

OCENE
RECENSIONI
REVIEWS

Todor Kuljić:

PROGNANI POJMOVI – NEOLIBERALNA POJMOVNA
REVIZIJA MISLI O DRUŠTVU. Beograd, Clio, 2018,
392 strani.

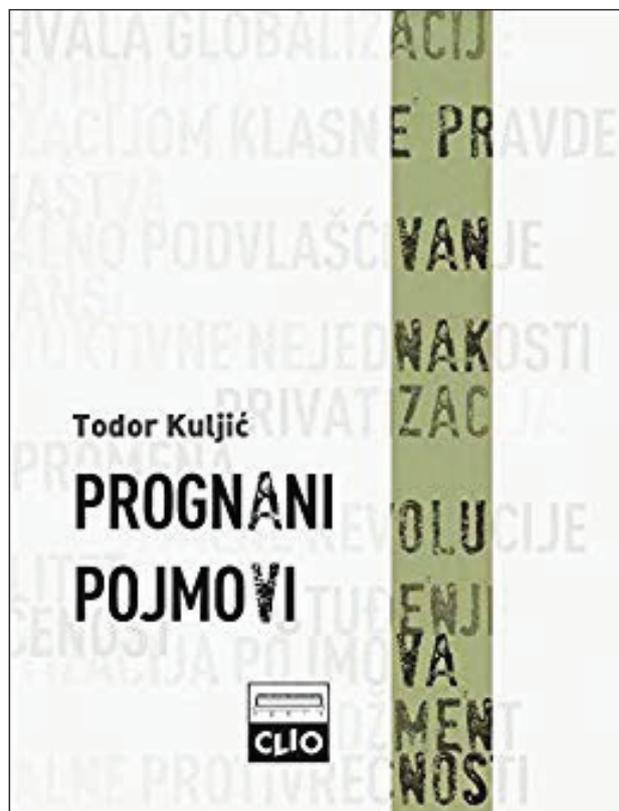
The subject of the most recent monography by T. Kuljić is the neoliberal conceptual revision of the social thought, which presents an applied conceptual history. The historical-sociological analysis of actual capitalism is here devoted to the criticism of its hegemonic social concepts (profitability, market, transition, management, social exclusion) and to the expulsion of the old concepts (socialism, internationalism, humanism, material social justice, social revolution, exploitation). The new concepts of social justice justify the interests of ruling groups directly or indirectly. By one should bringing order into numerous and often chaotic processes and events. Concepts summarize social contradictions, emphasize the key tensions and interests, and are grouped in discourses in order to get cognitive and effective power. The first two chapters of the book provide the elements of the theoretical and conceptual frame.

In the first chapter *“The conceptual history – sources, theory and criticism”*, author analyses the sources of the idea, theory and criticism of conceptual history. Special attention was given to its founder, the German historian R. Koselleck. His thesis that pluralist history should be written from the viewpoint which is also plural and his reflective historicism close to constructivism and relativism were given special consideration. Some of Koselleck is also presented, but despite it, the conceptual history as a scientific discipline encouraged a linguistic shift in historical research emphasized the importance of hermeneutic research of meanings and it reduced, more or less reliably, the complexity of the past events by productively summarizing the past on the whole.

The second chapter *“Historical concepts: a connection of an analytical and creative aspect”* shows why the key historical concepts are not just simple tools of knowledge but the factors of historical processes. These concepts are complex and variable combinations of analytical and normative efforts, and they become effective when connected within specific discourses. The book shows how semantics of the hegemonic concepts of any period testifies to what was imposed as desirable meaning of life. It reveals the way the complexity of bygone past and bygone future was reduced, as well as the historical concepts which were used as weapons of war and oppression or the ones which were levers of solidarity and peace. These concepts are both the prerequisites of the explanations in social sciences, and the means of emancipation. The necessary context for the

assessment of their role is provided by the conceptual history, which must have its own reflexivity; any usage of historical concepts has its own epistemological limits and its own take on the concepts. In this context, the book pays special attention to modern helplessness of the concept of anti-capitalism. The author concludes is that the contemporary idea of a wishful future and a clear distinction between the good and the bad aspects of the past are important requirements for the control of the present situation in capitalism.

The third chapter *“On justification of contemporary capitalism”* attempts to show new patterns of justification of capitalism in our century as a real frame of the postsocialist conceptual history. The political elites of the peripheral capitalism justify power by pointing to the entrance of the capital which moves away from the centre and towards the cheap labour force. The trade unions are powerless because the peripheral states give too much power to the capital coming from the centre. Thus the circle of exploitation closes with the migration of capital which has the power to blackmail and which deprives the trade unions and the labour force of power in the centre as well as on the periphery. The decisions are made by the supranational actors, the international funds and banks. In addition, today's capitalism is justified by the growth of religiosity and by the digital control over information. With the growth of religiosity, ethnocentrism, xenophobia, the right parties are getting stronger. The left has been destroyed by the ethnona-



tionalism and it is also encumbered by its own melodramatic nostalgia as the paralysing memory culture, stresses Kuljić.

The fourth chapter is entitled “*On human innate rights: the radical natural law and the social justice from K. Marx up to neoliberalism*”. The natural law is a supraempirical law that does not owe its dignity to the legal norm, but to the intrinsic qualities of a human being. This chapter presents a different hierarchical position of the natural law in the critique of capitalism by K. Marx to our days and its different accentuation as a suprapositive framework of justice. The theoretical search for social justice in the philosophy of the natural law (K. Marx, M. Weber, G. Radbruch, L. Strauss, E. Bloch, Lj. Tadić) (1) is analytically separated from empirical identification of power relations that allowed or hindered social justice in practice (2). The book offers an analysis of historically different relationships between the positive and the radical natural law in both the compressed 20th century epochal conscience and today’s neoliberal one. In addition, it compares the role of the natural law in capitalism and socialism and deliberates differences between social justice from above and social justice from below. The first one is gratuitous, paternalistic and limited, while the second one is radical and has to be conquered. The radical natural law should express itself as a fully developed social justice liberated from capitalism. Criticism of social injustice from the viewpoint of natural law has no practical effects in our days, and in spite of it, it is not anachronistic.

The fifth chapter “*Ljubomir Tadić’s ideological orientation and political engagement – between harmony and tension*”: and it deals with the vacillation of the Serbian philosopher Ljubomir Tadić’s orientation between revolutionary Marxism and internationalism on the one hand and ethnocentrism and the defence of capitalism on the other hand. The most important line of Tadić’s thought is oriented towards material natural law. The place of this conceptual content is analysed in the (dis)continuity of Tadić’s orientation. Tadić’s thought stretched between these two poles on the edge between two centuries and two different epochal consciousnesses is also shown. The scope of explanation of the two non-identical phases of Tadić’s orientation with the different concepts of evolution, maturation and conversions is discussed. It is concluded that the strong conversion of Tadić’s practical engagement was accompanied by a slower and more moderate evolution of ideological orientation (from revolutionary to restrained Marxism). His participation in the foundation of the Democratic (bourgeois) party was not accompanied by a denial of Marxism. The paper also follows the evolution of the interpretation of Tadić’s thought. Tadić’s neglect of anti-capitalism was less criticized than his abandonment of anti-nationalism. An overemphasized and often emphatic attitude towards Tadić’s practical engagement prevails; it diminishes the precision of the evaluation of (dis)continuity of

the his orientation, as well as the cognitive value of his sociological and philosophical-legal thought, because of its reductionist orientation towards the resistance to the state power and civil disobedience.

In the sixth chapter “*Altruism, philanthropy and humanism: the conceptual-historical aspects of solidarity*” discusses two main versions of altruism: philanthropy and humanism, their most developed historical forms and ways of legitimation. It is shown why private property, market and profit maximization are not inconsistent with philanthropy and why they are not in accordance with humanism. The role of philanthropy in the apology justification of capitalism is considered. The paper compares two classical writings: Marx-Engels’ *Manifest of the Communist Party* and Andrew Carnegie’s essay *The Gospel of Wealth*. In addition, it explores historical development, main features and the limitations of solidarity both in humanism and in philanthropy in religious and in secular life, as well as the types of philanthropists and humanists and the contemporary philanthrocapitalism in the USA and Germany. There are two kinds of philanthropy criticism: an extra-systemic one, which points to different abuses of philanthropists, but does not deny the foundations of the system (1), and a systemic one, which does not separate the criticism of philanthropy from the criticism of capitalism itself (2). Special attention is given to the usage of symbolic capital in the philanthropy and to different doubts about the sincerity of benefaction. There is a difference between abstract humanism which only condemns inhumanity, on the one hand, and the theory of real humanism, as the lever by means of which one should abolish exploitation and oppression of human beings, on the other hand. It is possible to differentiate ideological explanations of charity, philanthropic and humanistic attempts in the epochal consciousness of different historical ages from the antiquity to neoliberalism. Humanism prevailed during the Cold War in socialism, whereas philanthropy has become hegemonic since the collapse of European socialism. Humanism was rooted in criticism of private property, while philanthropy serves to promote bourgeois values. The conclusion is that philanthropy relieves poverty on the level of distribution, while humanism tries to annihilate poverty on the level of production.

The seventh chapter is dedicated to “*The concept of social revolution*”. The original meaning of the occupied and banished concept of social revolution (1) and its contemporary misinterpretation, changing of the content and scope (2) are analysed here. Both political and internal scholarly corrections and social conditions of the revaluation of the concept of social revolution are shown. The last two chapters author discusses the changes of the concept of social justice.

The eighth chapter “*The social justice in the 21st century*” deals with the analysis of the limitations of neoliberal criticism of inequality, the pluralisation and relativization of justice, the political use of social justice

and the suppression of social justice in the capitalism of the 21st century. The main values of social justice are deformed due to the weakness of the left. The liberal concepts of social exclusion and marginalisation are specifically analysed. The poverty seems quite different when analysed as an aspect of exclusion than as a result of exploitation. There are different discourses which summarize, evaluate and accentuate the social injustice in the opposite manner. The neoliberal concepts mystify the real reasons of social injustice, relativizing and neutralizing the fact that the key inequality lies in the production relations.

In the ninth chapter "*Farewell to social justice – on the narrow normative framework of neoliberal discourse about justice*" attention is drawn to different neoliberal conceptual normalisations of market inequality. It was necessary to show that a different narrowing of a normative framework of neoliberal discourse about justice (J. Rawls, W. Kersting) is connected with different criticism of capitalism. Marx's theory of labour value was stimulating when highlighting that capitalism reproduces an unfair social structure because it is based on exploitation.

Finally, the author draws several conclusions. An important aspect of theoretical conflict over the changes in a society is the concepts grouped in discourses. Historical semantics studies the changes in the meaning of words, concepts and discourses which bear the meaning of past societies condensed in concepts and thus reconstructs the forms of communication in the past. It is enough to say that the changes in the meaning of key concepts are indicators of the changes in a society. It should be added that the emergence of every new concept is the result of new circumstances, but also a new way to perceive the old ones. In a condensed form, it answers the question of why something happened in a particular way and the way it should have happened. The concepts grouped into discourses analytically explore the problem, but also suggest the direction in which the society should be changed. The analytical and normative components of concepts and discourses make them the carriers of theory and ideology. In its diachronic sense, conceptual history recognizes the moment of innovation, when the old concepts become obsolete, and the new ones are created. In a cognitive sense, a concept is a meaningful unity of logical operations; and in a political sense, new concepts are associated with social earthquakes when new forces invade a conceptual field and change not only the reality but also the perception of it. At turning points, the concepts become and influential and condensed part of the ideologies of social groups either when creating a desired vision of society or when stigmatizing the enemy. The changes of several strategic conceptual controversies (material versus formal natural law, humanism versus philanthropy, material social justice versus postmaterial market justice, transeunt versus immanent social justice) are an-

alysed. Different neoliberal arguments of postmaterial social justice are here explained and criticised as the ideologization of social inequality and of actual global capitalism as well. The neoliberal hegemonic epochal consciousness is condensed in fighting terms which are considered as both innovations and occupations, stresses in the conclusion author T. Kuljić.

Avgust Lešnik

Darko Darovec:

VENDETTA IN KOPER 1686. Koper, Zgodovinsko društvo za južno Primorsko, Annales Majora, 2018, 207 strani

From the very beginning, international relations—as an activity and a field of science—have been subject to the fundamental question of how to resolve conflicts that arise between individuals, social groups, and since the Westphalisation also states, in a peaceful way. Throughout history, two core reasons for doing so have been used—the first prevailed from antiquity to the late 19th century, which marks the start of the evolution of the second, which was formalised with the emergence of the League of Nations and the United Nations. Why two reasons and processes? Mainly because they build on two different approaches. Until the mid-19th century, the prevalent view was that peaceful conflict resolution makes sense because it pays off. Already the great Montesquieu wrote in *The Spirit of the Laws* that peace boosts international trade, and this in turn increases wellbeing. Peace and trade growth were (and still are) two sides of the same coin, and peaceful settlement of disputes until the 19th century was above all pragmatic. A shift came with the democratisation of the international community, and its increasingly hierarchical nature and complexity. All these changes also led to a turn from pragmatic thinking to ideological thinking. From this point on, peaceful conflict resolution was an ideological issue, and was seen as a civilizational achievement or civilizational norm. This was also confirmed by both Hague Peace Conferences, the greatest achievement of which is of course the *Convention for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes*. The two world wars are proof of how little we learn from history. This is why the setting up of the United Nations after WWII was only an attempt at continuing what had already been established on the ideological stage by the Hague Conferences and the League of Nations. Article 33 of the Charter of the United Nations, which lays down the means of pacific settlement of disputes, thus only reflects the progressive development of the ideology that it is a civilizational duty at our level of development to settle disputes in a peaceful manner rather than with guns and bayonets.