

I

THE POLITICS OF TRUST: RECOGNITION, INSTITUTIONS
AND SOCIAL CHANGE

POLITIKE POVERENJA: PRIZNANJE, INSTITUCIJE
I DRUŠTVENA PROMENA

INTRODUCTION

Marjan Ivković, Adriana Zaharijević
and Nuria Sánchez Madrid

THE POLITICS OF TRUST: RECOGNITION, INSTITUTIONS AND SOCIAL CHANGE

This special section is the result of continued cooperation between philosophers and social theorists from the Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, University of Belgrade (CriticLab), and the Research Group GINEDIS based at the Department of Philosophy and Society of the Complutense University of Madrid. Focusing on a wide range of topics – vulnerability and exclusion, violence and community, recognition, institutions and democracy – we have since 2017 aimed to articulate a peculiarly Southern European perspective on a variety of complex issues. Our fruitful exchanges were never merely descriptive or comparative, but always sought to look for social-theoretical resources which can help provide a societal diagnosis and a normative background for a transformative politics. The issue of trust, especially in relation to institutions and democracy, emerged at the moment when many in the world did not ask – do we trust? – but – how can we trust (in) institutions? The Covid 19 Pandemic urged us to *socially distance* and, even more importantly, to reflect on sociality and on what helps us regain trust. The pandemic, as it turned out, was only an episode, if a significant one, which, however, made us reflect on the broader and deeper constellations of (dis)trust in our societies.

When it comes to the broader picture, there is little disagreement that the current comprehensive crisis of ‘really existing democracy’ is structurally caused by the convulsions of the socio-economic order that underpins it – the global financialized capitalism. The structural contradictions of this order are the causes of phenomena such as the explosion of socioeconomic inequalities, climate change and the sliding of representative democracy toward electoral oligarchy. Many of us would also agree that, at the political level, the societal crisis manifests itself primarily as a general crisis of trust – the vertical trust of citizens in the democratic institutional system as well



as horizontal trust between persons, social groups and collective political actors. This in turn leads to the ever-greater political polarization that we are witnessing and the rise of new forms of right-wing authoritarianism. There has, however, been far less agreement regarding the key challenge that we are facing in light of these processes: how to think about, and foster, transformative political action within what is essentially a paradoxical context. The political paradox that we are facing is that the structural crisis of capitalism requires far-reaching transformative action, but at the same time severely undermines the preconditions of such action – interpersonal and inter-group trust as the basis for creating broad political alliances (‘counterhegemonic blocs’) and new collective actors.

This special section is a modest contribution to the task of overcoming the ‘trust paradox’. It brings together eight diverse contributions from Spanish and Serbian philosophers and sociologists, which nevertheless exhibit a clear unifying thread: they all approach, from different angles, the nexus between the institutional order of democracy, trust (and recognition as its medium) and social change. All of us share the premise that there are certain latent ‘potentials of trust’ within social reality that have been somewhat neglected so far in the debate on transformative political action, and that social science can shed light on this potential. In this section we make a preliminary move in this direction in three steps – we present social-theoretical arguments regarding the nature and dynamics of social trust, and we draw some implications of these arguments for transformative action; we formulate diagnostic arguments about the contemporary capitalist social order and its key ideological traits, with special attention to trust as both a resource for political contestation and an element of ideological narratives; and we formulate normative-theoretical arguments that suggest some possible ways out of the trust paradox.

The section opens with three papers which present social-theoretical resources for transformative politics, starting with Clara Ramas’ analysis of Robert Brandom’s pragmatist reconstruction of Hegel’s social philosophy. Ramas shows that Brandom’s reading of Hegel foregrounds the role of interpersonal relations in the construction of social norms and institutional reality, above all relations of interpersonal *recognition*. Relations of recognition should be understood as people’s mutual ascription of moral authority and responsibility – more precisely, their mutual ascription of ‘authority to attribute authority’. Ramas reconstructs Brandom’s argument that, for Hegel, societal emancipation – the transition from ‘modernity’ to the ‘postmodern’ society – means that people come to acknowledge that their relations of recognition (creation of normative statuses through interpersonal normative attitudes) are also relations of *recollection* (dependence of normative attitudes on already historically sedimented normative statuses that regulate how we recognize each other). Once this stage is achieved, society has become a ‘community of social trust’.

Srđan Prodanović complements Ramas’ analysis through an insightful consideration of the relationship between trust and *intuitions*. Prodanović argues that interpersonal trust cannot be reduced to either purely cognitive or purely

affective attitudes, but is a hybrid phenomenon which intertwines cognition and affect. He argues that personal intuitions are phenomena of a similar hybrid nature, distinguishing between ‘inferential’ and ‘holistic’ intuitions, and shows that the latter are able to ‘interconnect far elements of experience in a radically new manner’. In times of severe social crises, Prodanović argues, we rely on holistic intuitions to coordinate our collective actions even though the existing normative order no longer provides stable procedures of coordination – in other words, holistic intuitions can provide a basis of social trust in conditions of severe anomie.

Following the same theoretical intuitions, Igor Cvejić presents an innovative argument about the role of trust in the formulation of new norms in conditions of societal uncertainty. Cvejić builds on Bennett Helm’s argument about the constitution of plural agents through mutual ‘calls of trust’ to argue that, in a situation of pronounced societal uncertainty, even though people cannot rely on existing norms that regulate calls of trust, they still issue such mutual calls in the form of recognizing each other as ‘responsible’ agents, agents who understand the ‘import’ (significance) of the societal crisis in light of their shared circumstances of mutual dependency. Cvejić complements this argument about ‘trust without norms’ with the concept of *being moved*, a complex emotion, which, in his view, provides a stimulus to the mentioned ‘trustee’ in a situation of crisis to ‘reorganize her hierarchy of priorities and values’.

The middle part of the section brings together contributions which use the concept of trust as a tool of societal diagnosis and critique of ideology. Marjan Ivković analyzes the nature of cultural hegemony in post-Fordist capitalism and the prospects for transformative action that are created within it. Building on the work of Nancy Fraser and Wendy Brown, Ivković reconstructs the post-Fordist historic bloc as a contradictory unity of several axes of articulation that gives rise to a ‘paradox of engagement/disengagement’ and a certain ‘promise of political agency’ created within this historic bloc that remains unfulfilled. He relies on his joint work with Srđan Prodanović and Igor Cvejić to elaborate Axel Honneth’s concept of interpersonal ‘respect’ as a form of trust, and argues that interpersonal respect in the context of democracy should be understood as the recognition of actors’ ‘moral responsibility’ in the face of pressing societal problems. He suggests that the political left must formulate a ‘politics of respect’ that could actualize the ‘promise of political agency’ created within the post-Fordist historic bloc.

Andrea Perunović continues the line of hegemony analysis by focusing on the economic reduction of the phenomena of credit, debt and money within market-liberal discourses, and he formulates a critique of ideology in the form of an expanded, cultural-institutionalist understanding of these phenomena. Relying on Marcel Hénaff’s distinction between ‘constitutive debt’, ‘event-debt’ and ‘cosmic debt’, and Michel Aglietta’s and André Orléan’s heterodox conception of money as not just a medium of exchange but a ‘regulative agent of social belonging’, Perunović argues that Aglietta’s and Orléan’s three stages of trust in money, ‘methodic’, ‘hierarchical’ and ‘ethical’ trust can be mapped

onto Hénaff's three types of debt. He thereby draws a complex picture of how social reality is constructed in a monetary economy through the establishment of generalized relations of trust, the 'generalized credit' as he puts it.

Finally, Clara Navarro presents a diagnosis of the effects of financialized capitalism on democratic nation-states, which shows that the ideal of democratic popular sovereignty is progressively undermined by the processes of 'transnationalization' and 'diffusion' of sovereignty that characterize economic globalization. The globally spreading pragmatic ideal of 'governance' as an open-ended process of tackling societal problems relies on the assumption of generalized trust in human reason and ethical capacities, neglecting the existing asymmetries of power that obstruct egalitarian rational debate this is what makes the ideal attractive and gives it *prima facie* legitimacy. Any attempt to transform financialized capitalism, Navarro argues, will have to start from the fact of transnationalization rather than a 'return to the nation-state', and formulate innovative and persuasive alternatives to the seductive ideal of governance.

The last two contributors make tentative steps in this direction by questioning ossified binaries that plague our thinking about social change. Nuria Sánchez Madrid reconstructs Kant's cosmopolitan right as a non-ideal normative conception that holds some potential for informing politics today. Sánchez Madrid argues that, even though Kant's cosmopolitan right is not a theory of a 'cosmopolitan lawgiver', it relies on a conception of 'cosmopolitan mobility' that should be regulated through the informal norm of the 'common possession of the earth'. European colonization and the development of global commerce create, as Kant sees it, a situation of global 'productive interdependence', in the light of which the existing asymmetries of power are morally unjustifiable. Sánchez Madrid contends that with this argument Kant is 'decidedly enlarging our notion of human community and the forms of organizing common life'.

The final contribution by Lydia de Tienda Palop and Jacobo Huerta Vega formulates a nuanced critique of Tzvetan Todorov's perspective on global security in the aftermath of the Iraq War. While Todorov treats the goals of international security and democratic freedom as largely antithetical, de Tienda Palop and Huerta Vega rely on Amartya Sen's capabilities approach to argue that freedom and security – which they understand as multidimensional phenomena – do not have to be seen as mutually antithetical if we endorse the premise that, in a longer-term perspective, there is a dialectical relationship between the two in which each is the precondition of the other. Freedom, understood as 'the factual possibility of a dignified life' can only be achieved in a setting of security, while, on the other hand, security can only exist in a world in which all subjects are able to lead a dignified life.