

BOOK REVIEWS

SCHMIED-KOWARZIK, WOLFDIETRICH. *Solidarische Praxis in Allianz mit der Natur. Marx' dialektische Praxisphilosophie für das 21. Jahrhundert*. Westfälisches Dampfboot, Münster 2022. 205 pp. € 25.00.

Wolfdietrich Schmied-Kowarzik, the author of *Solidarische Praxis in Allianz mit der Natur. Marx' dialektische Praxisphilosophie für das 21. Jahrhundert*, was professor of Philosophy and Education at the University of Kassel from 1971 to 2007. He worked intensively in the field of a dialectical philosophy of practice and, through international conferences, was a promoter of “Philosophy of Practice”, the important school of thought that followed Marx.

This volume comprises a selection of articles from 1998 to 2018 and two in-depth contributions to the specialist literature. They aim to elaborate and continue the dialectical–practical–philosophical core of Marx’s thought as a current, ground-breaking, and “historically significant” “critical philosophy of social practice” (p. 132). It is, in this sense, that Marx should be rediscovered. And in this way, Schmied-Kowarzik counters shortened and petrified receptions of Marx and relies on excellent citations and a systematic argumentation. With the approach of dialectical practical thinking, a positivist or objectivist understanding of science, which is also widespread in Marxist movements, is simultaneously rejected.

Herbert Marcuse, Ernst Bloch, and Henri Lefebvre are particularly highlighted from the philosophy of practice that followed Marx. Schmied-Kowarzik draws an arc from Plato and Aristotle to the constellation between Hegel and Marx, in which philosophical thought culminated at the time. Marx’s “Theses ad Feuerbach” testify that he, again, placed thinking, as Plato once did, in the “primacy of practice” (pp. 16, 121).

In the process, Marx came to terms with Hegel’s affirmative understanding of knowledge of reality and bourgeois society (p. 45) and with the latter’s dialectic. He developed the mode of “intervening critique” (p. 16) and his dialectical philosophy of *praxis*, so the original notation or “Philosophie der Praxis” in German. Accordingly, bourgeois social philosophy does not go beyond the idea of legal equality based on private property, i.e. the property, appropriation, and power relations of bourgeois economic society.

But in this constitutional form, according to Marx, the “true, realised self-determination of the people” (p. 45) is not achieved. He found the roots of social problems in the political–economic conditions of capitalism, politicized himself, and developed the idea or “project” of a social upheaval as human and humanitarian “emancipation” (pp. 134–150).

The coherence of Marx’s concrete research and of his work is explained by the core concept. In this context, practice, embedded in the “productivity of living nature” (p. 23), is conceived as the human mode of existence and reality in general. People

maintain, shape, and change their lives through their work, social reproduction, and practice. The “social practice” of the “individuals producing in society” (Marx) consequently forms the fundamental “substrate and subject of human history” (p. 68).

However, there is no question of this practice and process reality being transparent and comprehended in history to date or being shaped in a conscious and solidary sociality. Capitalist formation is rather a self-generated divisiveness, foreign determination, randomness of individual destinies, and superiority of real relations, unequal property, and appropriation relations, as well as relations of domination.

This positive concept of practice, the activated dialectical thinking of contradiction, the basic situation of “alienation” (pp. 72–76) lead to indispensable tasks of a political philosophy and “revolutionary upheaval” (p. 86). It is necessary to work towards the consciousness and real subjectification of social individuals so that they can shape their living conditions in free association, in solidarity, and in moral and historical responsibility.

Thus, it is neither just about science nor about worldview, but about a conceptualization of human history grounded in real society and principally unsurpassable, with all the concomitant philosophical and political consequences. This concept is also based on Marx’s profound conception of the social praxeology and mode of existence mediated in everything with nature and its productivity.

Thus, Marx’s radical critique leads to the concept of historical dialectics and the recognition of the necessity and tasks of revolutionary practice in permanence – “fundamentally for all societies and their regeneration in and through individuals” (p. 73). This approach avoids reducing the socialist perspective to a project of reform or even feasibility.

The connection of “critical philosophy” with the target concept of “concrete utopia” (p. 132) or the power of “concrete utopian anticipation” (p. 88) proves that it means something different or more than critical social theories. Starting from that “constitution of human history” (p. 68), it would lead further here to develop the dialectical concept of practice in the sense of a comprehensive constitutional theory of social reality and to form it as a philosophical–scientific paradigm.

Marx’s work at that time led from *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* to the great unfinished project of a “Critique of Political Economy” (pp. 83–86). Marx was far from completing the once planned works on the “state” and the “world market”, and the questions of “dialectics” were also not finally clarified by either Marx or Engels (p. 117). The great achievement consists in showing the logic of the value of capital as a logic of alienation, insofar as, according to Marx, it simultaneously undermines the “original sources of all wealth – the soil and the worker” (p. 104) and tends to destroy the natural and moral foundations of all human life.

Schmied-Kowarzik sees in this a purely “negative theory” (pp. 96, 129), which proves that the capitalist law of value, the decisive motor of events, cannot represent a central function of *human* social development. It has an irreversibly destructive effect: capital exploits the workers and robs them of their strength. Nature is appropriated as a quasi-worthless prerequisite, returns as waste, all this negating social living conditions and ecological cycles.

The critique of political economy is therefore not the foundation of an economy as a science, nor can a socialist economy (p. 124) be derived from it. It first serves the

socio-political enlightenment of a revolutionary practice. According to this, what is needed is a radical upheaval that brings the basic economic processes “finally under control” (p. 77).

Marx’s critique shows the downright madness of capitalist economics and reveals the “fundamental contradiction between the logic of value of capital” and the real “wealth through labour and soil” (p. 77). Therefore, the capitalist mode of production on a global scale is opposed to the “solution of historical tasks of humanity” (p. 41). This is also evidenced by the “sell-out of the Third World” (pp. 130, 131), and its “exploitation and plundering by the capitalist industrial nations”.

It becomes clear to what extent a positivist understanding of the theory of value led to the failure of that “socialist economy” or to state capitalism. But even the “social market economy” cannot contain the basic contradiction. Its achievements are “radically” threatened, and capitalism does not become more humane (p. 130). A “socialist or socio-ecological oikonomia” (p. 178) would have to include all areas of reproduction and renewal of a society, such as family regeneration, education, and other socio-political areas.

Schmied-Kowarzik’s critique of the “economy of value” could give the impression that the category of economic value is negative per se (p. 117). However, Marx’s conception does not mean that it is obsolete in the context of an alternative, economic formation of labour and reproduction or “economy of time” (Marx).

Furthermore, Marx already sought to outline “transitional forms” and outlines of the new. In contrast, the negatory theory of capital and crisis has not been able to answer until today whether a positive alternative has not been preparing itself in the meantime, after 150 years, “in the bosom” (Marx) of the existing. At least, according to Schmied-Kowarzik, “forms of alternative modes of production and life are already visible in their beginnings or tried out” (p. 191).

Schmied-Kowarzik notes that the meta-philosophical or world-philosophical dimension of Marx’s concept is still misunderstood. Often a historicizing and bent image of Marx is cultivated, and critical social theories and particularist readings of capital push their way in. Moreover, it is a “total misinterpretation” (p. 163) that Marx inherited or delimited the scientific-technical belief in progress. The book’s title *Solidary Practice in Alliance with Nature* now aptly summarizes the perspective of the dialectical philosophy of practice. However, it is necessary to “update” it again and again from its core to the present problems (pp. 127, 147).

It is now about the “overall field of social practice” (p. 120) and all global conflicts. It also needs a critique of technology and science, which are value-economically appropriated (p. 120). Schmied-Kowarzik emphasizes the mission of pedagogy and education (pp. 61, 139) to develop the “reason inherent in human practice” (p. 50) and “morality” (pp. 45, 64). The goal perspective is thereby understood “as a mediated unity of individual freedom and moral society” (p. 68).

By uncovering the roots of alienation and existential threats in this way, the philosophy of practice aims at a solidary and moral world that is ecologically more worth living in. It has to mobilize “all resistant forces”, including the “imagination”, in order to “develop and test concretely desirable alternatives” (pp. 100, 101), which serve the transformation of the capitalist value economy and a comprehensive human, historical “emancipation” (pp. 134–150).

For this task, Schmied-Kowarzik explains how the present approach on the “dialectical relationship of human beings to nature” (pp. 151–192) provides the most advanced basis for dealing with today’s ecological problems of existence. It also follows from all this that demands for more environmental protection, or, for example, solar and innovative technologies, cannot solve the basic contradiction that has been grasped. In view of the driving logic of exploitation and the growth imperatives, “scientific-technical or political–legal measures”, even state intervention or nationalization, can only delay the catastrophe (p. 126).

Finally, beyond world conflicts, there is the threat of humanity’s self-destruction, exterminism through weapons of destruction, and the irreversible destruction of the biosphere. In view of this, it is summed up: the “concrete utopia” of a radical change proves to be “the only horizon of hope for the continued existence of humanity” (p. 132). Even more, therefore, consistent efforts are needed in the “invariant direction” (Bloch) towards the “great project of conscious humanity” (p. 189), for which there is “no certainty” (p. 132) of success.

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EROĞLU, ŞEBNEM. *Poverty and International Migration. A Multi-Site and Intergenerational Perspective*. Policy Press, Bristol 2022. v, 126 pp. £47.00.

Academic interest in migration and its effects has been increasing over recent decades. Throughout the twentieth century, European powers came face to face with cultures often only known through colonial interrelations between countries. The increase in migration in the twentieth century resulted in many studies focusing on multiple effects within the country that served as the country of destination for those migrating. Migrants were motivated by several factors, including political and economic. In the case of the latter, what happens in the country that migrants leave behind? Eroğlu’s *Poverty and International Migration* examines poverty as both a reason for and outcome of international migration. She does this by comparing three generations of “settler” migrants, all with Turkish ethnicity. In this comparison, migrants spanning multiple destinations were connected with their returnee and stayer counterparts living in the country of origin (Turkey). This approach is unlike that taken by most studies in the literature on migration, which focus on migrants and settlers in the country of residence (European countries such as Germany, the Netherlands, France, Belgium, Denmark, and Sweden).

Poverty and International Migration is the first study to investigate the extent of group and generational differences. In doing so, it draws on sources of monetary poverty and is based on an adaptation of the resource-based model. The resource-based model is adapted by means of three major innovations. First, by taking a multi-site approach, this study allows the settler and the return migrants to be compared with