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Articles

Critical Social Ontology as a Foundation for Ethics: Marx, Lukács and Critical Judgment
Michael J. Thompson

On the Failure of Oracles: Reflections on a Digital Life
David M. Berry

Happy Birthday Jürgen Habermas
James Gordon Finlayson

**University of Sussex Masters in Social and Political Thought
Gillian Rose Prize Winning Essay 2018**

The Production of Space Through Land Reclamation
Niclas Kern

Books reviewed

Psychopolitics: Neoliberalism & New Technologies of Power
by Byung-Chul Han

New Dark Age: Technology and the End of the Future
by James Bridle

Municipal Dreams: The Rise and Fall of Council Housing
by John Boughton

Adam Smith and Rousseau: ethics, politics, economics

Edited by Maria Paganelli, Dennis C. Rasmussen, and Craig Smith

Introduction to SSPT Volume 29

Studies in Social and Political Thought is the house journal of the Centre for Social and Political Thought at the University of Sussex. It was founded in 1999 by faculty members Andrew Chitty in Philosophy, William Outhwaite in Sociology, and a group of post-graduate students in SPT. It has been almost entirely run by Sussex graduate students since that date.

In 2010 it was re-launched with a prestigious International Advisory Board all of whom have been very supportive of the journal. It has published peer-reviewed articles by graduate students from Sussex and from universities all over the world, alongside peer-reviewed articles by internationally renowned academics working in the broad area of Social and Political Thought.

In keeping with the interdisciplinary core at the heart of *Studies in Social and Political Thought*, the contributions to this edition traverse the boundaries of philosophy, critical theory, the digital humanities, and political theory. However, despite disciplinary diversity, there are shared SPT concerns: notably, spatial, ideological, and personal domination, from the sphere of the geo-political to the private life of the individual. Michael J. Thompson addresses what he sees as a 'decline in that kind of political agency requisite for social transformation' with a case for revisiting Georg Lukács' 'ontology of social being'. Thompson argues that the development of a 'critical social ontology' may provide a ground from which to open up 'a new space of reasons within which synthetic-critical judgments' could 'be constructed'. Thompson envisages that in this 'new space' a Marxian-ethics could be formed, allowing 'freedom' to be reencountered with the aid of a critical social ontology that would be 'grounded in practice' and better at tackling reification than epistemic critique. David Berry's piece reads with the verve of a manifesto and vividly tackles the 'colonisation of private space' by the digital. Kitted out with smart objects and other digital devices, the home, Berry argues, is increasingly 'subject to the whims of edge, core, and cloud', allowing corporations unfettered access to our lives beyond even the fears of the Frankfurt School. In response to this situation, Berry issues a call to the reader to resist and 'push back'. Finlayson's birthday homage to Habermas evaluates the tetchy exchanges between Habermas's critics that have been provoked by the philosopher's 90th birthday. Finlayson engages with the debates by way of a brisk review of Habermas's reception more generally and in particular the strident position that has been taken by Raymond Geuss, offering, in response, a clarification of Habermas's work. In short, Finlayson lets some light in and some steam out of the overheated discussion to date. We are also pleased to publish the 2018 Gillian Rose Prize-winning essay from the MA in Social and Political Thought at the University of Sussex. This prize is awarded to the dissertation that achieves the highest mark each year and Niclas Kern's essay addressing land reclamation in the South China Seas is published here in full. This issue also offers a broad range of reviews. Neal Harris and James F. Kelly address the impact of the digital on the political in their respective reviews of James Bridle's *New Dark Age: Technology and the End of the Future* and Byung-Chul Han's *Psychopolitics: Neoliberalism & New Technologies of Power*.

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Freddie Meade offers a timely reflection on neoliberalism's disdain for social democracy through his review of John Boughton's *Municipal Dreams: The Rise & Fall of Council Housing*. In keeping with traditional social and philosophical concerns in the left republican tradition, Jack Edmunds addresses the Smith-Rousseau debate in his review of *Adam Smith and Rousseau: ethics, politics, economics*. We warmly thank all of our contributors to this issue.

Valerie Whittington and James Stockman

Editors SSPT Volume 29