

Socialism intercultural

The year 2021 marked thirty years since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, triggered by the collapse of the Soviet-style socialist regimes in the East-Central European states in 1989. Socialism seemed dead as a political concept at least until 2008, and the advent of the economic and financial crisis in these countries. At the same time, the 1990s and 2000s were marked by diverse critiques of capitalism worldwide that were not satisfied with Western liberal-democratic “triumphalism” and sought alternatives to (neo-)liberal democracies. In 2015, Axel Honneth updated this idea with his book on socialism, which triggered numerous reactions and broad discussions. His book therefore forms the starting point of this lecture. However, it will be less about a detailed reconstruction of this debate within the Western framework, but rather an attempt to look at the perception of the concept of socialism today from other civilizational or cultural perspectives and contexts. The focus will be on two case studies: (A) East-Central Europe, which, with its continuous alternation between eastern and western orientation, has challenged liberal democracy in individual cases (Hungary, Poland) and, in addition to conservative and right-wing reactions to the crisis, has reopened the debate on socialism, which, however, tends to be a marginal phenomenon. (B) China, which, with its decade-long “sinification” of Marxism, has presented its own concept of socialism with Chinese characteristics, which has survived the liberal turn in 1989.

The lecture will focus on the question of whether, by looking at these contemporary non-Western reflections on socialism, it is also possible to draw “normative lessons” that can be productively taken up for Western philosophical discussions.

Reading List

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