

The Challenge of Postcapitalism: Non-Capitalist Temporalities and Social Pathology

Onur Acaroglu

The 1993 film *Groundhog Day*, more than twenty-five years on, appears more prescient than ever. The film depicts Phil Connors, a cynically detached weatherman, and his journey to the small Pennsylvanian town of Punxsutawney to cover an annual event. To his dismay, he gets stuck in an inexplicable time loop, wherein he wakes up to the same day over and over. And no matter what he does during the day, the slate is wiped clean the following morning, whence the alarm clock turns on with the same song, in the same hotel room, at six o'clock. It has become a cliché to use the title to refer to repetitive, dull and unpleasant processes since the film was released, appropriately at a time when history had supposedly not only come to a standstill, but ended altogether with neoliberalism confining all scope of thought and action. The film's enduring relevance cannot be explained solely as a convenient cultural shorthand. It has more profound and troubling implications, since the predicament of the frustrating monotonous grind with no alternatives in sight is too familiar to many. In other words, the film strikes a chord with viewers who recognise its socially pathological temporal suspension.

This chapter seeks to explain this relationship between social pathology diagnosing critique and temporality, and to draw attention to the conceptual limitations of the former in face of the latter. Post- and non-capitalist temporalities are inscribed in the tendency to resist alienation and innovatively produce, a discernible feature of all human societies. The discussion first considers social pathology and sketches a definition (I). The intention is to avoid targeting strawmen and set the stage for an analysis through the lens of temporality. Thereafter I turn to the notion of plural temporalities and justify this postulate through a historical materialist optic (II). Based on this discussion, I argue that a consequence of the ontology of multiple temporalities is the undercurrent of post-capitalism, but that the explanatory ambit of social pathology falls short of illuminating this and requires conceptual elaboration and development (III).

I. *Social pathology, capitalism and temporality*

Groundhog Day is a comedically overblown depiction of social pathology *par excellence*. As per Neuhouser's (2012) understanding, 1) there is a negative self-perpetuating dynamic, 2) it works behind the backs of the social actors, 3) it is an opaque process (the reason of the loop is unexplained), and 4) it is almost impossible to halt (Connors even attempts suicide, yet wakes up again to the same morning). Additionally, the situation of always returning to the drawing board aptly captures how, despite environmental and humanitarian catastrophe, and unceasing economic tumult, we return to the same policies (i.e. bailouts for the culprits and austerity for the rest), and relive the same consequences seemingly *ad infinitum*. In the meantime, these cycles return with a more pressing urgency.

This predicament merits inclusion in a wide definition of social pathology as a negative self-perpetuating dynamic. Policies leading to undesired results such as poverty and oppression become their remedies. As Zurn (2011: 348) maintains, these are unwanted outcomes. But notwithstanding Zurn's cognitivist bias, they are emergent properties of overlapping knots of social relations, beyond the subjective attitudes of social and political actors. Rather, an impersonal process is at place, without necessarily diminishing individual responsibilities. On this account, diagnosing pathologies implicates a critical attitude towards society, despite its ambiguity about assigning blame. The nature of this criticism is not a straightforward denunciation. Issuing from a Hegelian heritage, social pathology analyses indicate the gap between what ought to be, what could be, and what is. In other words, it is shot through with the premise Horkheimer (1972: 246) set out for *critical* theory in a rare attempt at a definition, in that it seeks 'to create a world which satisfies [people's] needs and powers'. This critical dimension is echoed in Honneth's (2000; 2007: 10) argument that there are 'structural limitations ... on the goal of human self-realization'. The use of the 'social pathology' framing thus necessitates an 'ethical partisanship' (Harris, 2019a: 48) and an investigation of what has 'gone awry' (Honneth, 2007).

It is important to underline that the term 'social pathology' is used in a plurality of contradictory ways (Harris, 2019; Laitinen and Särkelä, 2019). My focus here is on those conceptions that identify pathologies as social wrongs, inflicted primarily by certain parts of society on themselves, and on to the rest of society. These approaches carry a critical thrust against those institutions and groups in society whose interests and actions marginalise and exploit others. Laitinen and Särkelä (2018, see also Laitinen, Särkelä and Ikäheimo, 2015: 12) demonstrate, amongst other framings, a 'naturalist' corollary which draws a literal parallel with medicine by conceptualising society as a body that can fall ill. From a Critical Theory perspective, this approach risks leaning towards functionalist sociology, presuming an initial state of harmony, or homeostasis, between complementary elements making up the whole, thus confining social criticism to a straightforward malfunction. As such, parts can be perfected as long as their pathologies are excised. Such an approach would lose the differentiation which separates pathology diagnosing social criticism from a liberal position that contents itself with critiques of 'injustice' which can be rectified through the same mechanisms that miscarry justice (Harris, 2019: 48). However, issues run deeper because, as the conception of social pathology advocated for here suggests, certain pervasive mechanisms function as they *should*, and their analysis falls within the ambit of critical social science (Fromm, 1963).

The identification of social maladies often involves an originary explanation: seeking the original cause of the pathological state. For this reason, Rousseau is held up as a social pathologist *avant la lettre*, in light of his narrative of civilisation as a progressively corrupting process (Honneth, 2007; Neuhaus, 2012; Harris, 2019). We can see this in the famous lines of *A Discourse on Inequality*

(Rousseau, 2002: 113): ‘The first person who, having enclosed a plot of land, took it into his head to say this is mine and found people simple enough to believe him was the true founder of civil society’. Here Rousseau points to the emergence of private property and accumulation as the spark that has created untold ‘crimes, wars, murders ... miseries and horrors’ (ibid). Similarly, Neuhouser (2012) refers to passages explaining the *sui generis* development of structural limitations that ultimately reproduce discontent and suffering for all involved. For example, Rousseau (1997: 28-9) writes about a historical scenario where tillers are taken off the land to raise armies which creates a shortage, which then leads to discontent among the peasantry, prompting further military fortification to quell a potential jacquerie. This is not to say that the powerful are as inconvenienced by these processes as the masses whom they plunder, but it goes to show how social pathologies take on lives of their own, binding livelihoods to their ends.

From this angle, exploitation can be seen as a social pathology that many *depend upon*. The quote attributed to the economist Joan Robinson, that the only thing worse than being exploited is not being exploited, is apposite in our time (e.g. in Warren, 2015: 303-6). In the context of insecurity and rollback of welfare, a stably exploitative occupation appears preferable to the alternative: having no occupation. By definition, the working class is deprived of the resources and means of production. They are thus compelled to sell labour-power to be entitled to a livelihood, making exploitation the lifeblood of the value-creation processes that characterise capitalism. Furthermore, labour, a universal activity all societies carry out, is harnessed to enable profit-maximisation. This reveals exploitation as a relation twisted deep into social reproduction. It is a structural impediment, and to the extent that it is normalised, as Fromm (1963:6) would argue about ‘pathologies of normalcy’, it is hardly recognised as a historically specific form of the servitude of one group of people to another. It follows that pathologies also, and perhaps especially, include mechanisms that blend into the background in daily social life, and cannot be recognised as such. It is the task of social pathology diagnosis to de-naturalise these limitations on human flourishing.

Considering the aspects of social pathologies covered thus far, they can be defined as relatively opaque, negative self-perpetuating dynamics, with the proviso that this is one definition among many. Moreover, a socially pathological mechanism tends to proliferate insofar as it can dominate practices of social reproduction. With the original sin of the historical inauguration of private property, and ongoing capitalist logics driving humanity towards self-immolation, social pathology diagnosis is an effective heuristic of grasping what has ‘gone awry’. However, in line with its critical theoretical roots, it is not forthcoming about positive proposals for change, ways to dismantle capitalism, or whom to blame. Focusing on the structural limitations does not *a fortiori* translate into the case for human flourishing. The very recognition of negative processes implicates their prevalence over other, potentially positive, empowering processes. Enlightening these alternatives can help to create a

‘thicker’ social critique and reveal in starker relief how societies hinder their members’ access to a dignified livelihood. This blind spot is the result of an inadequate consideration of temporal complexity; namely, the single-dimensional temporality inscribed in diagnoses of said negative mechanisms.

To elaborate through the example of exploitation, we have seen that it meets the criteria of a social pathology. However, while formidable, exploitative relations do not totalise all social reproduction. Instead, social life needs to be continuously brought under its rubric. To use Marx’s (1990: 247-258) basic formula, the circuit of Money-Commodity-Money generates capital, wherein the capitalist seeks to gain more than their initial input through the sale of commodities. Thus, the real process becomes M-C-M', where the difference between M' and M is the exploitative surplus-value extracted from labour-power. Marx uses the term labour-power - *arbeitskraft* - in this distinct sense of the capacity to work incarnated as a peculiar commodity, and subject of *Capital*, as opposed to labour - *arbeit* - or what can be termed productive activity (Fine and Saad-Filho, 2010: 20). The normative charge of the term ‘exploitation’ stems from the special status of labour-power as the alienated form of productive activity under capitalist auspices. The capacity to produce and innovate is confined to the temporal rhythm of a singular process, which mainstream economics fetishizes to the point of missing sight of the sociological realities that precede and shape its categories. And the exploitative nature of the wage-labour and capital relationship comes into focus when considering productive activity as more than a purely economic factor of production. Instead, labour is a culturally and historically specific *and* universal attribute of human societies. Its practice is mediated through cultural norms and social relations which may also involve its minimisation. In fact, as Caffentzis (2013: 145-162) observes, it is the capacity of labour to *refuse* work that sets it apart from other factors of production, beyond a mere value or commodity. Building on this, a critique of exploitation cannot be fully expounded with a negative focus on its mechanisms, but also through a discussion of the alternate temporalities that are suppressed at every turn. An account of potential flourishing embedded in social life can substantiate such a critique. This supplement to social pathology can be explained with a theorisation of temporal multiplicity.

II. *Multiple temporalities: A historical materialist approach*

The capitalist processes alluded to above are profound and pervasive social pathologies. They also embody distinct temporal frames, such as the one encapsulated in M-C-M'. The ‘time’ of accumulation is distinct from that of social reproduction, despite their wide overlaps. Here ‘time’ is used in an Aristotelian sense, linking its passage to movement in terms of the ‘number of movements in respect of the before and after’ (Morfino and Thomas, 2018: 1). In social terms, this refers to variegated social relations to historical time. Rather than an absolute, abstract process, relativizing time as a social relation within and among parts of society helps to incorporate it into social critiques. Broadly

conceived, society reproduces itself primarily along evolutionary-survival needs. At a smaller scale, societies are fragmented along class lines. The productive activity that needs to be undertaken for evolutionary-survival needs has economic instantiations particular to each society. This economic parameter covers one axis of culturally mediated survival. These practices take place along distinct temporalities, complicating straightforwardly linear - or circular - conceptions of temporal progression. Rather than a complete relativism of multiple times, I seek to situate a trans-historical temporality of productive activity over its local variations in particular historical periods, which are further temporally branched out. The contention here is that a central facet of human nature can be located in the tendency towards productive activity, which takes place in historically specific forms, and within the parameters of, particular modes of production.

It is a common and exasperating experience to encounter sterile debates on the complete fixity or malleability of 'human nature', often respectively advocated by right- and left-wing perspectives. It is to be expected for conservative opinion to naturalise the *status quo* as the perennial social arrangement, the *telos* of all historical development, and most in accord with human nature. However, while understandable, it is also hasty to counter such arguments with an assertion of complete malleability through socialisation, even though this has a decisive impact. As Norman Geras (1983) has elegantly demonstrated, there is a false dichotomy at play here. The misunderstanding about Marx's allegedly categoric opposition to human nature stems from a partial reading of an extract from the sixth thesis on Feuerbach (quoted in *ibid*: 29): '[T]he essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations'. Here Marx critiques, among other things, Feuerbach's simple abstraction of religion from any social formation or history, locating it in a human essence. Marx argues for a dynamic nature that can be extracted from social and historical realities. What is opposed is the isolation of any single institution - including the economy - as a unidirectional emanation of an essence, hindering an outlook that takes up social relations in their totality as the overall factor of people's general tendencies and dispositions. Moreover, this is a historical and social account of the individual, emphasising the fact that individualities are crafted with cultural implements, in the midst of society.

It could be argued, based on the above, that Marx favours historical specificity. Yet this does not take into account what may be termed his broader philosophical anthropology that accords a special status to productive activity. Due to various evolutionary factors, humans need to productively engage with nature, and socially orchestrate this engagement, in order to survive and flourish. This involves the manipulation of nature to create forces of production, as well as particular arrangements to use said forces, or relations of production. These combine to make up the mode of production as an objective benchmark of social analysis. Productive activity is a primal condition reflecting the physical weakness of humankind compared to other animals, even its primate cousins. From the primitive communal

hunter-gatherer societies onwards, people have had to innovatively produce anthropological ‘cultures’, in the sense of knowledges and tools learned after birth, like the fur coat or the crossbow. Productive activity is an innate attribute and frames all historical societies. Marx therefore (1959: 82) postulates *human natural beings*, whose natural composition and drives are instantiated through cultural mediations, marking longitudinal temporal divergences.

A second aspect of productive activity is the necessarily *conscious* engagement with nature, the variegation of which gives shape to its local manifestations. Marx (1990: 465) explains this with a comparison: ‘What distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is that the architect builds the cell in his mind before he constructs it in wax’. People build their sustenance and satisfy their needs - vital and otherwise - according to preconceived blueprints, using implements ranging from the spade to the supercomputer. While there are stagnant periods, there are also innovations and breakthroughs, such as the invention of gunpowder or the internal combustion engine. Here it is worthwhile to recall Marx’s (1962: 122) (in)famous point about the productive forces: ‘The hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill, society with the industrial capitalist’. This passage, penned as part of a polemic, is the smoking gun for accusations of technological determinism. Yet in multiple instances Marx and Engels (1974: 87-8) show an awareness of degrees of ‘determination’. Accordingly, the development of forces of production, and their transitive imprint of social relations, can be spontaneous and flexible. Their determinations can occur as hard barriers, impediments, gravitational pulls, or insignificant nudges, providing some explanation for the emergence of capitalism in Western Europe when this could have taken place at different times and locations. In sum, productive activity is a subterranean temporal current intertwined with the *historical* directions that societies take, capitalism being one of these.

Under capitalist auspices, productive activity ceases to correspond to the intrinsic need and desire for self-realisation and fulfilment. On the whole, even when primal needs are met, people are driven by various factors, such as straightforward boredom or creativity, to seek out novel activities to expend mental and physical labour on. Capitalist production does not tolerate such activities as ends in themselves and subordinates them to its instrumental logic. Therefore, the exercise of labour-power does not meet the drive to interact with, and learn from, nature and society in line with one’s interests. Harnessed to capital accumulation, productive activity takes the alienated form of wage-labour (Marx, 2000: 271-295; Ollman, 1971). Protracted processes of dispossession lead to the emergence of the working-class on the historical scene. Composed of people with only labour-power to sell, workers enter exploitative relations, enriching those who own and regulate the means of production (Marx, 2000: 281). As a result, toiling majorities are atomised from one another as sellers of labour-power in the market, alienated from the proceeds of their labour which confront them as distinct commodities with exchange-values once they are produced. The creators are thus expropriated of control over the

means - involving both forces and relations - of production they create and maintain (Marx, 1973; 1991). The importance of recognising the essentialness of productive activity lies in its revelation of the historically contingent nature of exploitation and the pathological alienation that facilitates it.

Ollman (1971: 132) has argued that alienation is best understood as the 'absence of unalienation'. Rather than a positive process constituting society, alienation and its mechanisms are pathological structures interpellating human natural beings as lifeless economic categories. Capitalism has self-referential temporal patterns and rhythms which grate against other modes of doing things, both antediluvian and anticipative of different futures. Marx (1973: 150) has not directly theorised multiple temporalities and their incongruities, yet he does intimate their presence when he argues for the co-existence of multiple modes of production:

In all forms of society there is one specific kind of production which predominates over the rest, whose relations thus assign rank and influence to the others. It is a general illumination which bathes all the other colours and modifies their particularity. It is a particular ether which determines the specific gravity of every being which has materialized within it.

This passage has destabilising connotations for approaches to historical progression as a unilinear, monolithic march of time. 'Capitalist society', based on this, is shorthand for a society in which capitalism reigns supreme as the dominant mode of production, casting a long shadow over the others. This can be seen in the hybridised social formations of the majority world, where the historical development of capitalism went hand-in-hand with a brutal regime of slavery, tore apart and forcefully restructured social relations. It was an exogenous shock, in contrast to the incremental, organic proliferation of capitalist relations in the core countries. Aside from carrying out creative destruction for accumulation, capitalism also gave colouring to the local modes of production such as feudalism. At times, these feudal powerholders were capable of existing alongside of, and grafting themselves onto, the dominant mode of production, all the while carrying over a pre-capitalist 'time' (Duzgun, 2019).

As the 'transition debate' of twentieth century Marxist historiography has shown, and continues to do so in recent discussions, the entrenchment of capitalism across the world had many false starts and defeats, and took root as part of a complex historical permutation of modes of production (Hinton, 1978; Wood, 2002; Lafrance and Post, 2019). The point here is not to lapse into a relativism of 'times'; there is an objective progression of periods where particular modes of production reign supreme before they atrophy. An inspection of the past and its survivals in the present rather show that temporal multiplicity is ontologically ingrained in social reproduction. This dissonance is not solely a simultaneous social differentiation, but a temporal lag, or what Balibar (2015) has termed *décalage*. It

refers to differential relations to historical time centred on various modalities of access to the socially created wealth, and as a particular *lag*, it involves advances and anticipations as well as regression.

Concurrence and non-simultaneity traverse Marx's analyses, indicating alternate temporal patterns as a factor of societal development. Morfino and Thomas (2018: 7) note that the young Marx considered Germany with reference to a European temporality, strained with the reconfigurations imposed by the 1848 revolutions. 'We are philosophical contemporaries of the present without being its historical contemporaries', Marx (1970: 135) argues. This is a reference to the conservatism of the German states, which took shape as a reaction to popular rebellions across the continent. These reactionary states conformed to the European *pensée unique*, adapting themselves to the counter-revolutionary institutional arrangements and ideological dispositions; though on social terms, German society remained at a pre-1848 standing. On the other hand, Germany was ahead of its time with regard to 'criticism', or philosophy, as its mostly exiled philosophers had made significant advances. A second observation on Marx's theoretical trajectory reinforces this notion of co-presence among modes of production. Focusing on Russia over the last years of his life, Marx makes striking observations to the Russian intellectual and politician Vera Zasulich. According to Marx (cited in Shanin, 1983: 97-123), the ancient communal village arrangement of the *mir* has the potential to be more than a hangover of past epochs. In a potential transition, the *mir* can be activated as a *socialist* institution after having resisted assimilation to commodity production, thereby transforming its temporal location with respect to the prevalent mode of production. These observations are supported and further explored in Marx's more recently published *Ethnological Notebooks*. Including notes on non- and pre- capitalist societies, these notebooks show that Marx was increasingly attuned to temporal complexity, and opposed to the unilinear stagism often attributed to him, mostly based on his earlier writings on India (Anderson, 2006; Achcar, 2013).

These intimations of a temporal contradiction are symptomatic of the explanatory insufficiency of what might be called the 'unitemporal' paradigm. The assumption of a monolithic temporal flow that encompasses all elements of society is a product of Hegel's influence on Marx. Louis Althusser and his collaborators are accused of illegitimately demarcating the young Marx from the mature Marx, but Althusser nevertheless touches upon a key departure. At the risk of oversimplification, Hegel (1991: §347, §352) theorised historical progression as an *autogenesis*, in movements of the contradiction between the notion of the Idea of freedom and its partial realisations in each stage. Each historical period is a social whole, or an 'expressive totality' in Althusser's (2015a: 583) vocabulary. This refers to the expression of an 'essence', or a Spirit (*Geist*), not to be confused with the 'subjective spirit' of personal cognition (Hegel, 2018: 253-390). In short, for Hegel, the Spirit can be gleaned from every part of the social whole, such that, crucially, there is a temporal cohesion to his teleological account of historical time. Historical epochs progress in a linear movement and towards an endpoint. Althusser

(2015b: 182-3) challenges this expressive totality because it belies a misleading unity of the present, represented in what he has called an ‘essential section’:

[A]n intellectual operation in which a *vertical break* is made at any moment in historical time, a break in the present such that all the elements of the whole revealed by this section are in an immediate relationship with one another, a relationship that immediately expresses their internal essence.

As Gordy (1983: 4) suggests, the continuous and homogenous present is analogous to the single frame in a roll of film. It is a cross section along a linear progression. Gordy’s analogy can be taken further since the self-enclosed ‘film’ is also an apt metaphor for teleological history with a beginning and an end, the question being not ‘if’, but ‘when’, it is to occur.

Althusser (2015a: 28) maintains that ideological misrecognition operates by presenting a misleading ‘fullness’ where a theory or science ‘sounds hollow’ to the attentive ear. Such fragile spots are glossed over as a ‘non-omission’ which may ‘seriously hinder the development of a science or of certain of its branches’. The assumption of the temporal unity of the present is one case in point. The difference between ‘capitalist society’ and ‘a society in which capitalism is in dominance’ is not solely a subject of theoretical debate, but key to charting departures from capitalism. The real tendency towards post-capitalism is at once made possible by the immanent capacities within capitalist production *and* a footing in a different temporality that haunts capitalism. Going back to the capitalist dynamic of exploitation sketched above, a capitalist society would imply that this mode of exploitation and its temporal axis has subsumed all alternatives. However, this would contravene the underlying principle of all exploitation: to place the yoke of labour-power on productive activity. It is the capacity of labour-power to be otherwise that makes its exploitation possible. This is a pathological process that suppresses unalienated, life sustaining and nourishing activity in line with needs and interests. The suppression of such non-market tendencies does not amount to their abolition. As such, the worker, as more than a mere factor of production, can choose to withhold labour from the capitalist. This reality lies at the core of surplus-value extraction. The pervasion of capitalist relations would nullify themselves if they could manage to reduce human productive activity to a cog in production. Social reproduction takes place along predominantly capitalist lines, but resists temporal colonisation. This complexity gives shape to the social formation, where negative mechanisms must constantly prevail and renew their hold. While this is a resilient pathology, it is also conditioned and shaped by a push in the other direction, that of post-capitalist impulses.

The enclosure of historical time as a teleological process guided by a Spirit fails to account for contingencies, regressions, and unpredictable turns that history takes as a lived praxis of social

reproduction. It also easily lends itself to elitist readings of historical agency, if such agency can be discerned at all. Marx's philosophy of history has been a settling of accounts with these assumptions, advancing alternate temporalities and their interconnections. In a draft of a letter to Zasulich, Marx (1989: 358) likens the histories of primitive societies to geological formations. This perspective lays bare the one-dimensional inadequacy of the Hegelian-inspired linear progress, wherein every epoch is a monolithic whole. Like geological formations, social formations have layers which may at times subsume, reinforce, or annihilate each another (Tomba, 2018: 77). There are layers of deeply ingrained tendencies and calcified roots, wherein novelties can hardly find soil to grow. Or they may present fertile opportunities to cultivate embryonic modes of production where, like the Russian *mir*, the past activates and catalyses future transitions.

III. *Social Pathology and Post-capitalism*

The subject of post-capitalism has seen a spike in interest over the last decade. Since Mason's (2015) book *PostCapitalism: A Guide to Our Future* was published, debates have intensified, with new work regularly being produced. This undoubtedly reflects a widespread sense of the finitude of neoliberal governance. A nihilistically punitive void has come to characterize faltering austerity regimes, 'dead yet still dominant' despite the lack of recovery from the 2008 crash (Smith, 2009: 56; Davies 2016). The paradigm of social pathology similarly faces a crossroads, resembling, and entailed by, its ongoing debates on redistribution and recognition (Fraser and Honneth, 2003; Harris, 2019). Equally, post-capitalism has been a subject of interest as a response to these times of emergency. In contradistinction to the prevailing mechanisms of atomisation and competition, burgeoning social movements and political organisations continue to assert the importance of solidarity and association. In keeping with the definitional outlines presented above, this section seeks to supplement social pathology diagnosis by invoking temporal pulls which need to be acknowledged. Also, in line with the mapping of the multi-temporal historical philosophy above, this section develops the alternate paths of productive activity in the other direction, turning from their past and present towards the future.

The Critical Theoretical diagnosis of social pathologies has retained a strong left-Hegelian inflection (Honneth, 2004). Accordingly, the outlook of 'pathologies of reason' focuses on instances where social practices fail to attain the highest possible standards of rationality made possible by the broader social constellation. This resonates with Marx's (1990: 799) critiques of capitalism, most simply that, that accumulation of wealth on one end being secured through accumulation of misery on the other, *even though* productive forces can ensure equality and prosperity for all. This mode of critique therefore goes beyond negation, and teases out the gap between what society does, and what it is capable of. In Hegelian terms, the actual fails to meet embedded rational standards, *ergo* pathologies of reason (Honneth, 2004: 340; Marcuse, 1969). Indeed, leading scholars of social pathology have formulated

unorthodox accounts of Hegel's notion of Spirit *vis-à-vis* recognition and failures thereof, evincing both Hegel's lasting imprint on social theory and innovative potentials under a new light (Honneth, 1995; Ikäheimo and Laitinen, 2011).

It is notoriously difficult to arrive at a definition of 'reason' central to some social pathological accounts that espouse the recognition frame. This is related to the contested nature of Hegel scholarship (Houlgate, 2012). Honneth has continuously revised his formulation of the concept in the development of his account (Harris, 2019: 101; Freyenhagen, 2015). It is however possible to address the lowest common denominators of advocates of this Hegelian approach. Pathologies of reason take a left-Hegelian view. They oppose the complacent position of its right-wing variant, that the existing state of affairs represents the final unfolding of the Spirit (Hardimon, 1992: 165-7; Harris, 1958). For Hegel, this was his contemporary Prussian state, though it remains an open question how literal he was about this, and whether this was a pragmatic decision (Desmond, 1984: 173). Left-Hegelians, the young Marx among them, took a critical view of their society, and argued that the unfolding of Spirit and the realisation of the Idea of freedom were far from over. After all, oppression, violence and misery were prevalent, and this could not have been what Hegel had in mind as the *telos* of history. In social pathological terms, persistent pathologies should be grasped in an immanent-transcendent manner, as the failures of the rationality immanent within society to come to fruition. The transcendental aspect of this perspective argues for the internal movement of the contradiction between the Idea and its partial realisation at a further point of resolution, such that its teleological endpoint has been realised.

The approach to social pathology in question takes 'reason' as a thick concept that is socially immediate and prior to subjective conceptions. Reason is monolithic and self-enclosed as part of the historical narrative guided by the Spirit. This philosophically dense conception is internally consistent, yet it subjects history to a preconceived, linear process of eventual realisation. On the other hand, once the temporal unity of the present is dismissed in favour of a complex unity of 'times', history is once again animated as a contradictory, improvised and overall messy process of social struggles. And rather than a reduction to a metaphysical determinism, which may have characterised left-Hegelian approaches, the course of historical change can be better understood as a perennial settling of accounts with social pathologies. These take place along relatively autonomous 'times', considered here as a permanent displacement as some progresses gather momentum and others are left behind. It is apposite here to consider the different ways Hegel and Marx analysed German society: a monolithic, frozen representation of the latest turn of the Spirit in the former, and a temporally fragmented, contradictory unity for the latter. The displacement in this latter understanding is constitutive of all social formations, and cannot be fully resolved to pave the way for a social life that is transparent to itself. Moreover, this complexity is incompatible with social pathological approaches of a Hegelian bent. As Marx's historical materialism took shape as a confrontation with expressive totalities and the social whole, so can social

pathology find a source of rejuvenation in complicating the simultaneity of aspects of social life. In this way, this paradigm can benefit from delineations of budding futures.

A shortcoming of social pathology comes through at this point. As a diagnostic principle, social pathologists retrospectively identify negative mechanisms, but this renders the approach myopic with respect to those processes that push back against such mechanisms. In fact, it could be argued that social pathologies are as reactive as they are constitutive of social relations. To put it more directly, capitalist pathologies are not partial realisations of an unfulfilled idea, nor the totalising constituents of social life. They are rather grinding repetitions of a past temporality. Mechanisms of exploitation, poverty and inequality need to update themselves in a renewed need to suture fuller expressions of productive activity, in a process which moulds history not as a straight line, but a geological formation. Contemporary social pathology scholarship is thus limited in its focus on the temporality of singular mechanisms, losing sight of their interrelations with crosscutting influences that originate in other points of social reproduction. This temporal isolation renders these diagnoses bereft of a sharper analytical acumen that can be gained from acknowledging and elaborating temporal alternatives.

The preceding discussion has elaborated on an ontological temporal stratification that makes up the social struggles driving historical change. This is grounded in the primordial human capacity and drive to strive for improvements to the quality of life, despite its staggeringly varied real historical outcomes. Productive activity is subsumed under the singular temporality of capitalist processes, but it is never fully colonised in this way. This can be glimpsed in the proliferation of voluntary association and non-market activities that maintain a footing outside of circuits of accumulation, ranging from the local aid networks that sprung up with the Covid-19 emergency, to more historically monumental episodes such as Communes from Paris to Beijing (Springer, 2020). Socially constructed and maintained reaches for non-capitalist temporality thereby dot the social and political landscape, no matter how bleak it may be.

These flashes of non-capitalist impulses are nurtured by spontaneous mass creativity that is manifest in the culturally rich tapestry of human civilisations and the political struggles waged across centuries to restore productive activity to its full capacities. These aspects of society all make up an array of post-capitalist temporalities, the futuristic counterparts to the hangovers of the past that *parcellise* the present. Pathologies are, by definition, signs of things having gone wrong, and imply that there are correct, or at least less wrong, modes of life that can be extracted from their wreckage. The immanent-transcendent method through which Critical Theorists diagnose social pathologies thus needs to be developed to incorporate an understanding of multiple temporalities. This can reveal pathological processes in sharper focus. Aside from this gain in explanatory power, the incorporation of such

alternatives can allow this paradigm to name names, pass judgments, and hold power to account more powerfully.

Social pathologies are diagnoses of negative mechanisms that lie behind the immediately observable phenomenon. As such, they explain a difference between the *status quo* and its potential alternatives. This is a paramount feature of *Critical Theory*. It is thus set apart from traditional theories, such as contemporary positivist social science, which content themselves with ‘objective’ description and proclaim normative pronouncements beyond the theoretical purview. The political and economic structures that sustain social problems pose a blind spot to traditional theory, that the pathology approach effectively addresses. In turn, however, social *pathology* is also loaded with a pejorative connotation, and focuses on unitemporal occurrences. To use a medical metaphor, this commitment overlooks the factors that are conducive to overall social well-being. As a result, social pathology diagnosis also risks stopping at portraying issues when it could go beyond this step by indicating alternative temporal patterns that do not produce, or even just mitigate, such issues. In sum, an engagement with the notions elaborated here can develop the social pathological conceptual apparatus and further enable the identification of post-capitalist forces present within the social order.

Conclusion: Enhancing the Social Pathology Paradigm

While it can effectively capture the discord between the existing state of affairs and the alternative ways they should be, social pathology scholarship does not fully capture post-capitalist temporalities. This chapter has identified the assumption of a homogenous, unified temporal backdrop to social pathological processes, along with the assignment of a singular temporal logic to each pathology, as an impediment to its critique and provision of remedies. This has involved laying the foundation of a historical materialist case for multiple temporalities, and the chapter has engaged with a widely defined understanding of social pathology. Building on this I have argued that along with the repetition of the past, anticipations and tendencies of a germinating future also exist and maintain a spark, no matter how dim, that can further destabilise the temporal lags at the centre of social reproduction.

Mark Fisher’s (2014: 11-22) oft-quoted ‘slow cancellation of the future’ was a reference to the incapacity of the late neoliberal period to produce new artistic movements or literary achievements, while compulsively recycling the past. This was symptomatic of the difficulty in imagining alternate social arrangements, where time appeared to stand still. This cancellation has now taken a more literal form. Considering the looming threat of global warming, the resurgence of nationalist sabre-rattling around the world, and the Covid-19 pandemic causing hundreds of thousands of preventable deaths, the literal future appears to be on the line. The economic, social and political scripts that perpetuate these dynamics are also intact and formidable.

However, it is also helpful to be reminded that even Phil Connors in *Groundhog Day* managed to leave the vicious cycle of waking up to the same, dreary situation. After many self-destructive and fruitless attempts to leave that day, Connors begins to consider others, and treat people around him as ends-in-themselves rather than accessories to his cynical desires. This break from an atomised and alienated existence leads Connors to identifying with the community he initially despised, and aligning his well-being with those around him. When Phil Connors begins to take a genuine interest in those around him, particularly the most vulnerable, his 'days' become infinitely more variegated and fulfilling. Even though the film takes place across iterations of a single day, we see Connors taking up the piano, reciting French poetry, getting to know and love a woman for herself, and on each day leading a more exhilarating existence than ever before. In fact, the predicament of the loop demonstrates to the viewer that had it not happened, Connors' ordinary life would have followed a more profoundly nefarious loop until it expired, without a revelation of its numbing monotony. The positive mechanisms that he has led off return to Connors, making him happier and more invested in his life, which had consisted of a homogenous going through the motions. Connors' day in the loop is more temporally heterogenous than the entirety of his biographic existence. *Groundhog Day* viscerally captures the differences that relating to each other beyond pathological loops can make. Beyond a wholesome, fantastic film sequence, the film attests to tendencies in society that can break repeated, impersonal and seemingly opaque processes. While this is not easy, it is also not impossible. Social pathology diagnosis can, and should, take cognisance of the counter-cyclical mechanisms to those under its investigative focus. In this way, Critical Theorists can substantiate their social critique with traces of the temporality outside of the here and now.

Bibliography

Achcar, G. 2013, *Marxism, Orientalism, Cosmopolitanism*, Chicago: Haymarket.

Althusser, L. 2015a, "From Capital to Marx's Philosophy" in *Reading Capital: The Complete Edition*, eds. L. Althusser & E. Balibar, London: Verso.

— — —. 2015b, "The Object of *Capital*" in *Reading Capital: The Complete Edition*, eds. L. Althusser & E. Balibar, London: Verso.

Anderson, K. 2006, "Marx's late writings on non-Western and precapitalist societies and gender", *Rethinking Marxism*, vol. 14, no. 4, pp. 84-96.

Balibar, E. 2015, "Elements for a Theory of Transition" in *Reading Capital: The Complete Edition*, London: Verso.

Caffentzis, G. 2013, "Why Machines Cannot Create Value: Marx's Theory of Machines" in *In Letters of Blood and Fire: Work, Machines, and the Crisis of Capitalism*, ed. G. Caffentzis, Oakland: PM Press, pp. 139-163.

Davies, W. 2016, "The New Neoliberalism", *New Left Review*. 101.

Desmond, W. 1984, "Hegel, Art, and History", in *History and System: Hegel's Philosophy of History*, ed. R. L. Perkins, Albany: State University of New York Press, pp. 173-193.

Duzgun, E. 2019, "The Political Economy of the Transition to Capitalism in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey: Towards a New Interpretation" in *Case Studies in the Origins of Capitalism*, eds. X. Lafrance & C. Post, London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 265-290.

Evans-Prichard, A. 2018, The next downturn could rival the Great Depression and wipe \$10 trillion off US household assets, *The Telegraph*, London, 16/09/2018.

Fine, B. & Saad-Filho, A. 2010, *Marx's 'Capital'*, 5th edition, London: Pluto Press.

Fraser, N. & Honneth, A. 2003, *Redistribution Or Recognition?: A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, London: Verso.

- Freyenhagen, F. 2015, Honneth on Social Pathologies: A Critique. *Critical Horizons* vol. 16, no. 2, 131-152.
- Fromm, E. 1963, *The Sane Society*, trans. E Rotten, New York: Rinehart and Winston.
- Geras, N. 1983. *Marx and Human Nature: Refutation of a Legend*. London: Verso.
- Gordy, M. 1983, "Time and the Social Whole", *History and Theory*, vol. 22, no. 1, pp. 1-21.
- Hardimon, M. O. 1992, "The Project of Reconciliation: Hegel's Social Philosophy", *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 21, no. 2, pp. 165-195.
- Harris, H. S. 1958, "Hegelianism of the 'Right' and 'Left'", *The Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 603- 609.
- Harris, N. 2019, "Recovering the Critical Potential of Social Pathology Diagnosis", *European Journal of Social Theory*, vol. 22, no. 1, pp. 45-62.
- Hegel, G.W.F. 1991, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- — —. 2018, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Honneth, A. 1995, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, Cambridge: MIT Press.
- — —. 2000, "The possibility of a disclosing critique of society: The Dialectic of Enlightenment in light of current debates in social criticism", *Constellations*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 116-127.
- — —. 2007, "Pathologies of the social: The past and present of social philosophy" in *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*, ed. A. Honneth, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Houlgate, S. 2012, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit: A Reader's Guide*, London: Bloomsbury.
- Horkheimer, M. 1972, *Critical Theory*, New York: Seabury Press.
- Ikäheimo, H. & Laitinen, A. (eds) 2011, *Recognition and Social Ontology*, Leiden: Brill.
- Lafrance, X. & Post, C. (eds) 2019, *Case Studies in the Origins of Capitalism*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Laitinen, A., Särkelä, A., & Ikäheimo, H. 2015, "Pathologies of Recognition: An Introduction". *Studies in Social and Political Thought*. <https://doi.org/10.20919/sspt.25.2015.44>
- Laitinen, A. & Särkelä, A. 2018, "Four Conceptions of Social Pathology", *European Journal of Social Theory*, vol. 22, no. 1, pp. 80-102.
- Marcuse, F. 1969, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Marx, K. 1959. *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, Moscow: Progress Publishers.
- — —. 1962, *The Poverty of Philosophy: Answer to the "Philosophy of Poverty" by M. Proudhon*, Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House.
- — —. 1970, *Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right'* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- — —. 1973, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, London: Penguin.
- — —. 1974, *The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx*, Assen: Van Gorcum.
- — —. 1989, "First Draft of Letter to Vera Zasulich" in *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, Volume 35, London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- — —. 1990, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy Volume I*, London: Penguin.
- — —. 1991, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy Volume III*, London: Penguin.
- — —. 2000, "Wage-Labour and Capital" in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, ed. D. McLellan, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Marx, K., & Engels, F. 1974, *The German Ideology*, London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- Mason, P. 2015, *Postcapitalism: A Guide to our Future*, London: Penguin.
- Morfino, V. & Thomas, P. 2018, "Tempora Multa" in *The Government of Time: Theories of Plural Temporality in the Marxist Tradition*, ed. V. Morfino and P. D. Thomas, Leiden: Brill.
- Neuhouser, F. 2012, "Rousseau und die Idee einer pathologischen Gesellschaft", *Politische Vierteljahresschrift*, vol. 53, no. 4, pp. 628–745.

- Niethammer, L. & Van Laak, D. 1992, *Posthistoire: Has History Come to an End?* London: Verso.
- Ollman, B. 1971, *Alienation: Marx's Conception of Man in Capitalist Society*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pinkard, T. 1994, *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ramis, H. 1993, *Groundhog Day*, Columbia Pictures Corporation.
- Rousseau, J. 2002, *The Social Contract and the First and Second Discourses*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Shanin, T. 1983, *Late Marx and the Russian Road: Marx and the 'Peripheries of Capitalism'*, New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Springer, S. 2020 'Caring geographies: The COVID-19 interregnum and a return to mutual aid', *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 10(2), pp. 112–115. doi: 10.1177/2043820620931277.
- Warren, P. 2015, "In Defense of the Marxian Theory of Exploitation: Thoughts on Roemer, Cohen, and Others" *Social Theory and Practice*, vol. 41, no. 2 pp. 286-308.
- Wood, E. M. 2002, *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View*, London: Verso.
- Zurn, C. 2011, "Social pathologies as second-order disorders" in *Axel Honneth: Critical Essays. With a reply by Axel Honneth*, ed. D. Petherbridge, Brill, Leiden, pp. 345-370.