Anselm Jappe (Collège international de philosophie, Paris)

TITLE: End of a Family Quarrel: Overcoming Capital and Labour

ABSTRACT: It is often said that capitalism is a revolutionary force. However, the opposite might also be true: revolutionary movements and moments have contributed a great deal to the development of capitalism. It was not always so. Early social movements against capitalism, such as the Luddites, were directed against industrial labour itself, and Karl Marx’s theory is, at its core, a critique of the very basis of the capitalist mode of production: value and commodity, money and labour. Nevertheless, the actual impact of the workers’ movement turned out to be quite different: it helped these categories take hold of the whole of society. “Labour”, in particular, was not critiqued as an alienated form of social mediation but, on the contrary, glorified. Nearly all kinds of social opposition advocated for a new way of distributing value and money, and never called for their suppression or overcoming. The conflict between wage labour and capital remained a family quarrel within modern labour society. In the last few decades, however, capitalism has reached its internal limits as labour has become ever more marginalised from the production process. Within this structural crisis, the basic features of the production process itself are increasingly being questioned, as their destructive and self-destructive character is becoming more clearly felt. In this context, “Thinking beyond capitalism” acquires a very different meaning.

Alex Demirovic (Universität Frankfurt am Main)

TITLE: On the edge: the question of the end of capitalism

ABSTRACT: The paper deals with the problem of how to think about the end of capitalism. There is some evidence that capitalism is not sustainable, and it is reasonable to think of capitalism as a zombie – in the sense that it continues and produces a lot of destruction and harm worldwide. In the tradition of Marx and Critical Theory (Horkheimer, Adorno) I argue that there is no theoretical possibility to construe any future or a free period of human beings. The boundaries of knowlegde are in themselves one of the reasons for the intent to overcome capitalist relationships. So the only way to think about this end is what Adorno called negative dialectics.

Catherine Samary (Université Paris Dauphine)

TITLE: „The apolitical veil of ordoliberal capitalism and the strategic recomposition of Europe”

ABSTRACT: In the context of the so-called 1989 “Democratic Revolutions”, the capitalist transformation named “transition towards the market” was supposed to implement the neo-liberal equation : “market + privatisation = efficiency + freedom”. In the following decades the integration of “New Member States” within the European Union (EU) was described as “Returning to Europe”, denying any progressivist past outside Western Europe and putting a veil on the dark
sides of the latter. The eastward enlargement of the EU radicalized the neo-liberal program put forward under the slogan “TINA” – There Is No Alternative – by Margaret Thatcher since 1980 in the core and neo-semi-peripheral capitalist countries. Nationalist xenophobia and acceptance of the capitalist competition are the hegemonic ideologies permitting to transform the suppression of the former single party and bureaucratic regimes, into tools to increase inequalities on the whole continent.

The 2007-2009 crisis was a turning point at the global level with specific features in the post 1989 UE. After the banks bailout, the so-called “crisis of the sovereign debts” was used to launch and legitimate a new phase of the anti-social European agenda on the basis of the apolitical veil of “ordoliberalism” : the “golden rules” of free competition were to be exempted from any debate and integrated into the marble of constitutions. The Greek elections have challenged that order, raising the potential of an alternative popular “legitimacy”. Even a minimalist program of basic social rights and of democratic choice is in radical opposition to the existing European order supported by its 1% winners in Greece, like in each European country within or out of the Eurozone. But this could also become an element of strength for resistances if that basic social and democratic programme won enough support to begin and build an alternative “hegemonic block” in Europe.

M. Tamás(CEU, Budapest)

TITLE: Capitalism and Democracy: Is Capitalist Democracy An Oxymoron?

The triumphant thesis since the 1980s everywhere, but especially in Europe, has been that although not every kind of capitalism is democratic, all versions of democracy are, by necessity, capitalist. Since no modern political system, particularly, no variant of ‘real socialism’ was able to transcend the capitalist horizon, this is not a great discovery. As all modern political systems are based on commodity production and wage labour, ruled by value and steered by the need for accumulation, all modern democracies and non-democracies are, by definition, capitalist.

What needs to be examined is whether the dominant claim, to wit, that liberal, i. e., constitutional democracies – with the typical separation of powers, rule of law, human rights, civil liberties, free elections and plebiscites, sovereignty of the individual, guaranteed private property, pluralism, laïcité/secularism, toleration, limits to legitimate coercion (habeas corpus) etc. – are indeed reconcilable with capitalism, moreover, that capitalism is an unavoidable precondition of such a democracy. Curiously, a part of the anti-capitalist Left seems to reinforce this impression by saying that liberal democracies (aka ‘rule of law régimes’) are shaped in a way which will make possible the undisputed supremacy of capital and, frequently, that of the bourgeoisie. In this view, constitutional or liberal or ‘rule of law’ democracy is capital’s tool, so the relation between capital and this sort of democracy is not contradictory or conflictual, so they (leftists suspicious of liberal-democratic smugness) do – albeit in a hostile manner – agree with the liberal and conservative establishment.

But is this right?
The fact is that in all historical modes of liberal (constitutional) democracy or ‘representative government’ without exception, social and cultural hierarchy, economic oligarchy (inequality) amounting to class rule had always been the case which means, of course, that the agency to which the idea of liberties refers, is disproportionate, and societal (sometimes legal and political) limitations on human (individual and group) action and ‘free choice’ are making a mockery of the assumption that everybody is equally free – that everybody’s will has an equal impact on collective action – hence it would appear that capitalism does not allow the unfolding of a ‘free society’ as conceived by bourgeois theory. What is important here is that it is not informal ‘influences’ which preclude the realisation or the full observance of valid constitutional principles, but it is the institutional nature of capitalism that contradicts the basic tenets of bourgeois democracy itself. In this respect we have a lot to learn from Rousseau and Robespierre.

Gérard Duménil (Université Paris 10, Paris)

TITLE: Neoliberal Managerial Capitalism: Its Class Foundations and Economic and Political Prospects after the Crisis

ABSTRACT: Beginning in the early 20th century, a long process of transformation of relations of production was initiated, with the rise of the classes of managers, including high officials—a “upper classes”—within the hybrid social formation of “managerial capitalism”. A feature of the decades that followed the Great Depression was the decline of the power and income of capitalist classes but, in the late 1970s, the United States and Europe entered into a new phase, “neoliberalism”. The management of corporations and policies were redirected to the benefit of upper classes in the context of financialization and globalization. The profitability crisis of the 1970 played a central role in the transition, but neoliberalism was the outcome of the victorious struggle of upper classes, breaking the alliance between managerial and popular classes. The core of neoliberalism is formed by the United States and the United Kingdom, as can be shown in the analysis of the interface between ownership and control worldwide and the sharp rise of inequality in these countries. The crisis of the early 21st century must be understood as the crisis of neoliberalism. Its roots are located in the class objectives typical of this social order. (The crisis is not a profitability crisis.) Since 2008, new diverging trends have been established, with, in the United States, a form of “administered neoliberalism”, with a strong involvement of the government and the central bank, in sharp contrast with the financial orthodoxy in continental Europe. In the context of the crisis of utopias that followed the failure of countries of self-proclaimed socialism, there is no alternative to the patient ideological and political construction of a new alliance between popular classes and managerial classes, with all the potential and risk inherent in this strategy as revealed by the history of social struggles for the emancipation of humanity since the 18th century.

Kristen Ghodsee (Bowdoin College, Brunswick)

TITLE: The Left Side of History: Remembering the Victims of Communism After the Crises of Capitalism
ABSTRACT: George Orwell once observed: “He who controls the past controls the future. He who controls the present controls the past.” The contemporary politics of memory and commemoration in Eastern Europe reminds us that history is as much about today as it is about seventy years ago. Across the countries of the former Eastern Bloc, a peculiar form of historical amnesia is spreading. Since the global financial crisis began in 2008, conservative politicians in Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Bulgaria have pushed forward with the agenda of the Prague Declaration, a bold program that equates the crimes of Nazism with those of communism, and portrays East European countries as the hapless victims of twin totalitarianisms. New days of commemoration and monuments honor the victims of communism—including individuals who were themselves perpetrators of heinous crimes. The timing of these new public memory initiatives is no coincidence. As capitalism began experiencing the worst global shocks since the Great Depression, political and economic elites appear to think it is more important than ever to preach about the evils of leftist alternatives.

Laurence Fontaine (CNRS, Paris)

TITLE: Are markets and democracy compatible?

ABSTRACT: Les marchés ont une histoire et des logiques propres, positives autant que négatives. On fera retour sur cette histoire pour montrer comment la manière dont se sont construites les relations entre le politique et les marchés marque toujours les fonctionnements actuels de ces derniers et, en particulier, ceux des marchés financiers. On entrera ensuite dans les différentes logiques des marchés pour montrer comment les populations les plus fragiles –les pauvres et les sans-statut- s’en sont saisis malgré les asymétries qui biaisent la relation marchande et comment les logiques négatives poussent à la marchandisation de tout, y compris de la vie humaine. On décrira alors comment l’Europe ancienne a cherché à résoudre ces problèmes et on dialoguera avec un courant des Lumières, incarné par Smith et Condorcet, qui, tout en réclamant la liberté des marchés, n’était pas dupe de leurs potentialités destructrices. On prolongera ces analyses en proposant d’utiliser les armes de la démocratie pour contrôler les appropriations des marchés mais également des pistes de réflexion pour protéger la dignité de chacun et l’équilibre de la société de la marchandisation effrénée ainsi que des logiques de court terme dont souffrent tant les marchés que la démocratie.

Maeve Cooke (University College Dublin)

TITLE: The Perils of Social Critique

ABSTRACT: For a long time critical social theory and the critique of capitalism were synonymous. While it remains the horizon for social critique in the Frankfurt School tradition, in recent years it has no longer been the main focus of enquiry. One reason for this may be a perception that the Frankfurt School critique of capitalism is dogmatic, authoritarian or even ideological. Such accusations are troubling for any kind of social theorising, but particularly so for
Frankfurt School critical theory, which has always seen itself as anti-authoritarian, as challenging dogmas and as coupling its critique of capitalism with ideology-critique. For, in this tradition critical social theories seek to identify the social conditions necessary for a liveable life, to diagnose the socially produced obstacles to a liveable life and to explore ways of overcoming them. Since these obstacles include effects on consciousness, they also concern themselves with questions relating to false or flawed consciousness. Thus, they seek to distinguish enlightenment, illumination and inspiration from ideology, propaganda and dogmatism. In making such assessments, they unavoidably appeal to ideas of a liveable life that go beyond the currently prevailing ones. But these appeals may themselves be ideological, authoritarian or dogmatic, as seems to be the case in their critique of capitalism. In my paper, I consider these perils of critical social theorising and make some proposals as to how they could be avoided.

Simon Susen (City University, London)

TITLE: Reflections on the ‘Postmodern Turn’ in the Social Sciences

ABSTRACT: The main purpose of this paper is to examine the impact of the ‘postmodern turn’ on the contemporary social sciences. Here, the ‘postmodern turn’ is conceived of as a paradigmatic shift from the Enlightenment belief in the relative determinacy of both the natural world and the social world to the – increasingly widespread – post-Enlightenment belief in the radical indeterminacy of all material and symbolic forms of existence. As illustrated in this enquiry, the far-reaching importance of this paradigmatic transformation is reflected in five influential presuppositional ‘turns’, which have arguably been taking place in the social sciences over the past few decades and which are inextricably linked to the rise of postmodern thought: (i) the ‘relativist turn’ in epistemology, (ii) the ‘interpretive turn’ in social research methodology, (iii) the ‘cultural turn’ in sociology, (iv) the ‘contingent turn’ in historiography, and (v) the ‘autonomous turn’ in politics. On the basis of this five-dimensional approach, the paper provides a systematic, comprehensive, and critical account of the legacy of the ‘postmodern turn’, notably in terms of its continuing relevance in the twenty-first century.

Ugo Mattei (University of California, Hastings College of the Law / Università di Torino)

TITLE: Beyond capitalist law and toward the ecology of law

ABSTRACT: The presentation will discuss the main themes of the forthcoming book, The Ecology of Law, that Professor Mattei has just completed with Ecologist and Physicist Fritjof Capra. At the root of many of the environmental, economic, and social crises, what we face today is a legal system based on an outdated worldview. However, by incorporating concepts from modern science, the law can become an integral part of bringing about a better world. Mattei’s presentation will briefly trace the fascinating parallel history of law and science, showing how the two disciplines have always influenced each other—until recently. In the past few years, the scientific paradigm has shifted dramatically, from seeing the natural world as a kind of cosmic
machine to understanding it as a network of fluidly interacting communities. But law is stuck in a mechanistic, seventeenth-century view that the world is made up of discrete individual parts. This has led to legal theory focusing on these parts and ignoring the bigger picture—for example, elevating the rights of individual property owners over the good of the community. It is now urgent to outline the basic concepts and structures of a legal order consistent with the ecological principles that sustain life on this planet. What we need is a profound and visionary reconceptualization of the very foundations of the Western legal system, with crucial implications for the future of our planet.

**Wolfgang Merkel** (WZB, Berlin Social Science Centre)

**TITLE: Is capitalism compatible with democracy?**

**ABSTRACT:** Capitalism and democracy follow different logics: unequally distributed property rights on the one hand, equal civic and political rights on the other; profit oriented trade within capitalism in contrast to the search for the common good within democracy; debate, compromise and majority decision-making within democratic politics versus hierarchical decision-making by managers and capital owners. Capitalism is not democratic, democracy not capitalist. During the first postwar decades, tensions between the two were moderated through the socio-political embedding of capitalism by an interventionist tax and welfare state. Yet, the financialization of capitalism since the 1980s has broken the precarious capitalist-democratic compromise. Socioeconomic inequality has risen continuously and has transformed directly into political inequality. The lower third of developed societies has retreated silently from political participation; thus its preferences are less represented in parliament and government. Deregulated and globalized markets have seriously inhibited the ability of democratic governments to govern. If these challenges are not met with democratic and economic reforms, democracy may slowly transform into an oligarchy, formally legitimized by general elections. It is not the crisis of capitalism that challenges democracy, but its neoliberal triumph.

**Yann Moulier-Boutang** (Université Technologique de Compiègne)

**TITLE: Is critical thought condemned by the resilience of capitalism? Cognitive capitalism, environmental revolution, transformation of the value of labour and liberation of society.**

**ABSTRACT:** We are invited to illustrate to what extent contemporary or still to come capitalism is both a condition and an object of thinking in the four domains of nature, culture, vis activa and politics. We shall dwell upon the highly historical characteristic of capitalism, its metamorphosis into a cognitive capitalism and its vigorous resilience that takes aback the riders of critical thought, a critical thought which sees crisis and final collapse of capitalism at the street corner as in the time of confrontation of the partisans of Berstein with those of Kautsky. The expansion of capitalism in each domain of the living sphere in not only in the mechanical sphere, is a transformation as big as the raising of the Anthropocene meanwhile the automation of intellectual
tasks through learning machines is becoming a daily life reality like in the famous fragment on the
machine in the Grundrisse of Marx. What transformation of economic value does this mutation is
matching? What transformations of society are these inner contradictions of cognitive capitalism
producing? What new spaces of liberty and liberation are they opening both in our relationship
with our living environment and with culture and knowledge?

Zoran Janković (Cégep de Saint-Laurent, Montreal)

TITLE: Emmanuel Levinas. Money and Community: measuring the unmeasurable. Money
as justice, time and usury.

ABSTRACT: Levinas confirms: a reflection about a money as a social and economical reality is
not possible without a serious analysis of empirical data. On the other hand, this reflection always
involves something else, so a money is never a merely economical category. In that sense, Levinas
proposes an intriguing meditation about some “dimensions” of a money in the western tradition.
Contrary to the traditional moral condemnation of a money – which however remains
unquestionable because of the fact that a man always carries a risk of becoming a merchandise –
Levinas suggests that money never simply means a reification, but always implies some positive
dimensions. Levinas suggests that a money is not something morally bad or simply neutral
covering human relationships, but rather a condition of human community. Furthermore, he claims
that a money is a fundament of the justice. A money makes possible a community, he explains,
because it opens up the dimension of the future, and implies the existence of human beings who
give themselves a credit; a credit understood as a time and a confidence. We shall try to address
some problems implied by this thesis, particularly the problem of the relationship between time,
money and credit. Finally, we are going to ask whether this credit – inseparable from the very
essence of the money – is not always already a sort of usury.

Rainer Kuhlen (University of Konstanz)

TITLE: “Commons-based information markets as a means both for innovation in the
economy and for progress in science”

ABSTRACT: The traditional scientific publishing market, at least as far as journals are concerned,
is still dominated either by the traditional commercial subscription model or by the online retail
pay-per-use model (downloading the desired articles directly from the publisher’s service site).
Publishers acknowledge, however, that scientists are becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the
commercial exploitation of publicly financed knowledge and information and with the strong
copyright protection of exploiters’ rights which brings with it many disabling restrictions on the
free use of published knowledge. As a consequence of this development, there is a clear revival of
the old concept of the commons which, in this case, knowledge and information being considered
common public goods rather than commercial privately controlled goods. And as another consequence, the traditional information markets are gradually turning into commons-based information markets, or at least into open-access markets. This means that publishers are accepting the open-access model of publishing – initially through gritted teeth but now increasingly convinced that open access is their chance to stay on the information market.

And indeed, what looks like a paradox at first sight (how is it possible to make money when access to information products and services is free of charge?) turns out to be a real chance for new attractive business models. This is because governments and public and private funding societies accept this model and are willing to finance it. What they have done for libraries for centuries – providing the necessary resources for them – may gradually shift to financing publishers’ open-access services – either by providing the means for individual article processing charges (APC) or by supporting libraries, research institutions, and science networks to negotiate and ultimately achieve flat rate agreements with publishers. These contractual agreements can cover the total publishing activities in broader fields or networks of science, and even, as it is the case in the UK, the science publishing activities of a whole state.

This talk provides some facts and data about the consequences of a comprehensive open-access market both for scientific creativity and for economic innovation. It also discusses whether commercial open-access models, subsidized by public money, are really sustainable and compatible with general market principles. We suggest an alternative divided publishing model: on the one hand commons-based information markets are mainly provided through initiatives of science itself; on the other hand, commercial publishers services are no longer subsidized by the public but are dependent, according to market principles, on the creation and competitive provision of value-adding features (added value added to freely available basic publications).

Vedran Džihić (University of Vienna)

TITLE: Democracy, authoritarianism and capitalism – Reflecting the protracted triangle and its Southeast European paradoxes

ABSTRACT: Globalization has changed the world so tremendously, changing in parallel the political regimes, its self-understanding and modes of rule fundamentally. Both democracy and authoritarianism are being re-shaped and re-conceptualized. The same goes for capitalism. The notion of democracy is challenged on a global scale, the narrative about crisis of democracy is prevailing. The authoritarianism in its different forms seems to flourish. It presents itself as one new kind of “normalcy”, this time even incorporating the democratic formal procedures and partly also rhetoric of democracy into its core. In both cases, in authoritarian regimes as well as in democracies, global capitalism is an undeniable part of the regime’s “raison d’etre”. This is ruining the classical liberal assumption of exclusive complementarity between democracy and capitalism. Capitalism shows its promiscuous face and lies in bed with both authoritarianisms and democracy at the same time. Particularly in those regimes, which might be described as grey-zone-regimes, where particularly the countries of Southeast Europe belong, this promiscuity leads to new contradictions and paradoxes within the society. My contribution will depart from some general considerations about the relationship between democracy, authoritarianism and capitalism and will then focus on new contradictions and paradoxes in grey-zone regimes of Southeast Europe.