



NICOS POULANTZAS
INSTITUTE



Left theory for the 21st century - II

online event

14th-15th of January 2021

Abstracts & bio



Andreas Maratos, The sound of steps III (O ichos ton vimaton III)

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Abstracts & bio

Day 1 - January 14th

Session 1 | Left theory construction after the SYRIZA government

- **Aristides Baltas, For Leo Panich: Syriza in Power (State and Social Movements)**

All social experiences are singular. Yet there are some that might claim general attention for they can become instructive. They becoming instructive to the extent that we single out the salient points of precisely such singularity and offer them for theoretical elaboration. The case of "Syriza in Power" falls, I believe, within this category. In this short presentation I pinpoint three such features: the characteristics of an all encompassing state, a social movement which supports Syriza in power while being for the most part immobile and politics finding its way on untrodden ground by following the 'poetic' principle "the road is made by walking" (Antonio Machado).



Aristides Baltas, former Minister of Culture, Education and Religions, is a Mechanical-Electrical Engineer at NTUA, holds a PhD in Theoretical Physics from the University of Paris and is an Emeritus Professor of Philosophy of Science at NTUA. His books and works have been published in various languages. He was awarded the National Prize for Essay in 2002 for his book "Objects and Aspects of Self" (Estia) and in 2010 with the Xanthopoulos-Pnevmatikos Award for "Excellence in Academic Teaching", bestowed by the President of the Hellenic Republic. He has been participating in the Left since his student years. He has been a regular contributor to the review "Politis" (Citizen) almost since its inception, and is an occasional contributor to the newspaper "Avgi". Founding member of the Coalition of Radical Left (SYRIZA), he is till now member of the Central Committee and the Political Secretariat. He has been President of the "Nicos Poulantzas" Institute and he was responsible for drafting the Founding Declaration of SYRIZA.

- **Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *A new thesis eleven for the left***

In 1845, shortly after he published the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844, Karl Marx wrote his Theses on Feuerbach. The Theses were his first attempt at building a materialist philosophy that was centred on transformative praxis and radically different from dominant thinking, whose main exponent at the time was Ludwig Feuerbach. The famous thesis eleven, the best known of them all, reads: "Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it." The word "philosophers" is used here in a broad sense, as referring to the producers of erudite knowledge, which nowadays might include the whole of humanistic and scientific knowledge deemed basic, as opposed to applied knowledge. Now, at the beginning of the 21st century, this particular thesis raises a serious problem for the left. In light of what happened in the last one hundred years, the left must develop a new interpretation or understanding of the world before it engages in a successful progressive transformation of the world.

Boaventura de Sousa Santos is Professor of Sociology at the School of Economics, University of Coimbra (Portugal), Distinguished Legal Scholar at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Law School and Global Legal Scholar at the University of Warwick.


<http://www.boaventuradesousasantos.pt>

Alice project: <http://alice.ces.uc.pt>

<http://www.ces.uc.pt>

- **Costas Douzinas, *Six theses for a theory of the New Left***

The difficulties of the European left start from the abandonment of theoretical analysis or the use of outdated tools. Globalized neoliberalism demands a paradigm shift. Old theoretical tools need to be updated and new ones adopted. The new vision and the theory of social transformation puts into dialogue the ideas of the radical philosophy with the political experience of SYRIZA in a process of mutual improvement. This talk examines six topics for left theory and strategy in the 21st century: how left theory develops; post-fordism; political subject; strategy; hegemony and imaginary; beyond capitalism.



Costas Douzinas, is a Professor of Law, Birkbeck, London University and President of the Institute Nikos Poulantzas. He was a Member of the Hellenic Parliament (2015-2019). Costas was the founder of the Birkbeck School of Law, the Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities and the School of Law of the University of Cyprus. He is the editor of the journal *Law and Critique* and managing editor of Birkbeck Law Press. His books include *Postmodern Jurisprudence*; *The End of Human Rights*; *Nomos and Aesthetics*; *Human Rights and Empire*; *Critical Jurisprudence, Resistance and Philosophy in the Crisis*, *Syriza in Power*, *The Radical Philosophy of Rights* and *From the University Chair to Parliament's Benches*. He edited the volumes *Law and the Image*; *Adieu Derrida*, *The Idea of Communism*, *The Cambridge Companion to Human Rights Law* and *The Meaning of Rights*,. He is a contributor to the *Guardian* and *OpenDemocracy* and writes the fortnightly column *Political Philosophical Current* in the *Athens Newspaper of Journalists*.

Session 2 | Left theory of economic restructuring and development

- **Lois Labrianidis, Preliminary thoughts on a left strategy for economic development in the 21st century: Lessons derived through the experience of SYRIZA in government**

We identify certain basic pillars of a left developmental strategy worldwide i.e. environmental sustainability, rising wellbeing, falling social and regional inequality and societal endurance. To a certain degree, the left shares the above broad goals with the center left and the center right, at least in words, though certainly not in deeds. We then try to identify the inherent characteristics of the left in order to achieve these objectives through macroeconomic and microeconomic policies consistent with a left view. Special emphasis is given to the need for a new industrial policy. We examine the Greek 10-year crisis and especially SYRIZA in government while at the same time we debunk the mainstream approach so as to reveal its real goals (bank bailouts, the making of a barely viable society to save the status quo ante etc.) which are clearly different from the declared ones.

Lois Labrianidis, Professor of Economic Geography, former Secretary General for Private Investments-Ministry of Economy & Development.

- **Petros Linardos Rulmond, Questioning the SYRIZA approach of economic restructuring and development**

SYRIZA as the main opposition party, but also as the government, thought and thinks about the development issues, according to the Keynesian and Fordist tradition, expecting a restart of capitalist development combined with reforms concerning the labour and social legislation. But such an approach does not include, paradoxically, a reform project concerning the domination of clientelistic relations between society and the state institutions, which are clearly responsible for the seriousness of the economic and environmental crisis. No effort has been made to elaborate a new project, and to describe a new régime, corresponding to the present and future challenges.


Neoliberalism is a strategy imposed by capital aiming at the preservation of profits, but not at the preservation of employment, social policies, or nature. The destruction of anything that looks like Fordism is the main purpose of neoliberalism. The destruction of social institutions together with the absence of efficient policies tackling environmental issues, while the productive capacity of the economy is reduced following the debt crisis and afterwards the coronavirus crisis, compose a dynamic that is leading to a worsening of social, environmental but also economic issues. The constitution of a social alliance, capable of offering a new societal project, achieving in a short period of time, social justice, environmental stability and economic efficiency, cannot depend on the leadership of capital. The left must propose and offer the construction of a new social alliance, between the existing popular classes, through the elaboration of development plans by the proper planning institutions at national, regional and local level, and their democratic approval by the representatives of these classes. Such a project, which must be constructed through the mobilisation of the forces of the left, with systematic field work and institution building, can be the path to the construction of a post-capitalist régime.



Petros Linardos Rulmond, Economist

- **Euclid Tsakalotos, Macroeconomic and structural issues in alternative economic strategies: Can they work together?**

This contribution examines the extent to which macroeconomic policy presents an obstacle to –or a framework for– a left agenda for the real economy. By looking at the SYRIZA case it examines both obstacles and potential.




Euclid Tsakalotos was born in 1960. He studied Economics, Politics and Philosophy at the Universities of Oxford, development at Sussex and completed his Dphil in economics in Oxford in 1989. From 1989 to 1990 he worked as a R.A. at the University of Kent and later taught at the Universities of Kent (October 1990-June 1993) and Athens University of Economics and Business (October 1994-September 2010). Since 2010, he is Professor of Economics at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. He is the author of six books and editor of three edited volumes. He has published numerous articles in economic journals, as well as political articles in newspapers and magazines. His published articles also include participations in multiple collective volumes. He served as a member of the Central Political Committee and the Political Secretariat of SYN, and member of the Executive Committee of POSDEP (Hellenic Federation of University Teachers' Associations). He is a member of the Central Committee of SYRIZA. On May 2012, he was elected MP of SYRIZA in Athens and got re-elected in January 2015. On 27 January, 2015, he was appointed Alternate Foreign Minister for International Economic Relations, in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On 6 July 2015, he was appointed Minister of Finance. On 20 September 2015, he was re-elected MP of SYRIZA in Athens and re-appointed Minister of Finance on September 23rd, 2015, a position in which he remained until July 2019. He is currently serving as an MP of SYRIZA in North Electoral District of Athens, Speaker of SYRIZA parliamentary group, and coordinator of Economic Policy of the leading opposition.

Session 3 | State Theory and Public Administration

- **Peter Bratsis, The Failures of Syriza and the Antinomies of Left Politics in Liberal Societies**

The institutional materiality of the capitalist state in Greece is a key terrain upon and through which the class struggle takes place. In the familiar formulation of Nicos Poulantzas, this materiality is the condensation of the political struggles of the past and partly structures the forms and probabilities for success of the struggles of the present. The notion, however, that the Syriza regime of 2015-2019 was unable to achieve its goals because of the structural selectivity of Greek state is not a compelling argument for the simple fact that there was no policy or initiative passed by the Syriza government that was undone by juridical or administrative resistance within the state or by, more conspiratorially, a 'deep state'. Indeed, even policies as unpopular as the Prespes Agreement were accepted and implemented by the state apparatuses. This paper will argue that it is certainly possible that the institutional form of the Greek state could have functioned to limit or derail Syriza actions but we can't know how or when because Syriza did not undertake actions that were so out of step with or divergent from the existing political hegemonies in Greece so as to make these limits visible. Instead, the Syriza government was plagued by two interrelated internal limits, the idea that the most important issue was to address the 'humanitarian crisis' in Greece, to undo the politics of austerity, and a fear of failure and of engendering more suffering. In short, the limits to the Syriza regime were more a product of the instrumental reason and fear of death and suffering that characterize liberal humanism and a forgetting of the political lesson that you have to risk and sacrifice biological life to achieve social transformation and political emancipation.



Peter Bratsis is associate professor of political science at the City University of New York. His publications include the books *Everyday Life and the State* (Routledge) and, with Stanley Aronowitz, *Paradigm Lost: State Theory Reconsidered* (Minnesota). He is an editor of the journal *Situations: Project of the Radical, Imagination*.

- **Danai Koltsida, Left strategies for (re)constituting democracy: Experiences from Greece**


The contribution aims at explaining how SYRIZA, especially during its term in office, not only defended and reconstituted liberal democracy, in all its dimensions (liberal, constitutional and popular), but it also built the conditions to go beyond it, following a twofold strategy, both on the political and on the institutional level.

The crisis of democracy is not a new phenomenon nor a Greek particularity. De-politicisation, exclusion of the popular element from democratic politics and professionalisation are only some of the aspects of this crisis that have been present for decades now. However, Greece could be considered as an exemplar of this phenomenon, especially –but not exclusively – after the outburst of the economic crisis and the imposition of severe austerity measures, which accelerated the transition to a “democracy without demos” and resulted in attacking all democratic demands as “populistic”, severely damaging all elements –popular, liberal and constitutional– of democracy.

The SYRIZA government (2015-2019) proved to be a turning point –not only for the reconstitution of liberal democracy, but also for its renewal, opening a pathway to go beyond it. It deployed a twofold strategy (institutional reforms on the one hand and re-politicisation of the public life on the other), which will be analysed, having a positive impact on democratic politics, as it will be shown.


Danai Koltsida, lawyer and political scientist, was born in 1985 and is currently based in Athens (Greece). She is the Director of Nicos Poulantzas Institute since 2018 and member of the Board and Vice President of Transform! Europe Network. She formerly worked as a political analyst, as a scientific associate to the parliamentary group of SYRIZA (2012-2014) and as a special adviser to the General Secretary of the Ministry of Interior (2015-2019). During this period she was a member of the committee for the reform of local and regional government (2016-2018) and of the committee for the attribution of voting rights to Greek diaspora (2018-2019) and she was responsible for the preparation of a series of legislation concerning local government, electoral law, transparency in political funding etc.

- **Christoforos Vernardakis & Elias Georgantas, *Negotiating the Quartet: Syriza's policy responses in public administration***



Christoforos Vernardakis is an Associate Professor, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, former Minister of Administrative Reconstruction. He is currently MP of SYRIZA in the 1st District of Athens.

Elias Georgantas is an Associate Professor, University of Crete



Session 4 | Left theory and Inequalities

- **Effie Achtsioglou, Syriza and the social issue**


In the present circumstances, the COVID-19 pandemic exerts influence on almost every discussion, whether this concerns the economy, social matters, inequalities, the role of the state or human and civil rights. This paper argues that, as far as Greece is concerned, the pandemic did not mark a turning point for neoliberal policies which continue undisturbed. What is more, the pandemic is used as an accelerator of the most aggressive aspects of the neoliberal agenda. How do we identify this continuity and how is this reflected in the social issue? What were the terms of the 2015-2019 Syriza government's intervention in this neoliberal continuity and what were the results of such intervention? What happened after the election of the right-wing government of New Democracy in July 2019 and how did its policy on the social issue evolve after the outbreak of the pandemic? Is there a way out?



Effie Achtsioglou (@E_Achtsioglou) is Member of the Hellenic Parliament (SYRIZA party) and former Minister of Labour, Social Security and Social Solidarity. She is a lawyer and holds a Phd in Law and a Master's degree in Public Law and Political Science. Effie Achtsioglou has been the Minister of Labour, Social Security and Social Solidarity from November 5th 2016 until July 9th 2019. From July 2015 until November 2016, she has been Head of the Minister's Cabinet, at the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Social Solidarity and she was the Ministry's chief negotiator in charge of the negotiations of the Greek Government with the Institutions (EC, ECB, IMF, ESM) on labour market and social security issues. She was also a member of the Management Board of the Greek Public Employment Service and member of the Greek Supreme Labour Council. She has been Head of the Alternate Minister's Cabinet, at the Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reconstruction (Jan – July 2015) and Accredited Parliamentary Assistant at the European Parliament (2014). She has also been Assistant to the Department of Civil Law, Civil Procedural Law and Labour Law at the Faculty of Law in Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece (2009-2013) and research associate at the Greek Centre of International and European Economic Law (2009).

- **Maria Karamessini, Mass unemployment, employment policy and welfare state reform under SYRIZA government**

SYRIZA government inherited from the previous mass unemployment of unprecedented scale, associated with mass poverty. It succeeded in reducing the unemployment rate from 26% to 17%, in spite of the prolongment of austerity under the 3rd MoU signed in July 2015. Although not the only determinant, the employment policy-mix has contributed to the success. SYRIZA government also inherited from previous ones a residual social protection system against unemployment, ineffective active labour market policies, a state apparatus totally lacking the capacity for planning and implementing institutional reforms and policy innovations as well as structural interventions agreed with the troika that were passed on as conditionalities in the 3rd MoU. As in other policy areas, SYRIZA government excluded or bypassed the neoliberal elements and integrated the modernization elements of prescribed institutional changes in a left perspective of welfare state reform (e.g., the reengineering of the Greek Public Employment Agency). However, the most important lessons to be learned from a left theory perspective come from an analysis of policy failure and obstacles to radical reform: external interference and constraints in policy-making (EU-IMF custody), limited fiscal space, structural deficiencies and politicization of Greek public administration.




Maria Karamessini is Professor of Labour Economics and Economics of the Welfare State at Panteion University, Ex-president and governor of the Greek Public Employment Agency

- **Yeoryios Stamboulis, Technological revolutions, development, work and social rights**

Recent crises (financial and pandemic) have accelerated phases of technological development and socio-economic transformation. The crisis of the Fordist mode of production has brought down with it the associated social contract including the end of near full employment as it was instituted in the post war era.

We can identify a few new macro trends in this process which exhibit elements of structural disruption, including inter alia a shift in the modality of capital accumulation with a change in the content of work from manual to intellectual and a decrease in labour intensity of the product along a neoliberal attack leading to rising public debt, erosion of the social state and rising inequalities.

A defence of the old social contract cannot be an effective response. Instead, we may seek leverages in the new conditions for a new social contract that will go beyond the old one, in terms of biopolitics and production relations (reduction of full working time, universal social goods – pensions, education, health etc – and cooperative production) with the argument that this is more effective not just socially just. An example of working time reduction and universal pension is presented.




Yeoryios Stamboulis teaches and carries research at the Department of Economics. His research interests include economics of technological and institutional change, management, strategy and policy for entrepreneurship, innovation and technology, organisation and strategic management, cooperatives management, strategy, organization and management, economics of energy and the transition to sustainable sociotechnical systems, critical management theory, critical realism and systems thinking.

Day 2 - January 15th

Session 5 | Left thinking confronts the rise of the far right in the 21st century: Fear, hope and Security

- **Todd McGowan, *Against the Expert***

The contemporary populist leader mobilizes the enjoyment of his or her followers through an attack on experts, who function as the structural representatives of the capitalist system. In this way, populist leaders position themselves in a position of the rebel or outsider, even if they are in charge of the country. As a result, these leaders become insulated from critique. Their failures are evidence for their lack of expertise, which is the very source of their appeal.



Todd McGowan teaches theory and film at the University of Vermont. He is the author of *Universality and Identity Politics*, *Emancipation After Hegel*, *Capitalism and Desire*, and other works. He is the coeditor with Slavoj Žižek and Adrian Johnston of the *Diaeresis* series at Northwestern University Press and the editor of the *Film Theory in Practice* series at Bloomsbury.


- **Gerasimos Kouzelis, Neutralization of the imagination Structures of bourgeois recontextualization of democratic claims**

This talk draws on Marx's conception of an everyday and realistic perception of reality as ideology in modernity, linking this conception with the fundamental question of every critical behavior: the possibility of agents to judge the relations that define them on the basis of a different possibility, of an "other" that they shape with their imagination. In recent decades, political positivism has been intensified by the exclusion of any substantial alternative from the horizon of subordinate classes' representations. The post-1989 international political interrelations and the authoritative arrangement of the financial and ecological crisis, as well as the emerging impasses, allowed but also demanded the reconstruction of bourgeois hegemonic discourse. Among the features of this reconstruction are in part contradictory elements but able to be articulated on the grounds of their late capitalist counterpart: a radical economism that penetrates every aspect of the subjects' world of life, "de-politicizing" and "de-ideologizing" it. A neo-humanism (with a corresponding thematization of rights - "beyond classes") which negates any other property of the individuals and excludes any other form of social subjectivity, while reaffirming itself as the centre of experience. And above all, a multilayered and non-mediated authoritarianism, the effectiveness of which is ensured by the dissemination and imposition of forms of stereotyped judgement as well as monopolist regulation of the public sphere. Economism, neo-humanism and -in particular- authoritarianism were exponentially reinforced by the "chance" they were offered within the pandemic. Their product is expressed politically through an extreme Bonapartism, and ideologically through the reframing of the principles of Enlightenment and the democratic claims, already stripped of their revolutionary content.

Gerasimos Kouzelis, born 1953 in Athens, is Professor Emeritus of Philosophy of Science and Sociology of Knowledge at the Department of Political Science and Public Administration of the University of Athens. He has been (until his retirement in August 2020) director of the Laboratory for the Study of Greek-German Relations and Deputy Chairman of the newly founded Department of Sociology at the University of Athens Until November 2019 (and since November 2015) he has been the President of the national Institute of Educational Policy in Athens. G. Kouzelis is the founder of the renowned academic publishing house Nissos, a founding member of the NGOs Society for the Study of Human Sciences (being for many years its Director) and Research Centre for the Humanities.

- **Tania Vosniadou**, *Dark times, the psychoanalytic concept of negativity, and the opening of possibilities*

In this presentation, I will try to work through the destructive trend that characterizes the dark times we are living in from a psychoanalytical perspective. Following Natalie Zaltsman's thinking. I will examine how the death drive crosses through the work of culture (kulturarbeit) on the one hand having its devastating effects upon it but, on the other opens up new possibilities for thinking and perhaps acting. Two paradigms will be used: one refers to my own trans generational research on women's identificatory processes and on a redefinition of ambivalence. The other will focus on Natalie Zaltsman's anarctic drive and the possibilities of subverting the adversities of the death drive.



Tania Vosniadou, Ph.D, psychologist-psychotherapist

Session 6 | The pandemic and the global lockdown: Technologies, biopolitics, climate crisis


- **Konstantinos Kavoulakos, Dialectic of the covid-19 crisis**

The current global health crisis puts on the agenda the fundamental opposition between nature and society. According to the naïve, scientific explication of the pandemic, the virus represents a malicious natural force that severely threatens social life. Human society fights back with the enlightened power of science, which will finally prevail. This is the medical interpretation of the crisis. Against it a “critical” reading of the situation is developed, which one-sidedly stresses its cultural representation and biopolitical administration: The pandemic as a social construction. However the dialectical understanding of the pandemic must combine both approaches in a unity that contextualizes it within the permanent ecological, economic and political crisis of globalized capitalism.

Konstantinos Kavoulakos, from 1998 to 2020 taught social and political philosophy at the University of Crete. From July 2020 he has been working as a professor of philosophy at the Department of Philosophy and Pedagogy, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. His most recent book is Georg Lukács’s Philosophy of Praxis. From Neo-Kantianism to Marxism, published with Bloomsbury Academic in 2018.

- **Paul Guillibert, *Pandemic Borders: States and Climate Apartheid***

The Covid-19 pandemic makes imperative to think of the “new border regime” (Mezzadra et Neilson, 2013) as a question of political ecology (Jones, 2017). This new infectious disease is caused by a zoonosis, i.e. a “Cross-Species Transmission” from bats to humans via a host species. It is further evidence that global health disasters are the effect of the destruction of ecosystems and wildlife habitats through deforestation and extractivism (Malm, 2020). But the main response of sovereign states has been the closure of national borders, reaffirming against the global circulation of the virus, the need to control human and political borders. In doing so, they have largely reinforced the ethno-nationalist projects of alt-rights (Hall, 2019 ; Zetkin Collective, 2020). Yet these policies seem at first glance to run counter to the “global biosafety” and global health programs promoted by health organizations (Keck, 2020). Based on this historical diagnosis, we may wonder whether this reassertion of sovereignty does not announce “climate apartheid” (Alston, 2019) as a model of governance of the climate crisis. In the face of the disaster (Stengers, 2013 ; Benjamin 1993), we will ask ourselves whether the constitution of an “antifascist climate front” does not allow for the creation of a hegemonic bloc against the militarization of climate change.



Paul Guillibert has a PhD in Philosophy from the University of Paris Nanterre where he teaches. His thesis will soon be published under the title: "Land and Capital. Three ecological readings of historical materialism".

- **Adam Gearey, *Viral Solidarity***


How has the virus disturbed the protocols which we use to think 'ourselves' and 'our' communities? Taking its starting point from Marx's notion of the 'pauper hospital' in *Capital*, this paper moves via Duras and Nancy to an appropriation of 'being-with' as a problematic of viral community. If we are radially open to infection as a condition of what 'we are' –then– thinking political community must begin with a notion of our radical dependence on each other or, in most simple and direct terms: solidarity. Making reference to the legendary work of Richard and Kay Titmuss on the gift of blood and national health services, this paper suggests that a notion of solidarity as 'being –with' might be a possible resource for opening up a progressive response to the global problematic of viral being.

Adam Gearey is a professor law at Birkbeck College University of London. His most recent book is *Lives that Slide Out of View: Poverty Law and Legal Activism* (2018).

Session 7 | Negativity in history and left politics: Separations, universals, utopias

- **Athena Athanasiou, *Temporalities of the im-possible***


At the heart of this inquiry lies a critical engagement with the present that might work to performatively instate possibilities for left politics at a moment marked by the necropolitical distribution of capital, resources, and bodies. Involving temporalities of unending crises and resisting (in) the present, criticality has thoroughgoing implications for transfiguring the present's no longer and yet-to-come. In order to address critical possibility, I attend to the question how the contingencies of weariness and injustice are taken up as situated knowledges of courage, critical response-ability, and left political world making in multiform geographies and temporalities that underwrite the global present. Instead of reducing this inquiry to a categorical distinction between utopian and non-utopian thinking, I think the conditions of possibility of both utopian thinking as critique and a critique of utopian thinking.



Athena Athanasiou is Professor of Social Anthropology at Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences. Among her publications are the books: *Agonistic Mourning: Political Dissidence and the Women in Black* (Edinburgh University Press, 2017); *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political* (with Judith Butler, Polity Press, 2013); *Crisis as a 'State of Exception'* (Athens, 2012); *Life at the Limit: Essays on Gender, Body and Biopolitics* (Athens, 2007); *Rewriting Difference: Luce Irigaray and 'the Greeks'* (co-ed. with Elena Tzelepis, SUNY Press, 2010). She has been a fellow at the Pembroke Center for Teaching and Research on Women, at Brown University, and at the Center for the Study of Social Difference, at Columbia University. She is a member of the editorial advisory board of the journals *Critical Times*, *Feminist Formations*, *Philosophy and Society*, *feministiqá*, *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, and *Journal of Greek Media and Culture*.

- **Vicky Iakovou, Walter Benjamin, utopia and us**


In this paper, I focus on a remark about Charles Fourier in Benjamin's eleventh Thesis "On the Concept of History". I propose a commentary on this remark and on its function in the text, and I relate it to other Benjaminian writings of the 1930s –particularly The Arcades Project. My aim is to bring out the significance of Fourier's utopian thought in Benjamin's late work and to raise the question of whether the sparse attention that Benjamin's interest in Fourier has received in the literature is a symptom of the anti-utopianism of our dark times and of the ambiguous predilection of much contemporary critical theory for sad passions.



Vicky Iakovou is Assistant Professor of Political Philosophy at the Department of Social Anthropology and History of the University of the Aegean. Also, she has translated, among others, M. Abensour, J.-L. Nancy, J. Ranciere, P. Ricoeur and S.L. Zizek.

- **Michalis Bartsides, *Socialism as utopia in the present***

The focus of this presentation will be on two ideas: first, negativity and how Althusser deals with this concept in his study of Machiavelli. Then, the present dimension of an ideal capable of mobilizing individuals and the masses in a positive direction. What we suggest here is to put an active methodology into practice in order to determine whether what we called socialism exists today and also undertake its reconceptualisations and transformations that may help us reflect on socialisms of the present. We can think about expansion and opening of time and space from the inside, expansion of the present to the future but also the unfulfilled possibilities of the past. We see things from the point of view of an eternity in the present. This means a different methodology of political program and planning. The presentism we propose does not favor an exclusion of utopia and, therefore, fixation in the present. Instead, we propose a lifting of the internal barriers-borders experienced by political subjects due to the exile of the imagination.



Michalis Bartsidis teaches Philosophy at Hellenic Open University and Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. He is the Scientific Director of the Nicos Poulantzas Institute. His publications and research interests move in the field of Political Philosophy and Contemporary European Philosophy, especially of Etienne Balibar's work and include the volume *Transindividuality (Diatomikotita), Essays on an ontology of relation*, Athens, Nissos, 2014.

Keynote Speaker

Jean Luc Nancy, *On Negativity*

Negativity can be dialectical, able to supersede and leading to a final positivity ; or it can be purely negative, nihilistic, lasting perpetua without any positive product. This second absolute negativity seems to be the sign of our times: identical with catastrophe as well as the physical and spiritual death of individuals and societies, it invites us today to take seriously and face with courage the void of meaning it creates before it drives us into sinking in the chaos of deregulated post-capitalism and the darkness of fascism. Together with Hegel, Nietzsche as well as Marx, J.-L. Nancy points out the urgent need of our time to invent a new meaning of history despite the impossibility of universal narratives

Jean-Luc Nancy (b. 1940) is a French philosopher. He is the Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel Chair and a professor of philosophy at The European Graduate School / EGS. Nancy graduated with a degree in philosophy from the Sorbonne (Paris) in 1962, where he worked with Georges Canguilhem. During his time at the Sorbonne, he also worked with Paul Ricoeur, who supervised his MA thesis on Hegel's philosophy of religion. He briefly taught in Colmar before becoming an assistant at the Institut de philosophie at the University of Strasbourg in 1968. In 1973, he completed his doctoral dissertation on Kant's analogical discourse under the supervision of Paul Ricoeur. In the same year, Nancy became maître assistant (later maître de conférences) at the Université des Sciences Humaines in Strasbourg, where he remained a professor until his retirement in 2002. He has been a guest professor at numerous universities, among them the Freie Universität Berlin, the University of California, Irvine, and the University of California, Berkeley. Nancy's research is very diverse and his work challenges the modern idea of systematicity. While he has written on numerous major European thinkers such as Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Heidegger, etc., he has also responded to many key twentieth-century French contemporaries, such as Jacques Lacan, Georges Bataille, Maurice Blanchot, and Jacques Derrida. The philosopher's most important topics include: the question of community, the nature of the political, German Romanticism, psychoanalysis, literature, technology, and hermeneutics.

More details: <https://egs.edu/biography/jean-luc-nancy/>