

Summaries

Nico Wilterdink

Capital's Fault
Marx and globalization

Radical protest movements tend to grow when the groups whose interests they claim to defend become stronger and the reasons for protest are diminishing - and vice versa. This paradox can be illustrated by the vicissitudes of Western Marxism. Marxist ideas gained new popularity among Western intellectuals in the 1960s, precisely a time of strong economic growth and rising wages among the working class; they went out of fashion in the 1980s, when capitalism went through several crises, mass unemployment became endemic, and inequality increased. Today, there are some intellectual reasons for a return to Marxian theory: the 'power of capital' is increasing in relation to organized labour and national governments, as is indicated by the growing concentration of capital, the renewed significance of ownership as the basis for power within and between firms, and changes in the distribution of income in favour of capital owners and managers. This can be connected to 'globalization', or, more particularly, the growing international mobility of physical and financial capital. Marx already drew, for his own time, a connection between the growing power of the capital-owning bourgeoisie and the expansion of world trade. However, his theory cannot be applied simply to on present-day developments. Today's 'globalization' (as well as its relation to changing class relations) differs in several important respects from that of a century ago. And whereas income inequality in Western societies has increased since about 1980, there are no clear indications of hardening class lines, let alone of growing class consciousness and class struggles. Although the Marxist tradition is useful for the study of contemporary social trends, one should not allow oneself to be misled by its ideological illusions.

Kees Bruin

Fallen Deeply
The Fraudulent Ways of Two Dutch Patricians

What happens when upper class businessmen turn out to be criminal offenders? In the beginning of this century two high born Dutch directors of financial institutions caused a national scandal by their embezzlements, running up to a total of several million - then! - guilders. Public opinion was shocked by the evident lack of control, and the corruption of the upper classes was hotly debated. This case-study focuses on the social background of the two fraudulent directors and it analyses the class-aspect in the reports on their trial and in the discussion of the scandal. Further-

more it describes the fate of the directors after their downfall and examines the social degradation of their families. It is shown that the extent of exclusion from higher circles differed between them. Despite the dramatic effects of the scandal on their lives, military and other careers remained open and recovery of social standing was not impossible.

Dienke Hondius

Skin Colour Unimportant?

The Acceptance of Interracial Marriage and the Cautious Dealing with Visible Differences in the Netherlands

Based on interviews with thirteen black Surinamese-white Dutch couples, the article explores the importance of visible somatic differences such as skin colour for the acceptance of mixed couples by their parents, families and friends, as well as in public situations in daily life in the Netherlands. The title refers to an often-used phrase in ads by people looking for a (marriage) partner: 'skin colour unimportant', which reflects the dominant norm. Three levels of acceptance of mixed couples are distinguished: unproblematic or full acceptance (no problem whatsoever, according to the interviewees); acceptance with some difficulty (ranging from slight hesitation at first to longer periods of rejection by close family or friends); and no acceptance (or full rejection: couple has no contact with important part of their close family or friends following their rejection). For these 13 Surinamese/Dutch couples, one third reported full acceptance, whereas almost two thirds reported acceptance with some difficulty, and one couple had remained unaccepted. 'Acceptance with difficulty' appears to be the standard situation. Whereas in the case of the unaccepted couple the resistance came from the white Dutch family, in the cases of the couples accepted with difficulty the hesitation and resistance had come more often from the Surinamese family members or friends. Closer inspection and extensive quotes from the interviews show that virtually all these hesitations and resistances were temporary. Couples reported specific strategies to gain or improve acceptance. As to colour difference, the interviews showed that the subject is painful and many respondents chose to ignore or avoid the subject altogether. A concluding paragraph discusses the way most sociologists have avoided differences in physical appearance as a factor in their research designs. This avoidance is interpreted as a form of shame that deserves more attention.

Tales of Lies

The Bodybuilder's Body between Reality and Fantasy

Recently the use of doping amongst amateur bodybuilders has become a public item. Previous research has shown that the chance of a bodybuilder becoming a steroid-user increases with the amount of years one is working out. In this paper the nature of this relationship is examined, by investigating the way the human body is conceptualised in bodybuilding subculture. It is concluded, that in those manifestations of bodybuilding subculture, endurance is romanticised, and its positive effects on the human body are both glorified and exaggerated. In the past, this view on the body has been challenged by bodybuilders, but for some reason, the ruling powers in bodybuilding subculture have always counteracted other views. So, bodybuilders are advised by the 'muscular' spokesmen to work out heavily and frequently, and to cultivate a lifestyle that is centred around the daily training routines. However, it is impossible to make significant achievements in bodybuilding while maintaining this lifestyle. The training overload causes extensive damage to the muscle fibres, thus making growth of muscle tissue impossible. Only when using forbidden substances, such as anabolic steroids, progress can be made. *Natural* bodybuilders should not work out the way the spokesmen of bodybuilding subculture tell them to. Instead, when naturals reduce training workload, progress is made. It is concluded that the fight against the use of enhancing agents should begin at educating potential doping users on training. The impact of this should not be underestimated, as these unrealistic training procedures are already taught at the educational system of some schools in the Netherlands.

Stef Aupers

Instrumentalization of New Age Spirituality

This is a historical-sociological analysis of the pseudo-religious phenomenon that is often labelled as the 'New Age Movement'. In the debate about secularization sociologists often refer to the popularity of New Age-views and practices as a typical example of religious change or even 're-enchantment' of society. This view is problematized in this article: on a basis of different empirical sources it is argued that the religious content is often neglected in the contemporary New Age-circuit. In a lot of cases the participants don't really believe in metaphysical truths and seek to optimize well-being, welfare and prosperity in a rather pragmatic way. This development is referred to as the 'instrumentalization of New Age-spirituality' but can also be seen as a proces of secularization.