

# Ethics, Alienation, and Ontology: The impossible is the starting point of each possible

*Ética, alienación y ontología: Lo imposible es el punto de partida de cada posible*

João Romeiro Hermeto

## ABSTRACT

The first quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is reaching its end, and worldwide crises appear to become ubiquitous. Capitalist forces of destruction have not gone rogue, they merely represent the actualization of capitalist relations of exploitation. Notions of fettering fall prey to illusions, which overlook both particular historical moments and the essence of capitalist relations. In contrast, social emancipation presupposes an ontological understanding of human action. It is not enough to wish for a more humane society; both the limits of and potential for transformation must be understood. Based on Marx and Lukács, the ontological categories of possible and impossible, labour and teleology, are investigated, consequently, creating an opposing prerogative to capitalist naturalization and eternization. Capitalism is instead taken for what it is: a determined social, historical construction, thus, a superable social organization rather than a natural force. Insofar as the historical debacle of Marxism has provoked a methodological vacuum filled with relativism, contemporary critical analyses disaggregate into bourgeois isolated phenomena, becoming liberal assessments themselves. The concrete impact is not irrelevant: for they fight arguments in the fields chosen by capitalism; any perception of totality is rejected a priori; strategies to overcome capitalist challenges reproduce the conditions which create them, because it is assumed what needs to be explained. It appears urgent to reframe social critique within the frame of methodological orthodoxy. Marxist capitalist critique departs from ontological facts, for instance, labour. This means grasping both the totality and the ontological dimensions of particular forms, enabling effective strategies towards emancipation.

**Keywords:** Marxism; Lukács; Orthodox Marxism; Reification; Ontology.

## INFORMATION:

<http://doi.org/10.46652/runas.v3i6.78>

ISSN 2737-6230

Vol. 3, No. 6, 2022. e21078

Quito, Ecuador

Submitted: October 05, 2022

Accepted: November 29, 2022

Published: December 10, 2022

Dossier Section | Peer Reviewed

Continuous publication



## AUTHOR:

 João Romeiro Hermeto  
Freie Universität Berlin - Germany  
[joao.romeirohermeto@fu-berlin.de](mailto:joao.romeirohermeto@fu-berlin.de)

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No potential conflict of interest is reported by the authors.

## FUNDING

No financial assistance from parties outside this article.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

N/A

## NOTE

The article is not a product of a previous publication, thesis, project, etc.

## PUBLISHER

## RESUMEN

El primer cuarto del siglo XXI está llegando a su fin, y las crisis mundiales parecen hacerse omnipresentes. Las fuerzas de destrucción capitalistas no se han desbocado, simplemente representan la actualización de las relaciones de explotación capitalistas. Las nociones de encadenamiento son presa de ilusiones, que pasan por alto tanto momentos históricos concretos como la esencia de las relaciones capitalistas. Por el contrario, la emancipación social presupone una comprensión ontológica de la acción humana. No basta con desear una sociedad más humana; hay que comprender tanto los límites como el potencial de transformación. Basándose en Marx y Lukács, se investigan las categorías ontológicas de lo posible y lo imposible, el trabajo y la teleología, creando así una prerrogativa opuesta a la naturalización y eternización capitalistas. En su lugar, el capitalismo es tomado como lo que es: una determinada construcción social, histórica, por lo tanto, una organización social superable en lugar de una fuerza natural. En la medida en que la debacle histórica del marxismo ha provocado un vacío metodológico lleno de relativismo, los análisis críticos contemporáneos se disgregan en fenómenos burgueses aislados, convirtiéndose ellos mismos en valoraciones liberales. El impacto concreto no es irrelevante: se combaten argumentos en los campos elegidos por el capitalismo; se rechaza a priori cualquier percepción de totalidad; las estrategias para superar los desafíos capitalistas reproducen las condiciones que los crean, porque se asume lo que hay que explicar. Parece urgente replantear la crítica social en el marco de la ortodoxia metodológica. La crítica capitalista marxista parte de hechos ontológicos, por ejemplo, el trabajo. Esto significa captar tanto la totalidad como las dimensiones ontológicas de las formas particulares, permitiendo estrategias efectivas hacia la emancipación.

**Palabras clave:** Lukács; Marxismo ortodoxo; Reificación; Ontología.

## 1. Lukács' Orthodox Marxism

Drawing on György Lukács' works *Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein* and the posthumous *Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins*, I propose the following thesis: *a human praxis is necessarily an effective real impossible*. This thesis evokes the elements of orthodox Marxism and the social ontology based on social relations of labour. It is, nonetheless, important to emphasize that such a thesis must not be reduced to the concept of utopia, which according to Karl Marx and Lukács has a merely contemplative character.

But if one wants to grasp the entire process in its totality, then it becomes clear that the movement of the essence independent of the human will is the basis of every social-being, but basis in this context simultaneously means: objective possibility. With this statement, Marx has proved every idea of utopia to be unreal (Lukács, 1986, p. 425).

*An effective real impossible* expresses given causal conditions within the realm of the *possible* of nature deprived of sensitive human activity, *id est*, labour. Thus, the only possibility to go overcome these objective conditions is to change the *given causal conditions*. That is, only if the emergence of human idiosyncratic activity that the process of *making* history commences, though people “do not make it of their own accord, not in circumstances chosen by themselves, but in circumstances which are immediately encountered, given and transmitted” (Marx & Engels, 1960, p. 115). Such given causal conditions represent what I call here the *impossible*. Sensible human activity, namely *labour*, creates conditions, which enable surpassing what is immediately perceived. Labour alters the limits of natural barriers. Human activity is no longer a purposeless activity among the many within organic nature, instead, it posits immediate purposes beyond genetic determinations.

To draw on Lukács' *Marxist Ontology*, it appears crucial to address his thesis called *Was ist orthodoxer Marxismus?*, for it contains the necessary key not only to understanding Lukács own philosophical effort but also to fostering a Marxism deprived of bourgeois determinations. In a word, Marxist questions must refer exclusively to the method (Hermeto, 2020, p. 256). Years before the chapter on *orthodox Marxism in History and Class Consciousness*, Lukács had already written a study with the same title: *Was ist orthodoxer Marxismus?*, which was contemporary to studies such as *Taktik und Ethik*. In this former version, the Hungarian philosopher criticizes treating Marx' texts and theses as a holy bible. Such effort not only flattened Marxism but also laid beyond the Marxist method, which was the revolutionary dialectics that brings theory and action together as praxis (Lukács, 2013b, p. 61). On the other hand, Lukács's early endeavour a-critically transferred and reduced Marxian efforts to the Hegelian dialectics and categories (Hegel, 1986).

The second version of *orthodox Marxism* provides a more expanded and consistent representation of a non-fetishized Marxist method. It is worth quoting:

Orthodox Marxism, then, does not mean an uncritical acceptance of the results of Marx's research, does not mean a "faith" in this or that thesis, not the interpretation of a "holy" book. Orthodoxy in questions of Marxism refers rather exclusively to the method. It is the scientific conviction that the correct method of research has been found in dialectical Marxism, that this method can only be developed, continued and deepened in the sense of its founders. But that all attempts to overcome or "improve" it have led and must lead only to flattening, to triviality, to eclecticism. (Lukács, 2013a, p. 171).

And in complete opposition to modern scientific efforts, in constant opposition to everyday life and the involvement with mass politics, Lukács reiterates the need to keep proximity with the masses, learning from but also politicizing them.

Rather, both in the theory and in the method of seizing the masses, those moments, those determinations must be found which make the theory, the dialectical method, the vehicle of the revolution; the practical essence of the theory must be developed from it and its relation to its object. For otherwise this "seizing of the masses" could be an empty pretence. It could be that the masses are moved by quite different motive forces, act towards quite different ends, and that theory means for their movement only a purely accidental content, a form in which they raise their socially necessary or accidental action into consciousness, without this act of becoming conscious being essentially and really connected with the action itself (Lukács, 2013a, p. 172).

Although Lukács wrongly overemphasizes subject aspects of reality –according to his self-critique, see below–, he correctly claims that theory is a necessary precondition for revolutionary action, and correctly places, thus, emphasis on the method. For instance, Marxian economic categories express forms and conditions of existence. Without this dialectical development, what emerges or rather remains is a mere theory of opportunism. Every fact is not a fact in itself, it springs from a method, and it is biased from the outset. In contrast, the traditional theory takes on isolated facts and phenomena. "The unscientific nature of this apparently so scientific method lies, therefore, in the fact that it overlooks and neglects the historical character of the facts on which it is based" (Lukács, 2013a, p. 177). This appears as timeless laws, whereas the Marxian historical method divulges processes of social transformations.

While Lukács correctly recognizes the revolutionary character of capitalism, criticizing the bourgeoisie's lack of awareness while performing this function, his methodological mistake, giving consciousness the same, if not greater, ontological priority over objective reality, proves to be central when mystifying the proletariat and proletarian consciousness beyond and above given historical conditions.

Despite this mythologisation of the proletariat, he still recognizes the struggles as constant unceasing processes, therefore the separation between movement and final goal is a primitive ideological matter. Thus, his orthodox Marxism thesis appears central to bridge not only the gap between earlier and later Lukács but also vulgar and orthodox Marxism, whose main function is overcoming of revisionism and utopianism, is not a one-time settling of wrong tendencies, but an ever-renewing struggle against the seductive effect of bourgeois conceptions on the thinking of the proletariat. This orthodoxy is not a guardian of traditions, but the ever-awake herald of the relation of the present moment and its tasks to the totality of the historical process (Lukács, 2013a, pp. 197–198).

His methodology also had a crucial impact on one of his most important theses, namely reification. Lukács appears to confound the categories of reification (*Verdinglichung*) and objectification (*Vergegenständlichung*), while the former is a particular result of capitalist social property relations the latter has a central ontological dimension to human activity, which very own act of actualization presupposes the act of objectification. Nevertheless, one hundred years later his universalization of a particular moment of capitalist relations accidentally becomes correct. Contemporary tendencies of capitalist relations –especially with the advancement of digitalization– narrow that gap between non-capitalist and capitalist relations. It appears that all moments of human relations are becoming moments of capital. “The distinctions between production and reproduction, public and private, professional and domestic spheres are eroded, and the values and attachments in which market calculations and labour were traditionally embedded are increasingly subsumed to an entrepreneurial logic” (Pellizzoni & Ylönen, 2012, p. 51)

## 2. Ontology of the social-being and the human emancipation

For Lukács it would be crucial to abandon the deductive character of the Marxist-Leninist doctrine that would come into force with Stalin, “as if it were a logically necessary consequence” (Lukács, 1984, p. 689). Due to such a mechanism, rooted not only in (vulgar) Marxism but also widely in the capitalist sciences, it would become imperative in Lukács’ view “to restore the ontology that Marx elaborated in his works” (Lukács, 1984, p. 689). Such a Herculean task, which Lukács would carry out rigorously, had been posited by him as necessary in order to be able to conceive what he considered would be his great work: his *Ethics* (Lukács & Konder, 1969). However, he died having “only” finished sketching what would be the introductory basis for his *Ethics*, that is, the *Ontology*, which, left in manuscript form, would become his greatest work.

It is of utmost importance to make a double historical contextualization. The first is that Lukács became known, even famous, for his *History and Class Consciousness* (among other earlier writings, which cannot be called works of youth because of the age Lukács already had at the time he conceived them). Such a work historically expressed an important character of the class struggle; at that time, with the rise of the Soviet Union, a mystical, messianic character of the working class was sustained, or rather, strengthened, as if workers were in themselves the bearers of and for the emancipation of

the human being. This quasi-religious hyperbole of the proletarian can historically also be expressed as a theoretical reaction to the attacks by international capitalist classes namely the intervention in the Russian civil war by the United States, the British, Japanese, German, and Ottoman Empires, France, the Kingdom of Italy, etc., on behalf of the tsarists, liberals, and conservatives, invading and attacking the Soviet Union to destroy the socialist revolution. Thus, it appeared imperative to unite (and keep united) the proletariat around a new ethic, henceforth, the mystification of the proletarian struggle was fostered. However, as Lukács himself not only recognizes but also sharply criticizes himself, in the “new” preface of 1967 for his own work *History and Class Consciousness*, the mystification was not only a historical fatality but the product of a crass methodological error, in which Marx’s ontology was subordinated to Hegel’s ontology of the ‘absolute spirit’ (*des absoluten Geistes*), on which the so-called (western) Marxism was largely based (Lukács, 2013c). As we shall see here, such a stance is erroneous, hence the need for yet a second historical contextualisation.

With the advance of neoliberalism, first within European social democracy (Foucault, 2004), and then mutating into fierce global neoliberalism, the US-American and European elites not only relegated any emancipatory project of the human being, but it was (as still is) of paramount importance to delegitimise and destroy Marxism, because it is the only critique that exposes and unveils the bases of capitalist exploitation, therefore destroying its illusions. Research shows that right after the Second World War those elites created a joint plan for this process of annihilation of the emancipatory struggle. For instance, the CIA successfully infiltrated the world of literature (Whitney, 2016). However, to understand its extension, it is worth reading in full the first paragraph of *The Cultural Cold War*, if history is to be critically considered:

During the height of the Cold War, the U.S. government committed vast resources to a secret program of cultural propaganda in Western Europe. A central feature of this program was to advance the claim that it did not exist. It was managed, in great secrecy, by America’s espionage arm, the Central Intelligence Agency. The centerpiece of this covert campaign was the Congress for Cultural Freedom, run by CIA agent Michael Josselson from 1950 until 1967. Its achievements—not least its duration—were considerable. At its peak, the Congress for Cultural Freedom had offices in thirty-five countries, employed dozens of personnel, published over twenty prestige magazines, held art exhibitions, owned a news and features service, organized high-profile international conferences, and rewarded musicians and artists with prizes and public performances. Its mission was to nudge the intelligentsia of Western Europe away from its lingering fascination with Marxism and Communism towards a view more accommodating of ‘the American way’. (Saunders, 2013, p. 1)

Two important points spring out of this. The *first* was the total and complete discrediting of Marxism and its works. “The language”, as Perry Anderson points out, “in which they were written came to acquire an increasingly specialized and inaccessible cast” (Anderson, 1989, p. 53). Soon, when Lukács died in 1971, his manuscripts of the *Ontology* written in German were not published in German, but first in Italian in 1975 (where some remnant of Marxism still survived); it was only in 1984, when Marxism had been virtually floundered from Europe, that his most important text would

be published in full in German. However, objective, and subjective social conditions for a serious reception of the text did not exist anymore. Except marginally—for instance by the work of Sergio Lessa (Lessa, 2012; 2015)—, the *Ontology* was virtually forgotten.

The *second* point connects to the former, both the surviving western Marxism and the one slowly being reborn convey with themselves the same mysticism that Lukács explicitly criticised in 1967 and that Marx fought so hard to distance himself from. A prime example is the main critical theory (or the Frankfurt School) – which claims to inherit a Marxist critique – as with a recent book on reification (Honneth, 2015), in which Axel Honneth, while bringing into the debate the Lukács of *History and Class Consciousness*, completely neglects the later Lukács of the *Ontology*; the latter having a distinct and incompatible position on reification than the former (Hermeto, 2020). Thus, when Honneth neglects the transformation in Lukács’ thought, he then contributes to and reaffirms a mystification of vulgar Marxism.

The only form of apprehension of reality that truly contributes to the understanding of capitalist relations, Marxism, has retreated very far –the project of the elites made explicit by Saunders and Whitney has had great success in this regard– and today, still at the beginning of the 21st century, it has a much lower status than it had more than 100 years ago: in other words, Marxism is crawling again. Nonetheless, as always, a shadow of capitalism, Marxism can be hidden, concealed, and veiled, when the contrast of capitalist contradictions diminishes (objectively and/or subjectively), but as soon as the antagonisms of capitalist relations gain momentum and become blatant, the shadow of the Marxian (and Marxist) critique of political economy gains exponent. Great Marxist contemporary contributions have today modest social relevance. There lies a great difficulty in reproducing and expanding Marxist thought and critique. The Marxist-cult was not only banished but also refrained itself from political and critical practices, leaving an open lane to the mythology of the so-called free-market (abstractions without any ontological dimension) and the western capitalist rewriting of history, where the liberal barbarities that have been committed for centuries were erased from history or, at least, largely minimized, while caricatured and disproportionate accents were attributed to socialist practices, removing from them any historical context.

The falsified Hitlerite/Nazi notion of *cultural Bolshevism* of the first half of the 20th century (Mann, 2017) is being promulgated in the 21st century by reactionary right-wing cadres in the United States (such as the “Alt-right”) and in Brazil (propagated, for example, by entities such as the so-called “Instituto Liberal”) who are replacing the cultural Bolshevism slogan with *cultural Marxism*. Adolf Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* or his private conversations leave no room for doubt: Fascism’s main struggle was against communism and Marxism; moreover, in despite of scorning socialism, it was clear that the *Nazi (National Sozialismus)* needed to exploit and make use of symbols from the socialist (international) struggle against capital in order to gain support from the masses, which although despised were necessary to be won over: “The absorptive capacity of the great mass is very limited, the understanding small, but the forgetfulness great.” (Hitler, 1927, p. 198) The colour red was used with zeal as part of a swindling strategy:

We chose the colour red for our posters with care and depth, in order to irritate the left, to cause indignation and to ensnare them to come to our meetings, even if only to destroy them, in this way so that we could talk to the people. (Hitler, 1927, p. 542)

Moreover, in a discourse of 8<sup>th</sup> of April 1942, it was once again emphasized: “I followed the example of the Marxist parties by putting up posters in the most striking red” (Hitler, 2000, p. 413).

Today, the desperate masses without prospects, who are animalised by capitalist relations, find in irrationalism and mysticism, thus repeating history, an apparent “unique way out” of their concrete problems. Irrationalism and mysticism thus foster the transformation of the subjective apprehension of reality to deal with the objective problems they cannot change. *The distance between the real and the notion of a supposed real is widened and, in this way, the mystical discourses of the global right become more palpable, without counterpoint from a left that was captured still in the 20th century and is capitulated until today and in practice simply repeats the discourses of capital, while pretending to deny them by a moralistic perspective: a farce.* The neoliberal left represents only a simulacrum of the neoliberal right: the former apparently denies the economic dogmas but, without realising it, reaffirms them in its atomistic identity practices.

Contemporary liberal irrationalism has spread widely. In the west, peace is proclaimed by waging war across the globe; many elements of the far-right, using communication tools based on satellites orbiting the planet, reinstate the flat-planet thesis; lowering wages and austerity are asserted to be needed to enable capitalist freedom based on mass consumption of wants pushed by advertisement; workers are to achieve better working conditions with less working rights; nations are strengthened by subordinating themselves to international capital; governments needed to have a maximum size cap though abstract and undefined; political-economy and law plan social-economic relations and behaviour to achieve democracy while affirming that social-economic planning is anti-democratic. Liberal-irrational discourses and practices are contradictory, and yet the so-called left is unable to counter-act, not even at the level of discourse, endorsing the destruction of the political imaginary (Rockhill, 2017).

It is up to those who struggle for the emancipation of the human being, who understand that without critique there is no emancipatory struggle, for it delineates the limits of social action and unveils the contradictions between discourse and practice, exposes the class antagonisms, gives objectivity to political action, enables social-historical lessons, prevents the non-owner class from falling into bourgeois moral traps, etc. The critique is a weapon for a conscious social construction and not an end in itself, thus it is necessary to bring Marxism back to the order of the day and also to maintain a critical posture turned upon itself for constant theoretical learning; not only that but also a constant confrontation with the processual reality which itself requires that the theoretical sphere constantly reinvents itself in order to be in real conditions to give practical answers to concrete problems (Tse-Tung, 1968, pp. 377–378).

It is with this in mind that I write here about human praxis as *an effective real impossible* –correspondingly, beyond any utopia of the impossible– through a Marxian and Lukácsian methodological prism, that is, that of a *Marxian Ontology*. To do so, I will discuss *labour, teleological setting, reproduction, estrangement, ideology* and also a notion of *ethics*. In this sense, arise the necessity to restructure



the notions of (a) ethics as a means or an end, (b) alienation as a synonym for estrangement, and (c) ontology as a philosophical metaphysical category into, respectively, (a') ethics as a practical synthesis, (b') alienation as a mere phenomenon of estrangement, and (c') ontology as a non-metaphysical incessant category.

### 3. The Social-being and the Labour

Nature is firstly composed of *inorganic* nature, but the historical causal relations of nature made possible the emergence of *organic* nature as a second category of nature. Organic nature essentially differs from inorganic nature with respect to its existence. It is an ontological necessity, that is, its existence requires its production, the production of life; but if the end of singular lives represents with death a return to inorganic nature, only by going beyond the production of singular life does an ontology of organic nature become possible. Consequently, the *existence of species* that makes up organic nature presupposes not only their production but their reproduction. Reproduction creates a historical link, a continuous chain between the organism(s) and environment (the surroundings); the reproduction of life then presupposes a relationship, initially, with inorganic nature, but with the development of organic nature a direct relationship emerges between diverse organisms of organic nature themselves.

However, Lukács exposes a third category of nature: the *social-being*. Now, if social-being is part of organic nature, if its ontological condition presupposes its production, reproduction and relation to inorganic and organic natures, then apparently there is no distinction between social-being as a unique category to nature and organic nature in general. Marx has paid attention to the essential difference that exists between social-being and organic nature since his youthful writings. Yes, the human being in order to live must also produce and reproduce life, but the way this is accomplished gains with the human being a completely different accent. For this reason, Lukács sees in the *social-being* a third category of nature.

While the plant or the animal produces the singular lives or reproduces their species in a relation between the action prescribed in their genetic material and a given environment through a process of natural history, i.e. a merely causal process; the social-being breaks the genetic barriers of nature with the specific form of its activity: *labour*.

Labour is the specific way in which human beings produce life and reproduce themselves as a species. But if labour is a distinct form, an active form of action that transcends genetic immanence, then in reproducing the active agent of labour, the immediate means of labour is reproduced identically. When producing life, a human being produces and reproduces itself also as means of production of life. Such a break with the natural identity of the merely causal relation imposed by nature enables the human being, in asserting himself as the means of his own activity, to become the object of himself and simultaneously to assert himself as a subject. The subject that objectifies himself (in a positive way), also reifies nature, which is no longer a symbiotic part of his reproduction, but a mere means subjugated to the actions of the human being. However, the social-being, no matter how much he creates new relations within nature, cannot –as he is a natural being– separate himself from it. There-

fore, the negation of the relationship with nature and its complete subjection to the vicissitudes of the human being gives the first form of human affirmation via labour a partially estranged relationship. In its affirmation as a species, there is negation as a biological being belonging to nature. Let us return to this point below.

#### 4. Labour and the teleological Setting

The performing of labour, as Marx reinforces in his *Capital* when he compares the spider to the weaver, and the bee to the master builder, is an exclusively human attribution. The sensitive human activity called labour has its idiosyncrasy in the *teleological setting*: the human being conceives in the mind before performing it in practice (Marx, 1962, p. 192). What Lukács reveals and emphasises in his *Ontology* is Marx's unique ontological grasp of the category of teleology. Until that moment teleology was not something new, Aristotle and Hegel give particular emphasis to it, however, only with Marx it gains a correct ontological accent (Lukács, 1984). While teleology is for Aristotle and Hegel an act that besides belonging to labour has a cosmic character beyond human activity, for Marx its centrality is limited to the production of life, to the act of working. Thus, in Hegel all history appears as the product of an *absoluten Geistes*, teleology is expanded in such a way that a philosophy of history appears as the concrete reality, so, in Hegel, the concept of the *end of history* appears, that is, since history would be the realisation of a teleological movement, the end would be given *a priori*. In Marx, the different teleological accent breaks two simultaneous paradigms: that of naturalism and that of destiny. By relativising the role of teleology, by limiting its scope within the activity of the production of human life, Marx brings the causal element back into human history, teleology in Marxian terms gives causality a completely new accent. Every relation is realised as a causal relation, however, the teleological setting through labour modifies causal relations, manipulates them, transforms them, and creates new causal relations, new possibilities not existing before. The previously complete subjection to the history of nature is transformed by labour into the history of humanity. On the other hand, such naturalism is not replaced by a humanly or supra-humanly determined *a priori* destiny, the teleological setting constantly alters causal relations but does not overcome them; it creates a new accent, but not a parallel reality with a pre-established knowledge.

Every teleological setting has a double character: (1) it is *teleological* because it is mentally conceived – intended – before the act, thus, there is a gap between what is thought as pre-conceived and what can only become real with the action; (2) it is a *teleological setting* because its actualization presupposes an act, the teleology disconnected from a setting has no relation with the objective reality, it does not alter it, it does not modify the practical reality and the immanent causal relations. Therefore, while teleology is an abstract conception in-itself, the teleological setting in a movement for-itself creates the real dynamics and sets in motion the attempt to influence the causal sphere and modify it. A wooden chair is not a natural derivation from the tree; its emergence is a historical act created and formed through labour; a single-legged chair is unstable, a chair built with the wrong or insufficient material would prove fragile and/or inadequate; the notion of a chair is necessarily different from what is transformed into practice, such a notion must constantly be refined, modified to realise a new ontological plane of not previously existing possibilities. Whether a chair will be used to sit, support objects, function as a step, as an object of artistic contemplation, as an object of power (like a throne), as a weapon, or as fuel (firewood), will depend both on its concrete reality based on the material-so-

cial-historical possibilities, and also on the accent given by social practice (Marx, 1976, p. 977). It is only with the creation of the chair that such possibilities come into existence. This dynamic is valid for the whole set of social practices derived from the work that –with the teleological setting, with the actualization of human sensitive activity of an act not determined by the immediately biological sphere, for example, a genetic response– breaks with a destiny of nature, with the utopia of the impossible.

## 5. The teleological setting and the estrangement

Here we return to the separation that had occurred between the social-being and nature due to the act of labour. When the production of human life transcends genetic imposition, the social-being creates a relationship between human-being and nature that with historical development increasingly subjects nature to human action and will. The symbiotic relationships of nature are transformed into relationships of domination. The values created within the cultural sphere come to be applied to nature as if they emanated from it; the social-being starts seeing relations that ontologically are merely natural as mimetic to his praxis. This makes it possible to see in animal hunting the cruelty of the superior type towards an inferior type. Nonetheless, this is ontologically wrong. Lukács is clear:

When the tiger hunts and eats an antelope, it does the same within its naturally prescribed reproduction as the cow does when grazing. It is just as little cruel to the antelope as the cow is to the grass. It is only when a primitive human-being begins, for example, to torture his prisoners of war that cruelty arises – as a causal product of becoming human – with all its later, increasingly refined consequences. (Lukács, 1984, p. 13)

This is a process of non-recognition of nature, the social-being, reproducing itself based on the exploitation of the human being, creates an inherent conflict with itself and its social spheres, thus creating a cleavage that is also dimensioned to nature. There is no doubt that the socio-cultural factor is a considerable part of the anthropomorphization of nature (as, for example, seeing in it cruelty), however, the historical increase of competition within the production of the life of the social-being imposes a competition not only between social-beings, but between social-being and nature, since the latter, as the basis of the production of the life of the former, represents a source of the individual (or singular, when pre-capitalist) and social power, hence domination in nature guarantees leverage in the field of social domination. The estrangement between social-being and nature is therefore of three orders. First, the break between genetic prescription and appropriation of nature in a non-symbiotic-causal way, but through estranged labour; second, the subjective false apprehension of nature due to cultural attributions to the merely natural; and finally, its total subjugation as an object for domination by others (estranged political power).

However, estrangement is a socially determined relation, it is not prescribed in nature; therefore, its form and degree vary according to the mode of production and, consequently, the relations of production. Therefore, in a capitalist society, we must pay attention to the specific form of estrangement which is given by the particular form of labour.

With the advent of capitalism, social relations of [exclusive] private property of the means of production arose for the first time in history. There is, therefore, an inherent separation between producer and product. Marx, in the *Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, gives a unique centrality to the category of estrangement that would become the central object of his analysis (Lukács, 1986, p. 503): the separation between the human being and his humanity (Marx, 1968). This he demonstrates in the book *Capital* with the [exchange] value (alienation-value) that seeks to be eternalized by political economy. Reducing that which is useful, that which is produced, to the sphere of commodity, of exchange. Marx, starting from the capitalist separation of exchange-value and use-value, concludes that the dual existence of value reveals the fetishism of value, because the separation represents mere “appearance form” (“*Erscheinungsform*”) and the use good (or use-value) can never be isolated since, as [exchange] value, it only exists in relation to another commodity, that is, under capital only value exists.

Henceforth, the separation between the exchange-value and use-value of a specific commodity occurs, and such antagonism appears in a commodity: labour power. It is revealed, therefore, beyond the attempt to eternalize value, that it is not simply an economic category, but a socio-political one that, in this way, expresses power relations.

Value is the act, the actualization of alienation. Its social reality is consummated, and becomes real, with the immediacy of the double alienation act. The relation among human-beings appears as something external, estranged to them, it is immediately alienated since it is externally mediated.

Marx reinforces: if human-being is separated from its labour –private property of production– and to survive it can only sell its labour-power, then its life and labour-power enter daily antagonism with themselves. The worker lives to work instead of working to live. The use-value and the exchange-value of his labour-power clash with one another, since the only way to sell one’s labour-power is if its exchange-value is lesser than its use-value. Well, if exchange-value expresses a relationship between use-values, then the exchange which does not correspond to use-value must necessarily have extra-economics characteristics.

In other words, Marx lays bare and dismantles the theory of value: value appears not as an economic category, but as alienation, that is, the phenomenological form of capitalist estrangement. Thus, the only commodity that produces value, *id est.*, labour, negates itself in the act of labour. To this end, the separation of labour-power must appear in a phantasmagorical form with independence that cannot be overcome in the act of labour: *fetishism* expresses such an inversion where the concept, the commodity and the object appear as a truth, independent of the subject that conceived it (Marx, 1962). It remains for the subject to subject himself to the object created by him, which incurs what Ludwig Feuerbach emphasized about religion and Marx had perceived and applied to social-political relations: namely *subject-object-inversion*.

In the manuscripts Marx is unequivocal. If the human being produces his life, his humanity through labour activity, then the labour that is separated from the worker as wage labour –Marx also

calls it *estranged labour*— perpetuates a cleavage that cannot be overcome except by cancelling the source of such separation, this is, by abolishing private property (and ownership) of the means of production. Marx expresses the four fundamental contradictions: If political economy sees private property as a fact, the affirmation of life is only possible through it, then it follows from this:

(1) the product of labour is alien to the worker, because the worker is the one who conceives the product of labour which is already born of him alienated, because labour (i.e., the commodity labour-power) is only executed when the worker alienates himself from it via wages. Labour produces something concrete, specific, the fruit of its activity, of its actualization, and receives back something alien to it, something generic, abstract, the commodity that represents all commodities and none simultaneously: money (via wages). Thus, the alienated product of labour is estranged from the worker. Alienation is not the source of estrangement, but arises as a necessity of the separation between worker and labour due to the separation between producer and means of production; the only possible phenomenological form of this separation is the alienated one (juridical relation of double cession in the act of market exchange – as can be seen in Hegel's *Rechtsphilosophie* (Hegel, 2013). Hence, the concretisation of labour appears as its negation (Marx, 1968, pp. 511- 512).

(2) This is only possible because this estrangement exists not only as a result but as an activity, as an act of production. Marx is blunt:

How could the worker be able to strangely confront the product of his labour, if he did not estrange himself in the act of production. The product is only the summarize of the activity, of production. If, in this sense, the product of labour is the alienation, then the production itself must be the active alienation, the alienation of the activity, the activity of the alienation. In the estrangement of the object of labour, only the estrangement, the alienation in the activity of labour itself, summarizes itself. (Marx, 1968, p. 514)

(3) Labour, belonging to someone else different than the worker himself, has an estranged relation with itself, the humanity of the human-being confirmed by labour is estranged to him as a worker, as the one who produces his life, his practical reality, actualizing labour, denies his own human reality as a social being. The human-being and worker cease to be an identity, they do not recognize one another; thus, in a capitalist society, drugs (regardless of legal or illegal) play such a significant social role, because they numb the estranged social relations, they anesthetise the oppression caused by the capitalist relations of power and domination.

(4) However, if the human-being is a social-being, he produces his life *mediated, with and for* society, then, when the worker does not recognize the work made by him, all his bond with the society, which he reproduces and, accordingly, itself reproduces this bond, produces, and reproduces estranged conditions. If his life and the lives of the other social-beings are estranged due to (1), (2), and (3), then the whole of their relations can only make up something that they cannot identify with. The worker with the private property of the means of production actualizes a work to survive, not one

that could fulfil himself. He engenders coerced work, since he has neither the material nor the social means to perform a work that expresses himself, thus, his work is done not for his own or social enjoyment, but as alienation to obtain other means of survival. His work does not fulfil his life, his life fulfils work. Work, which is a means, becomes an end, an end in itself.

## 6. The Estrangement and the Perpetual Present

Capitalist estrangement also has one more sphere that I call the *perpetual present*. The separation between social-being and the real spheres that compose it also occurs on a practical-ideological level: the perpetual present conceives of a subjective reality that constantly imposes itself on objective reality rendering impossible the real subjective apprehension of concrete reality. Thus, instead of the real movement of a constant approximation of objective reality by the subjective one, the latter promotes a permanent opposite movement of distancing itself from the former. The stranger concrete reality becomes to the estranged social-being, the more antagonistic and contradictory the relations that compose the perpetual present become. The contradiction, instead of representing a movement of change, becomes an anti-movement, that is, it promotes inflexible maintenance of conflicting relations and increases the abyss between them, turning it into an apparently insurmountable gap. An ideology is thus created that promotes both fatalism (in the manner of naturalism) and fate.

The perpetual present creates an apprehension of reality without real correspondence. It expresses a dialectical relation towards social change, but which is constrained by the conditions of self-preservation of the dominant forces. Throughout the development of capitalism, a heterogeneity of schools of thought and ideologies emerged; from this process of ideological confrontation, a synthesis emerged that reveals the central elements of capitalist legitimation within liberalism, idealism, materialism, irrationalism, imperialist philosophy, existentialism, critical theory, postmodernism, neoliberalism, etc. This means that the sustainability of capitalist relations is based not only on objective power relations (and, accordingly arising from them, structures) but fundamentally on subjective ones. The constant force within the processual change to maintain capitalist power relations is what I have called the *perpetual present*. The legitimation of private property of the means of production has guaranteed the *ontological legitimation* of capitalist (which historically converged to a capitalist-bourgeois) domination in both national and international spheres, except for a part of Marxism that has always considered the abolition of private property of the means of production as, even though still insufficient, a necessary condition to establish a real struggle for the emancipation of human beings.

On an ideological level we can quote Lukács to understand this qualitatively new term of capitalist estrangement, the notion of eternalising, fixing the hitherto most dynamic system of production known to humanity, a contradiction only possible to establish as full subjective reality via irrationalism which Lukács also criticised so much in his *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft* (Lukács, 1973; 1974a; 1974b) (*The Destruction of Reason*). In his *Ontology*, he says: “That the ideologies of the dominant classes are interested in the psychological fixation of estrangement as ‘natural’ and emerge for them in a continually propagandistic way is a matter of course” (Lukács, 1986, p. 551). Guy Debord also corroborates my thesis when he emphasizes:

*Quand l'idéologie, devenue absolue par la possession du pouvoir absolu, s'est changée d'une connaissance parcellaire en un mensonge totalitaire, la pensée de l'histoire a été si parfaitement anéantie que l'histoire elle-même, au niveau de la connaissance la plus empirique, ne peut plus exister.* (Debord, 1992, p. 104)

Unlike many Marxists, including the earlier Lukács of *History and Class Consciousness*, for the later Lukács of *Ontology* there is no doubt, ideology is not a negative concept, it does not express a false consciousness, he rather sees ideology as an essential social feature “for the functioning of every society” (Lukács, 1984, p. 17). Ideology is determinant for the actualization of work by functioning as a social nexus, enabling individual decisions to have a character for a general social interest. Therefore, Lukács reinforces that “content and form of that, which we understand as general interest, [have] so much stronger, predominantly ideological character, the more initial each society is” (Lukács, 1984, p. 17). For the later Marx, ideology makes up all extra-economic social relations. Thus, the perpetual present appears as the social nexus of imperialist, monopolist, and parasitic capitalist society. It conceives of a subjective reality that constantly imposes itself on objective reality, making impossible a real subjective apprehension of the latter.

## 7. The Perpetual Present and the Emancipation

The fact that the objective reality imposes itself on the subjective reality and, the other fact, that the subjective apprehension of the perpetual present distances itself in an insurmountable way from the objective reality, creates the condition for a resumption of the apprehension of the real, however, in a very violent fashion. The violence, not necessarily [only] physical, is given by the sudden and virulent shortening between the distance of the apprehension of the real that the perpetual present imposes as a social nexus and the real itself. It is like a shock, it represents the imposition of the real, like a leap into the abyss. While the perpetual present outlines an abstract abyss of infinite depth – that is, there would never be a collision – when we reach the bottom of this abyss of contradiction we are confronted with objective reality. The lack of preparation for this can be understood in what Lukács creates of an image as the ontological priority of objective reality over the subjective one. When ontologically correct, subjective reality must always roughly create a synthetic understanding of the infinite complexity of the real. I quote a passage that I tend to repeat from Lukács, as, to me, it appears unequivocal:

Epistemologically, cars on the street can easily be explained as mere sensory impressions, ideas et cetera. However: if I am hit by a car, there is no collision between my idea of a car and my idea of myself, but my being [Sein] as a living person will be ontologically threatened by an existing car [seiend]. (Lukács, 1984, p. 12)

Any emancipation of the human-being must be the emancipation of the social-being, it cannot be a supposed emancipation of identities, of individuals-des-individualised, that is, of individu-

als-as-not-social-being – since the individual himself is a social product and becomes ever more individual, the greater an increase in sociability takes place, which correspondingly creates real possibilities of and for activities, tasks, and practices not existing or not being possible within a framework of less sociability or prior to that increase. The imposition of the real also imposes the need for a constant correct ontological apprehension, if the social-being seeks its emancipation, if the social-being seeks a social organisation which consciously transforms its reality by launching itself towards the unknown, but by creating latent possibilities, modifying the field of the possible, impacting the social-natural historical arrangement which appears as given, although they are in reality –either by the causal relations of nature or by the teleological-causal relations of the social-being– in constant movement.

Any emancipation of the human being presupposes the creation of correspondent objective conditions. But the act of creating presupposes a teleological setting, presupposes work, presupposes a political arrangement, presupposes a mode of production, relations of production and, therefore, a form of property, that is, of *appropriation* (Marx, 1983, p. 23). This basis for establishing objective conditions is not provided by nature and is not the fruit of mere chance, but of a process of struggle and learning. Consequently, it is imperative to destroy the illusions from the perpetual present, it is vital to enable immanent critique and to recognise the real and historical problems, because only in this way is it possible to solve such problems, to build paths, and to create possibilities. Political struggles and political arrangements, beyond those of a bourgeois professional character, are central elements to organise and build such bases.

## **8. The impossible is the starting point of each possible**

Human ethics, when understood by a Marxian and Lukács'ian notion of ontology, cannot be a concept of the good life, of morality neither as a means nor as an end; on the contrary, ethics then becomes a product of existing social relations. It expresses and mirrors the socially created and fostered values; it represents a horizon. A capitalist ethic represents neither a virtue nor a vice, instead, it embodies both the socially dominant values and the peripheral values of the dominated. If capitalist relations are based on the exploitation of human beings and nature, on the appropriation of estranged labour (which must be alienated to reproduce itself), on estranged, fetishised relations, and social disintegration, then the ethics that a society based on the capitalist mode of production produces expresses the conflicts and contradictions that capitalist social relations promote. It is an ethic of antagonism, of fetishism, of estrangement; capitalist values mirror not only social relations but social relations-reified; the capitalist ethic is that of a war between all men, it is one of selfishness as the social nexus, that is, it is one of a-society-not-society.

The capitalist ethic promotes a doubly social production, that is, it fosters socialisation, because it first specialises labour in such a way that the survival of everyone depends all the more on the labour and social relations of other human beings. It also, by applying science to production, creates an even



deeper bond between knowledge –a historical-human product– and doing, thus fostering on a deeper scale the division of labour and thus social relations. However, the basis of the capitalist mode of production is cooperation between atomised activities and individuals. This means, against the backdrop of social cooperation, the separation between human beings in all spheres of life is peculiarly fostered with the advent of capitalism, in the ontological sphere of the economy, where labour, the means of production and the product of labour suffer a permanent cleavage with the advent of private property of the means of production. A reconciliation between the human being and his life requires the abolition of the source of these contradictions –social production and private appropriation; labour cooperation and immanent antagonism between workers–: that is, the abolition of private property of the means of production, in other words, new social property relations. Any ethics distinct from capitalist ethics presupposes a production of life within a *non-capitalist* mode of production.

Although the elite protects its domination and privileges through the practice of the *perpetual present*, the ontology of social-being demonstrates that doing, namely the human activity goes far beyond what is prescribed in its genetic code and the limitations imposed by nature as a given set of possibilities. Labour engenders an active activity, which constantly breaks the barrier of the impossible, the barrier created by the field of given possibilities so that in its immanent act it overcomes them by creating possibilities not previously existing in nature. As I discussed in the example above, a wooden chair is not a necessary consequence of the wood of the tree, such a possibility was not contained in the tree, it only comes to exist when it is first abstractly created with the intention of the mental construction and comes to exist in fact if the mental construction manages to be concretized within the existing objective conditions. At this moment, new possibilities that were impossible until then become existent, become part of the reality of the social-being. Thus, *an effective real impossible* is a real necessity of human praxis, the point of departure as the impossible, and the point of arrival as the establishment of other impossibilities, which may in an analogous process be overcome or not, and of possibilities until then unheard of. The very body of the human being is formed by his social practice, not in the immediately biological sphere, but in a culturally determined one, he acquires new dimensions. Friedrich Engels demonstrates the incredible similarity that exists in the biological sphere (muscles, bones, etc.) between the hands of an ape and a human being, however, the cultural difference creates important dimensions and distinctions in the biological field; “but the hand of the lowest savage can do hundreds of things that no monkey hand can equal. No monkey hand ever made the roughest stone knife” (Engels, 1975, p. 445).

The human being has extraordinary potential and whose limit is ontologically unknown. An emancipated human being may seem an impossibility to many people, to statistical projections (and never a prediction or forecast, for they are ontologically impossible; they are projections, for they merely project the already known); but a practice that carries the values towards human emancipation should therefore create objective and subjective conditions to achieve this goal by creating hitherto non-existent possibilities and relations. The impossible cannot be the point of arrival, but the point of departure, the limit that the impossible imposes represents for human relations merely a historical context that imposes a social structure of departure, it never determines *a priori* the point of arrival,

even because every point of arrival concomitantly means a new point of departure. In this way, every ideology of *perpetual present* which postulates the end of history, which affirms the present as the quintessence of social relations conceives only rhetoric without historical-ontological content, has no real validity, but the legitimation of the maintenance of a *status quo*, of the current social-political-economic power.

It is, however, important to stress that a complete relativism of the categories of nature due to the existence of human labour that creates possibilities that did not exist before, i.e. turning nature into a mere cultural product, incurs a double error. First, there is an important difference between –“n” as a natural need, e.g. the need to feed oneself, to procreate, etc.– and *necessity<sub>n</sub>*, *necessity<sub>c</sub>* “c” as a cultural invasion into biological spheres and the creation of purely cultural spheres. Thus, to turn immediate want into a cultural activity is to incur a false apprehension of the real, because want has in an immanent way a different quality than need, e.g. to hydrate in order to stay alive is qualitatively different from enjoying some wine. In German there are two words for the notion of “eating”, *fressen* denotes eating like an animal, while *essen* expresses the eating of the human being, cultural. Therefore, basing himself on Marx, Lukács states: “The main tendency of the development process that emerges is the constant, quantitative and qualitative increase of the purely or predominantly social components, the ‘retreat of the natural barrier’” (Lukács, 1984, p. 566). This transformative process, however, has a limit which is expressed in the second error of overestimating cultural relations. There is an ontological priority of natural need over culturally determined want. Obviously, within social relations, both can become momentarily identical, or at least often appear to collapse into one form. In the production and reproduction of life, the various social values that create and transform needs cannot exist as forms in-themselves, while biological needs are present on the level of the real, independently of the existence of values and the forms they assume.

In this way, the struggle for an emancipated society must consider these ontological facts, not create an abstract, “de-ontologised” reality”, that is, the creation of emancipatory social values presupposes not only an emancipatory reality but a path that creates such future conditions considering the present conditions and their transformative process. Any society that produces living conditions must consider the productive structure, the energy matrix –food, productive, and non-labour oriented–, the communication networks – forms of transport, distribution, communication, and their respective structures –, cultural forms that determine social values –such as art and science–, available resources, education as preparation for adulthood, for the productive world and as general social cohesion, etc. To carry out this process consciously also requires the production of political education and awareness, of making the social-being aware, through and for politics, of its social existence as the primary basis of and for its individuality. In this way, it is imperative to avoid building a “de-ontologized” utopia, but rather to recognize *an effective real impossible* that immanently considers both objective and subjective realities to be able to act upon them and transform them.

## References

- Anderson, P. (1989). *Considerations on Western Marxism*. Verso (ed.).
- Debord, G. (1992). *La Société du Spectacle*. Gallimard.
- Engels, F. (1975). Dialektik der Natur. In *MEW Band 20*. Dietz Verlag Berlin.
- Foucault, M. (2004). *Naissance de la biopolitique: Cours au collège de France (1978-1979)*. Seuil Gallimard.
- Hegel, G. W. F. (1986). *Werke 5—Wissenschaft der Logik I*. Suhrkamp.
- Hegel, G. W. F. (2013). *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts oder Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft im Grundrisse*. Suhrkamp.
- Hermeto, J. R. (2020). *Lukács' Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Wandels: Von einer mythologischen Ontologie des absoluten Geistes zu einer Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins*. Verlag Dr. Kovač.
- Hitler, A. (1927). *Mein Kampf*. Zentralverlag der NSDAP.
- Hitler, A. (2000). *Hitler's Table Talk: 1941-1944*. Enigma Books.
- Honneth, A. (2015). *Verdinglichung: Eine anerkennungstheoretische Studie*. Suhrkamp.
- Lessa, S. (2012). *Mundo dos Homens: Trabalho e Ser Social*. Instituto Lukács.
- Lessa, S. (2015). *Para compreender a Ontologia de Lukács*. Instituto Lukács.
- Lukács, G. (1973). *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft, Band I: Irrationalismus zwischen den Revolutionen*. Luchterhand.
- Lukács, G. (1974a). *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft, Band II: Irrationalismus und Imperialismus*. Luchterhand.
- Lukács, G. (1974b). *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft, Band III: Irrationalismus und Soziologie*. Luchterhand.
- Lukács, G. (1984). *GLW, Band 13, Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins, Band 1*. Luchterhand.
- Lukács, G. (1986). *GLW, Band 14, Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins, Band 2*. Luchterhand.
- Lukács, G. (2013a). Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein (1923). In G. Lukács Werke, *Frühschriften II: Band 2*. Aisthesis.
- Lukács, G. (2013b). Taktik und Ethik (1919). In G. Lukács Werke, *Frühschriften II: Band 2*. Aisthesis.
- Lukács, G. (2013c). Vorwort (1967). In G. Lukács Werke, *Frühschriften II: Band 2*. Aisthesis.
- Lukács, G., & Konder, L. (1969, August 24). A autocrítica do marxismo. *Jornal Do Brasil*.
- Mann, K. (2017). *Contra a Barbárie: Um alerta para nossos dias*. Gradiva.
- Marx, K. (1962). Das Kapital: Kritik der politischen Ökonomie: Erster Band: Buch I: Der Produktionsprozeß des Kapitals. In *MEW Band 23*. Dietz Verlag Berlin.
- Marx, K. (1968). Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte aus dem Jahre 1844. In *MEW Band 40*. Dietz Verlag Berlin.

- Marx, K. (1976). Results of the Immediate Process of Production. In *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy: Volume One*. Penguin Books.
- Marx, K. (1983). Einleitung zu den ‘Grundrissen der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie’. In *MEW Band 42*. Dietz Verlag Berlin.
- Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1960). *MEW Band 08*. Dietz Verlag Berlin.
- Pellizzoni, L., & Ylönen, M. (2012). Hegemonic contingencies: Neoliberalized technoscience and neorationality. In L. Pellizzoni & M. Ylönen (Eds.), *Neoliberalism and Technoscience: Critical Assessments*. Ashgate.
- Rockhill, G. (2017). *Counter-History of the Present: Untimely Interrogations into Globalization, Technology, Democracy*. Duke University Press.
- Saunders, F. S. (2013). *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and The World of Arts and Letters*. The New Press.
- Tse-Tung, M. (1968). Über den Widerspruch. In M. Tse-Tung, *Ausgewählte Werke: Band 1* (1st ed.) (pp. 365–408). Verlag Für Fremdsprachige Literatur.
- Whitney, J. (2016). *Finks: How the CIA Tricked the World's Best Writers*. OR Books

---

#### AUTHOR

**João Romeiro Hermeto.** Visiting Scholar: Università degli Studi di Pavia (2022). Post-Doc Candidate, Freie Universität Berlin (2019-22). Dr Phil, Universität Witten/Herdecke (2016-2019). M.A. In Philosophy and Culture, Universität Witten/Herdecke (2013-2016). B.sc. Economics, Universidade de São Paulo (2007-2013).