

4th Conference of the International Consortium
of Critical Theory Programs (ICCTP):

the CRITIQUE of violence NOW

University of Rijeka, Center for Advanced Studies
Southeast Europe (UNIRI CAS SEE)

JUNE 16th – 19th 2018

The critique of violence is the focus of the fourth meeting of the conference cycle of the International Consortium of Critical Theory Programs. A small group of scholars will meet in Rijeka, Croatia with faculty and students from the Balkans to discuss Walter Benjamin's essay "A Critique of Violence," combining a close reading of the text with a discussion of the broader question, "what is the critique of violence now?" Topics include legal violence, the ghostly presence of police, the general strike, the biblical and Marxist dimensions of the text, the philosophy of history, critique, anarchism, life, and various forms and frames of violence.

One question is how the idea of critique changes when it becomes a "critique of violence"? Walter Benjamin asked this question in the early 1920s when he offered his own account of legal violence. Many of the traditional debates about violence and non-violence have presumed a common understanding of both terms: we were assumed to know how best to identify violence and how to go about justifying or opposing its use. We were asked to believe that the law is coercive but not violent. What challenge, then, does the idea of "legal violence" pose to those traditional debates? And what forms does "legal violence" take now? What is the relation between spectacles of massacre, for instance, and forms of legal violence, including administrative violence, given that they are not equally visible? Does it matter how we understand regional violence (and how we designate regions) when we seek to answer this question? In addressing the topic "the critique of violence now," we will ask how we might re-appropriate Walter Benjamin's influential and controversial essay to illuminate the present political terrain.

The meeting is hosted at the Center for Advanced Studies – Southeast Europe, University of Rijeka, and organized in collaboration with the Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory at the University of Belgrade, Serbia.

[The event is closed to the public.](#)

Conveners

Petar Bojanic

Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory,
University of Belgrade
Center for Advanced Studies Southeast Europe,
University of Rijeka

Sanja Milutinovic Bojanic

Academy of Applied Arts and Center for Advanced Studies
Southeast Europe, University of Rijeka

Gazela Pudar Drasko

Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory,
University of Belgrade

Adriana Zaharijević

Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory,
University of Belgrade

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International Consortium of
Critical Theory Programs

Saturday, June 16th 2018

5.00 PM-7.00 PM |

Introductions and discussion of existing and future projects.
(**Judith Butler, Petar Bojanic**)

Sunday, June 17th 2018

9.30 AM-12.30 PM |

Opening paragraph on law and justice, focusing on the means/ends distinction, explicating the meaning of *critique* for this essay. (**Peter Fenves**)

Paragraphs 2-3: The problem of natural law. (**Massimo Palma**)

Paragraphs 4-6: "The question of the justification of certain means that constitute violence": the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate violence; the introduction of legal violence as a problem; violence of the law and violence outside the law. (**Julia Ng**)

2.00 PM-5.00 PM |

Paragraphs 7-8: Introduction of class struggle and the general strike, its relation to "pure means" and to non-violence; its relation to military law; the introduction to law-making in relation to Sorel's *Reflections on Violence*. (**Marc Crépon**)

Paragraphs 9-11: The police, its ghostly presence; transition to the non-contractual character of non-violent resolution, its relation to language and understanding; the relation between parliamentary power and violence; the non-violence as "unalloyed means" or "pure means."

(**Dario Gentili, Başak Ertür**)

Monday, June 18th 2018

9.30 AM-12.30 PM |

Paragraphs 12-13: Non-violent resolution of conflict; techniques of civil agreement; the prohibition of fraud, "a policy of pure means," the general strike. (**Anne-Lise François**)

Paragraphs 14-17: Violence imposed by fate, the nonmediate function of violence, transition to mythic violence and the unwritten law and its relation to retribution; fate and the introduction of the mythical; the distinction between mythical and divine violence, the examples of Niobe and Korah. (**Astrid Deuber-Mankowsky, Michelle Ty**)

2.00 PM-5.00 PM |

Paragraph 18: Divine power and "educative power"; Judaism and the commandment against killing; the doctrine of self-defense; the condition of "man"; the question of sacred life. (**Judith Butler, Petar Bojanic**)

Paragraph 19: The formulation of the critique of violence as the philosophy of its history; breaking the cycle of the dialectical rising and falling of law-making and law-preserving violence. How to name that break, that "attack on law"? The expiatory power of violence; its invisibility; the final speculations on "true war" and "divine violence." (**Pablo Oyarzún**)

Tuesday, June 19th 2018

10.00 AM-12.30 PM |

Informal discussion of ICCTP and future plans for collaboration.

Information on the Participants

Petar Bojanic is the director of the Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory (IFDT) at the University of Belgrade, where he has been a fellow since 2005. He directs the Center for Advanced Studies – Southeast Europe (CAS) at the University of Rijeka.

Judith Butler is Maxine Elliot Professor in the Department of Comparative Literature and the Program in Critical Theory at the University of California, Berkeley. She is Co-Director of the International Consortium of Critical Theory Programs.

Marc Crépon is Professor of Philosophy at the École Normale Supérieure, Paris, and the Chair of the Philosophy Department. He is also Research director at the National Scientific Research Center (CNRS) Husserl Archives.

Astrid Deuber-Mankowsky is Professor of Media and Gender Studies at the Ruhr-University in Bochum. She is an external affiliate of the Centre for Philosophy and Critical Thought at Goldsmiths, University of London.

Başak Ertür is Lecturer in Law and Co-Director of the Centre for Law and the Humanities at the School of Law at Birkbeck, University of London.

Peter Fenves is Professor of Literature, German and Comparative Literature at Northwestern University. He has taught at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Johns Hopkins, Princeton and Harvard Universities.

Anne-Lise François is Associate Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of California, Berkeley, where she is also affiliated with the Program in Critical Theory.

Dario Gentili is Associate Professor of Moral Philosophy in the Department of Philosophy, Communication and Performing Arts at the University of Roma Tre. Gentili is a board member of the Associazione Italiana Walter Benjamin (AWB).

Julia Ng is Co-Director of the Centre for Philosophy and Critical Thought. She co-chairs the Walter Benjamin London Research Network. She is also Research Associate of the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures at Harvard University.

Pablo Oyarzún is Professor of Philosophy and Aesthetics and Director of the Bicentennial Initiative at the University of Chile. He is also director of the Central Research Seminar at the Art Institute of the Catholic University of Valparaíso. Oyarzún has also been a member of the Superior Council of the National Fund of Science and Technology (FONDECYT).

Massimo Palma is Assistant Researcher of Philosophy at the Suor Orsola Benincasa University in Naples, Italy.

Michelle Ty is Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Clemson University and a postdoctoral fellow at the Institute for Cultural Inquiry in Berlin. She is currently writing a book about Walter Benjamin's solidarity with all that is abjected from the category of the human.

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