect the worlds of so-called high culture (including art and architecture) and the everyday world of practical invention. It evokes an original as well as a copy of the original—but fails to inform us which is which. It also blurs the boundary between the two worlds, and forces us to discover elements of one in the other—since we can see the solving of problems in the production of aesthetic objects as well as beauty in the arrangement of the elements of the supposedly technical solutions. Even when the technical problem to be solved comes in the aftermath of genocide. So, although the authenticity of the original is called into question, a different authenticity might be affirmed: that the realm of art can encompass a wide range of human inventions, including tools and writing; and that even when history repeats itself, the recurring event acquires its own significance, its own singularity, as the solution to a real problem, which in turn demands repetition.

Antonio Callari, a former member of the editorial board, challenges the widely held view that contemporary globalization signifies the decline of U.S. hegemony and/or undermines the possibility of any territorially centered imperialism. In fact, Callari argues, the ability of finance capital to capture an increasing share of surplus-value represents a new type of imperialism—different from the old imperialism, which was built around the production of surplus-value in the metropolitan nations, but still a form of imperialism, in the sense that the dominion of finance is based on the use of state power in international relations. More specifically, Callari views the new imperialism as an Anglo imperialism, because of the ability of the United States and Great Britain to capture distributions of surplus-value produced around the globe. It is different from the old because it seeks to manage its political and cultural conditions of existence in a manner that gives priority to a certain concept of democracy (rather than humanity, culture, or nationalism/independence) as a way of articulating political agency and property relations within the domestic and international agendas of globalization discourse. The conclusion that Callari draws from this analysis is that the Left needs to take democracy seriously as a space for emancipatory politics. Because the imperialist project of democracy involves an expansion of the fantasy of property at an international level and a retreat of the promise of democracy within the center, the Left has an opportunity both to contest this process of rearticulating and retreating from democracy and to struggle for a democracy in excess of property.

As we complete with this issue 20 years of *RM*, we hope to have shown not only that Marxism has a continued relevance to the project of interpreting and changing the

world but that the Marxian tradition contains the kind of openness and collective vitality that calls for its own rethinking. There is certainly much more to be done—and new worlds to be gained.

The Editors