Preface: Critical Theory in the Era of the New Radical Right

Shaul Setter

Critical theory is a philosophical endeavor with noise at its heart. It is a noise-generating enterprise—that is, intellectual activity that is not hemmed in by the boundaries of thought, of the kingdom of reason and imagination or of the ivory tower of institutional research and academic freedom. Instead, it is an endeavor whose movement echoes throughout the polis, takes place in the public sphere and is heard throughout the social sphere, raising its voice and seeking to transmit and disseminate it. Its center is the din of philosophy that is created by connecting thought to action, that is, to practice. It has been this way not only from the moment of its founding or its naming, but rather since 1845, the year in which a young intellectual who was exiled from his homeland jotted down some thoughts after reading a book; that is, since Marx's theses on Feuerbach. This is what Marx wrote in his second thesis:

> The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a practical question. Man must prove the truth, i.e., the reality and power, the this-sidedness of his thinking, in practice. The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking which is isolated from practice is a purely scholastic question. (Marx, 2002)

Critical thought—theoretical thought underlying which is a critique of society and whose goal is the liberation of society—distinguishes itself here from scholastics. The scholastic question is the question regarding thought, whereas human endeavor, including intellectual endeavor, is an activity that is realized and fulfilled in the world

of action, in the array of social relations, in practice. Underlying critical thought, therefore, is a turning away from the life of the spirit, the life of study or theory, the *vita contemplativa* qua pure thought based on the quiet workings of reason, abstract, stripped of the body, of external conditions, and flying around in its own circles. The stance that is contrary to scholastics involves abandoning the *skholē* relinquishing leisure as a basic and general freedom from labor, from the need to maintain life in an earthly and material manner. This is also a relinquishing of the emotional availability, the freedom from the worry and anxiety involved in fulfilling material needs—freedom that supposedly makes it possible to stay in a state of conscious equilibrium and spiritual balance. This is a relinquishing of the quiet that underlies reasoning and study in the school—the place for the transmission of knowledge, the abode of the spirit, the home of the book. Scholastic thought, in which that "purely scholastic question" arises about the reality of thought that is separate from practice, is thought that expels the "askholia"—the lack of leisure, which relies on action that supports material life. Such thought is insensitive to the frenetic movement of material human existence, which is a noisy existence, for "askholia" also means noise, that very din that demands action and accompanies it, the clamor of practice.

In her book *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt outlined what distinguished skholē from askholia and polarized them (Arendt [1958] 1998, 12–16). This distinction lies at the heart of the philosophical-theological tradition of the Christian West: From Plato to Aristotle, through Christian interpretation of Scripture to contemporary academe, many consider thinking as humankind's most noble activity and insistently demand the quiet that it requires. Scholars want to study in silence, to escape the struggles of existence, to become impervious to the noises of the world and to engage with abstract concepts and constructs. They inherit this desire from the very writings in which they seek to delve and even more so from the social institution within whose walls they delve into these writings—from the university itself, ever since the first universities in Europe in the 12th and 13th centuries, the scholastic universities. In her book, Arendt sought to undermine the seemingly eternal hierarchy between the life of the spirit and the life of action and to return to the previous, pre-philosophical historical moment, in which there was, according to her, one area of activity that was superior to theoretical reasoning—the area of political action. This is the activity that takes place between human beings without the mediation of material objects, not in order to maintain life or to create tools, without any external purpose. This is the area of deed and speech that Arendt identified as the area of political action, the area that in Athenian democracy, the one that preceded Plato, was worthy and even more

exalted than theoretical study. However, Arendt's reversal of values only intensifies the antagonistic relation between noise and thought and the inferior status of noise, i.e., the entirety of economic and social activity, since in order to elevate the political act Arendt separates it sharply from the other areas of the *vita activa*, which remain, even for her, inferior. In a certain sense she makes the area of political activity—in its purest sense, that is, to the extent that it is distinguished from labor and work—a new skholē that relies on freedom from having to maintain the conditions of existence and create instruments, on the freedom from need and necessity, liberation from product and purpose, and thus seems actually quite close to *vita contemplativa*, and is based, too, on the exclusion and repression of the noise.

Critical theory, in contrast, called for askholic thinking. In opposition to the life of scholastic study, on the one hand, and the Arendtian life of spontaneous political action, on the other, it opened a space of noisy thought. Noise, that is, clamor and tumult, a loud and unpleasant sound, disturbance in the vocal space; a voice that is out of place, unintelligible, bearing no meaning, the rejected remains of a note, and therefore a grating sound in the midst of fluent sonority, truncation of the harmonious sonorous flow. Whereas scholasticism sought to dampen the noises, to clear away the disturbances, so that only the appropriate argumentative act remained, critical theory is thinking that invited the noise in. It insisted on thinking from within the noises of the world, with them and of them, but also toward the noises of the world, that is, going back to the world in the attempt to unsettle it—to do something in it, to shake it up, and to change it. Critical theory turned away from eloquent musical movement and sought to think, on the one hand, about the conditions for producing the sound and the act itself of making that sound, that is, the infrastructure of the ways of producing the sense, the meaning and the presentation of arguments; and on the other hand, about what digresses from the argument and its stipulations, including its incorrect notes—the disturbances, deviations, failures, and mistakes. Noise became an integral part of the investigation itself and often its actual focus. The more that critical theory developed and diverged, the more it severed its connection to its Marxist origins, the louder and more multidirectional and multifaceted it became. What in the past was considered white noise accompanying the investigation—the ethnic and gender identity of the scholar, the scholar's position in society, the power relations between the scholar and the object of the investigation, the institutional track in which the study was conducted, the language of the investigation—now became its center. There is no thought without questioning its localization, without problematizing its course of representation, without detailed shaping of the ear drum through which we hear the ways of the world.

And indeed, today these are the multidirectional trends of critical theory that give it its increasing validity and great flexibility: the transitions and the continuations, the vibrations and the intersections, that very scale of intensities in the theory of affect, posthumanism, the Anthropocene, performance, which are always located somewhere in between—between the body and consciousness, between the human and the bestial, between the living and the mechanical, between the historical and the natural, between appearance and representation. A multichannel flow of disseminated sound—that seems to respond, a generation later, to the course set by Adi Ophir, the founding editor of **Theory and Criticism**, as it appears in the preface to the journal's second issue:

> The critical discussion of culture has no set point of departure, no single method and no unifying aim […] The study of culture cannot focus on a single type of phenomena that has a bounded research field and a set of laws that can be deciphered totally, because of the undefined and multiple-meaning nature of the phenomena being studied […] The critical discussion of culture is therefore eclectic by nature, both in relation to its objects and in relation to its research methods and theoretical assumptions. From this nature, too, stems the interdisciplinary character of the discussion. (Ophir, 1992, 3)

In the beginning of the 1990s these words had great resonance. They were directed against every unifying interpretive attempt that relied on a permanent foundation and that followed a set explanatory procedure; against separate and discrete knowledge fields, each bearing the history of its development; and above all, against the hegemonic narrative of the national ideology. They sought ways to escape by means of deconstructing readings, changing perspectives, and startling connections—barricades of multiplicity against the one stable battalion. And indeed, critical theory in Hebrew was established in the period of the dismantling of the Soviet bloc and the final prevailing of the Pax Americana, after the end of the struggles of the 1970s and in light of the attack on the great "meta-narratives." It was created in the most liberal moment of Israeli society—in the gay nineties, years of accelerated liberalization of the Israeli economy and the social processes of normalization (which quickly turned out to be illusory). It acted from within this moment, and simultaneously took it to its extreme and critiqued it; it interrupted the dogmatic slumber of Israeli academe, immersed in ideologically driven national research, and infused into it external critical approaches that were translated culturally and updated politically to this place. Against the unison of the main road it established dissonant diverging paths.

This critical project was very successful, perhaps too successful. The echoes of the noises dominated our hearing; we are in a state of constant tinnitus, flooded with different voices, attention-deficit-disordered. The dissemination of noises today is not only an act of criticism; it is the by-product of multiplicity that bears no emancipatory horizon but instead is one of power's operative modalities. The amassing of wealth, the chain of financial speculation, the profusion of spectacles—all these are elements of the current phase of neoliberal capitalism. "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold," as Yeats put it. But is anarchy indeed spread throughout the world? In the past decade we have witnessed the rise of governmental power that does not adhere to order, does not even pretend to; a power that is neither uniform nor eloquent, a power that declares its own emptiness and takes pride in its failures; a power that undermines the unifying melody and purposely blasts deafening noise. The one mouth of the ideology—organized and deceitful—has split open and become a broken and crumbling orifice. But this has not caused it to lose power; on the contrary, it has succeeded in frenetically coalescing into unprecedented, centralized, oppressive authoritarianism. Now, multiplicity is what roars as loudly as possible, with a great clamor.

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This very power, which has appeared recently on the world stage as a multi-tentacled octopus, lies at the heart of the current issue of *Theory and Criticism* and in it is termed "the new radical right." It is first and foremost a political phenomenon, centered around the rise to power of authoritarian leaders in many countries throughout the world: Viktor Orbán in Hungary, who has grabbed almost unlimited governmental powers, is destroying free journalism, blocking immigration to his country and promoting an ethnocentric policy *en route* to the formation of the "illiberal state"; Vladimir Putin, who is maintaining unrestricted sole rule in Russia; Donald Trump, the unabashed, capricious, unstable, misogynist and racist billionaire, who was elected president of the United States of America; his double in the southern continent, Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil—chopping down the rain forests, attacking citizens and supporting torture; and Rodrigo Dutarte in the Philippines, reviving the drug war with all its victims. In addition to them are the right-wing rulers who are slightly more respectable but who already seem eternal and are slowly changing the constitutional character of their countries: Narendra Modi in India, Racep Tayyip Erdoğan in Turkey, and Binyamin Netanyahu in Israel. At the same time, in other countries that seemed emphatically democratic just a moment ago, nationalist, xenophobic, anti-Muslim and sometimes anti-Semitic right-wing parties are gaining ground: the Alternative for Germany

Party in Germany, Marine Le Pen's National Front in France, the Northern League of Matteo Salvini in Italy, and many more. In each country different processes have brought this about, but we may be in the midst of a global regime change at the heart of which is the weakening of liberal democracy and its transformation into postdemocracy (Crouch, 2004) or reactionary democracy (Mondon and Winter, 2020)—through which the world order established after World War II is coming to an end. However, the new right is not only a matter of regime. It is a far-reaching cultural and psychic phenomenon that changes the modes of social discourse and its regimes of truth; the ways of understanding the self and the possibilities of individual and collective action; as well as the linguistic and visual expression and the orders of desire and imagination. The colossal echoes in every area of life are testimony to the tectonic noise of the last decade.

The new right—in what sense is it new and in what sense is it right? Are the leaders, the parties, the social movements and the discursive orders of the last decade indeed different in principle from those of the previous right, the "old right," which ran many countries, passed much legislation and established social movements even within the post-WW II world order? How is the new right different from the governments of the war on terror and the defense economy after 9/11; from the neoliberal conservatism and the shock policy of the 1980s; from the reactionary response to the welfare policy, on the one hand, and the anticolonial struggles, on the other, in the 1950s? Perhaps the same authoritarian rulers who are limiting the democratic or liberal basis in their countries are only the most recent stage, for now, of the great drift to the right, the drift that Francois Cusset shows as having eroded world politics in the last 50 years of counter-revolution (Cusset, 2018). Or perhaps what we have before us is a form of right-wing regime that is not part of that drift, but rather diverges from it to what can be called proto-fascism (Traverso, 2019) or aspirational fascism (Connolly, 2017)—and therefore is actually a renewed form that shares some fundamental characteristics with European fascism of the 1920s and 1930s. Is the new right a direct derivative of the neoliberal regime in its current form—not only a highly powerful economic disposition but also a logic of its own that establishes social institutions and new forms of subjectivity (Brown, 2019)? Or is it, in fact, impossible to understand the new right through the distinction between right and left, a fundamentally republican distinction from the days of the French Revolution? Perhaps we must give up this dyad in favor of a different conceptualization, such as that of populism, and thus understand how this seemingly "new radical right" is actually very different from the old breed of rulers and movements of the political

right that preceded it—be they conservative, libertarian or even altogether neoliberal; whereas this new movement only makes a political covenant with right-wing parties and their powerful machines in order to come to power (Mouffe, 2018; Fraser, 2019). This last view is promoted by theoreticians who call for the dissolution of this unholy covenant and the establishment of a counter-covenant formed by "left populism," which we may someday be able to call "the new left," because nowadays it seems that we are surrounded by a new right and an old, very old, left. While, at the same time, this "new right" is retroactively whitewashing the old right, which liberals and progressives pine for, the stately right, the Jabotinskyite glory, the princes of the Likud, Angela Merkel, Mitt Romney!—and is establishing a world in which, as Shva Salhoov says in the beginning of the conversation that concludes the issue, "The right is everywhere."

These are some of the points of departure of the current issue. They relate to the new radical right as a current phenomenon, which is in motion and still developing and open and therefore remains to a great extent unknown and subject to argument. However, this new radical right is not only a political and social phenomenon that needs to be described and explained. It also bears a challenge to critical theory, which often fails to rise to the challenge. Many of the thinkers associated with critical theory have erred in their understanding of this new radical right or are still groping in the dark, applying a theoretical framework that has difficulty in conceptualizing it. It seems that the theoretical engagement with the critique of the political and cultural forms associated with democratic regimes, liberal thought and the rights discourse, which took the legacy of the Enlightenment to task and questioned the emancipatory tendency allegedly embedded in modernization, is unable to contend with a phenomenon that deviates, at least in part, from that path. Slavoj Žižek infamously remarked before the 2016 presidential election in the United States that if he were an American citizen he would vote for Trump. This statement certainly indicates the critic's clinging to the role of the *enfant terrible*, who by uttering the unacceptable exposes the accepted position and challenges it. It also is evidence that at that time Trump's election as president seemed improbable, to the point that support for him was considered a defiant theoretical game. Yet Žižek's statement primarily exposes how the ultimate object of criticism of large parts of critical theory is still the (neo)liberal and progressive position (and therefore the political candidate that represents this position). And thus, after the election of Trump, and in the era of Trumpism—when the outrageous and unacceptable has become reality—it is a deep critical failure. It is not for nothing that celebrity thinkers of this period—Yuval

Noah Harari, on the one side, and Jordan Peterson, on the other—are very far from the tradition of critical theory. They sometimes argue with it, at least to the extent that they understand it. But at bottom they both reject it from the start—the library it has created, the discussions that take place in it, its interpretive frameworks and its modes of discussion.

There is a certain irony in the fact that critical theory in its current incarnation is helpless in the face of the meteoric rise of the new radical right, because critical theory—whose name was coined by Max Horkheimer in 1937 and was identified initially with the Frankfurt School—was concocted from the start as a way of contending with the rise of fascist power in Europe. It was Marxist thought that was reshaped in light of the rise of the right-wing regimes, and therefore it needed, in addition to Marxist ideological criticism, the psychoanalytical theory of drives, the Nietzschean genealogy of morality and the psychology of the masses. Critical theory was thus created as a theory of the new radical right. Already in the 1930s Herbert Marcuse wrote that liberalism is the ground on which the totally authoritarian state grows. Max Horkheimer argued that fascism is actually political capitalism taken to the extreme; and in 1940 Walter Benjamin called for turning the fascist state of emergency into a real, revolutionary one. In the years after the war, Theodor Adorno argued that the political situation should be considered as containing the conditions for fascism and that therefore fascism already existed in it, like a ghost waiting to come back to life. His lecture in 1967 on the rise of the extreme right in Germany, part of which appears in this issue, shows the extent to which Adorno was concerned with right-wing parliamentary movements and was of the opinion that a social theory was needed that could stand up them, philosophically and politically. Thus it appears that in contrast to the genealogy laid out at the beginning of this essay, critical theory did not originate in a liberal moment and it exists not only through a dialectic relation with it. Instead, it was founded from within the fracture—in the social situation and in theory—that the drift to the right creates. And therefore, just as the current rise of new right-wing formations is a challenge that the theory has difficulty in responding to, it provides an opportunity for the theory to turn on its axis and return to its roots, to its fundamental questions, in order to rephrase them differently in a changing world.

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The texts in this issue grapple with this challenge. In contrast to the strictly European, actually German, path of critical theory briefly outlined here, they cross many

geographical and cultural regions: South Africa and the United States, France and Israel/Palestine, the Catholic Church and Jews of the Orient. Some of the texts deal directly with Israel. Others spread their wings and offer a study that passes through various places, thus providing the global context and comparative perspective that are necessary for a discussion of society and culture in Israel. They all examine the new right as a political and social phenomenon, the conditions of whose emergence and the forms of whose existence must be understood. At the same time they examine—some of them explicitly, others implicitly—how the new right is changing the perspective, procedure and methodology of the inquiry.

The issue opens with the article by **Yuval Kremnitzer** on the challenge that authoritarian right-wing regimes pose to political thought. If ideology critique of the modern regimes was conducted through the lens of exposure—exposing the regime's sources of legitimation, forms of authority and mechanisms of power—what happens when such exposure becomes the pattern of action of the new regimes themselves? Kremnitzer analyzes the tendency of regimes of the new right to violate the unwritten laws of respectable social and political life. Through these regimes' affinity to the obscene, they receive their authority by virtue of that same procedure of exposure, that is, by laying bare the social rules and making them explicit. To explain the secret of the attraction of this new breed of politicians rising in these regimes, the article traces the re-establishment of the relationship of the leader with the masses and examines how that relationship is mediated through the mass media.

Maayan Goldman, too, raises the question of the connection between critical theory and the forms of discourse of the new right. She sets out from the "heartbeat law," enacted recently in several states in the United States, which bans all abortions from the moment the fetal heartbeat is detected, in the sixth week of pregnancy. Goldman wonders about the connection between the process of ascribing meaning to that heartbeat—a maximalist ascription of signification that sees in the unborn a clear anticipatory indication of what is to be born—and the exhaustive readings that are customary in critical theory, including feminist and queer theories. What happens, therefore, when the procedures of progressive or radical reading share so many principles with the forms of argument of the pro-life right? Goldman proposes considering a different, weaker and more local reading. In the face of the cut of critique and abortion understood as a decisive cut, she proposes an uncritical reading.

Hilla Dayan's article analyzes the local form of the new right—Neozionism. The article sketches a portrait of Neozionism, its similarities to classic Zionism and the differences between them. Through the encounter between the national logic and the

neoliberal logic in the 1990s, Dayan presents the dramatic changes that the Zionist paradigm underwent in that decade. She shows how what in the 1990s seemed to be a breaching of the national paradigm and the transformation of Israeli society into an open, liberal and tolerant one, was only a reorganization around a shared understanding that was no less solid—of the economic success of the "start-up nation," based on an apartheid colonial regime and successful conflict management.

The article suggests that this new regime logic also requires a change in the array that interprets and critiques it, and that the concepts of a centralized state, monoethnic elites and identity-centered cultural clashes require a substantial revision.

Yehonatan Alsheh's article discusses a unique and very powerful instantiation of the new right: the white right in post-apartheid South Africa. Unlike the new right regimes booming throughout the world, this is a minority right wing, which many years ago went through a "catastrophe" embedded in the end of the regime of privileges and is now experiencing great fear of a "white genocide." In addition to exposing the political distortions of reality, the lies, the contradictions and the ideological biases of that racist right, the article attempts to describe the internal logic that leads to this position and to understand the experience of loss and the sense of angst that underlie it. The contemporary Afrikaner right, the article suggests, is simultaneously deviant and paradigmatic: The days of its hold on power are indeed over, but that is precisely why the Afrikaner right signifies for new right regimes worldwide a future catastrophic prospect from which it derives many of the justifications for its modes of action.

Karma Ben-Johanan turns in a slightly different direction: She does not deal with the new right in the sense of regime or politics but with the Catholic Church and Joseph Ratzinger, one of its most important theologians. Ratzinger, who was Pope Benedict XVI, managed to occupy the holy see but also to leave it. Before that he argued with the secular Enlightenment, on the one hand, and with progressive streams in the church, on the other, over the relation between religion (Catholicism) and modernity. Against the secularization thesis and the view of modernity as the victory of reason over religious faith, Ratzinger argues that the Christian faith and church doctrine have an inherent rational foundation. Therefore, Catholicism need not make way for secular reason or reach a compromise with it over modes of interpretation and strongholds of power, because Catholic Christianity, according to Ratzinger, is the only spiritual and moral foundation of the existence of modern reason. Ratzinger is not, of course, a philosopher of the new right. However, in his writings he posits

a counter-move to the secular thinking of the Enlightenment, on whose other side is the new radical right.

Hod Halevy has written an essay on the French author Michel Houellebecq, as both a symptom of the new right and as its theoretician. Houellebecq began his literary path as an internal critic of the European left and in his books recounted the atrophy and weakening that ensued from the failure of the liberation movements of the 1960s and their conversion to rules of moral asceticism. However, in the beginning of the 21st century, Houellebecq turned more and more to describing new forms of life, lacking any prospect of liberation, that function within the empty bacchanalia of neoliberal technological globalization and are creating a new type of melancholy that Halevy terms "the melancholy of the right."

Rula Khoury has curated a portfolio of the works of four Palestinian artists active in Haifa. They were created under the conditions of artwork in the age of the new right in Israel/Palestine when, under the guise of quiet and efficient conflict management, Israeli control of the Palestinians is broadening and deepening. Khoury calls this a "state of extraction," in which the continued removal of the Palestinians' territorial, material and symbolic assets is also the total extraction of those assets, exhausting them and rendering them inanimate. The four artists offer four different ways of coping with this situation: In his photographs, Rabia Salfiti shows nature covering over the remains of a culture that has been denied and removed from memory. In the exhibition space Nardeen Srouji uncovers the traces of its past, or presents tools and objects that create another space in it. Hamody Gannam uses photographs from Zionist archives, injecting foreign elements into them or cutting the images in them and seeking what is hiding behind. And Haitham Haddad shapes a personal and family memory that is based on covering and reinvention.

In April 1967, **Theodor W. Adorno**, a member of the Frankfurt School and one of the founding formulators of critical theory, was invited to speak to the Socialist Students of Austria group at the University of Vienna. He delivered a lecture about the strengthening of the radical right in Germany, set against the background of the establishment of the NFD, the National Democratic Party of Germany, an extremist right-wing party with a neo-Nazi character, and the fear that it would receive more than negligible support in West Germany's parliamentary election—a fear that two years later proved unfounded. A recording of the lecture was kept in an archive (and is now available for online listening), but it was published in print in Germany only last year and its publication aroused great interest. An analysis of the reasons for the rise of the extreme new right in the 1960s also sheds light on the new radical right of

our time. In his lecture, Adorno discusses the revival of pathological nationalism, the bursting forth of the class tensions unresolved in late capitalism, and the unconscious wish for a social catastrophe. The new extreme right is based on all these; according to Adorno, it has no solid ideological center or real political theory and that is the secret of its power, which is manifested in its flexible and effective propaganda attacks.

Part of Adorno's lecture appears in this issue. The full lecture will be published soon in a book that is the product of a collaboration between Hakibbutz Hameuchad (Dark Red Line Series), **Theory and Criticism** and the Van Leer Institute Press. **Naveh Frumer** wrote a foreword that is a comprehensive introduction to Adorno's social theory in which he explains not only how the structural tensions erupted in late capitalism, but how, according to Adorno, they are mostly silenced and contained within it. Thus, even if class antagonism is not overt, as it was in the past, it still constructs society. At the same time, even if most human beings do not experience the social antagonism subjectively, it is not just an illusion that needs to be refuted by means of a structural analysis, but is in itself a social fact whose modes of functioning must be understood.

The issue concludes with a conversation I held with the poet and scholar **Shva Salhoov** in which I asked her to think about the new right in Israel as a contemporary political phenomenon whose deep structures we must understand. The conversation begins with a distinction between the new right and the old right, and when it seems that everything is right-wing, she turns to the possibility of thinking beyond the right—from what she understands as the theology of the failure that is found in the beginnings of Zionism. Salhoov juxtaposes it to the messianic-Canaanite and entertaining-boastful outburst of the 1970s and from within which she seeks to validate a certain model of a Jewish state, which negates the Christian act of statehood and juxtaposes it with the Mishnaic thinking of sovereignty. The conversation took place in Salhoov's home in Jaffa over the course of a year—between three sets of elections—and it bears the mark of the era of the new radical right.

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The coronavirus crisis erupted during the months that we were working on this issue, and it seemed as though the matter of the rise of the new right was being sidelined by the pandemic and the international state of emergency with which all the regimes—the new right, the old right and everything in between—were instantly forced to cope with it. Even the critical dominant was channeled in other directions: critique

of the adoption of political emergency measures and extreme policing of individual movement, of the deterioration of the public health systems and the welfare policy in the past and of the question of essential professions as opposed to work that could be shut down in the present. At the same time ,the different ways in which countries contended with the virus revealed differences in the nature of their regimes—in the degree to which they acceded to the warnings of scientists, the speed with which they imposed a total lockdown, the willingness to shut down the economy and the means of monitoring the population. A discussion of this is missing in this issue, because the texts were completed before the coronavirus emergency. In the next issue there will be a coronavirus dossier that will offer various perspectives on the crisis that erupted, and still exists in the era of the new right.

The current issue, however, does offer some thoughts about the beginning of a renewed approach to the crisis. In its attempt to contend with the new radical right it sketches the movement from critical thinking that is invaded by noise to critical thinking as noise. This is noise in the sense of earthquake—the movement of tectonic plates and their rubbing against each other until the foundations of the earth split open; that is, not only the accumulation of fluctuations that invade the sphere of hearing but also the one movement that shatters and ruptures it. The earthquake creates a rift. And the rift, we must remember, is what lies at the heart of the act of critique. "Critique" comes from the Greek verb *krino*, which means to distinguish, to separate, to cut, to decide. Its origin is in *kritike techne*, the art of criticism, that is, the fundamental decision that entails its own reasoning; the distinction or the differentiation—*krinein*—that lies at the heart of Socratic philosophizing. In ancient medicine it signified the decisive moment in the progress of the illness, in which it was determined whether the illness spreading in the body would overcome the patient or whether the living body would prevail. From there it moved on to various knowledge fields and arrived, through philology and judgment of the value of literary and artistic works, at the Kantian critical project (Raffnsøe, 2017), and from there moved to the *Critique of the Critical Critique* of Marx and Engels (the original title of **The Holy Family**) and to critical theory.

Krise und Kritik was the title of the journal that Brecht and Benjamin planned to found in Berlin in 1930. *Kritik und Krise* was the title of the book by the historian Reinhardt Koselleck (1973). So, how can we return to the crisis of critique? On the face of it this seems like a strange question, because whichever way one turns these days one hears about "crisis": an unprecedented health crisis, and with it an unusual political crisis and an unprecedented judicial crisis, an economic crisis-in-the-making

and a military crisis that may erupt any minute. We are overloaded with crises, and the dramatic tone with which they are declared is entwined with the everyday manner in which we experience them. Instead of being disrupters of reality, they are the whisper arising from it. In an age of collective attention deficit disorder, in which the present is compressed and saturated—disconnected from the past and without a clear future—isolated and fragmented moments are gathered together into a continuum of rifts. In the current stage of financial capitalism, it succeeds in digesting the frequent crises that befall it and enable the continuity of its activity, as in the joke about the Marxist economists who predicted 11 of the four economic crises of the 20th century.

But the crisis of critique is different: It is conflictual and antagonistic, splitting and divisive; not cumulative, neither adding to nor joining the continuum; severing, decisive, instigating. It is not only a crisis that critique detects in the world, crisis as a social fact, but rather also a crisis that the world imposes on critique and the crisis taking place within it. The title of Nancy Fraser's latest book, which analyzes the collapse of the neoliberal progressive hegemony in the United States, quotes the famous sentence penned by Antonio Gramsci in 1930 in the **Prison Notebooks**: "The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born." The new radical right is the product of this crisis—in the chasm between what was and has ended and what has not yet happened, in the gap between the known but obsolete and the new that has not been revealed, and in the movement between the political event and the means of achieving it. To understand the crisis—and even more, to act within it—it is not possible just to keep shaking the liberal foundation from various directions and thus to join the background noise accompanying its fall. We must transform the noise of the rift and present a critical front in the form of cut and interruption: a cut in the accumulation of the multiplicity and variance that inhabit the undisturbed economic continuum, and an interruption in the face of the new political form that pours them into a civilizational disaster.

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The current issue of **Theory and Criticism** is the first that I have edited. I have had the great privilege of being appointed the journal's editor and being tasked with setting its course in the coming years. These are not good times, and that implies that they are not good for theory or criticism. The space of critical discussion—critique of the government, the state, the economy, the hegemonic forms of living and normative values—is shrinking. Some are afraid to speak out, some don't know what to say and some have forgotten that they have a voice. At the same time, a neo-positivist

wave is washing over the humanities and the social sciences, and there is no patience for theoretical, speculative work that is not dependent on a single, isolated object or attached to a familiar discipline. This is also not a good time for publishing a journal: Print issues that appear once in half a year and contain long articles that are not easy to read—who will want them? Even more so a journal in Hebrew, when academe demands of its scholars and lecturers publications in English only.

Theory and Criticism must act against these conditions, in detours and in collision lanes. It will aim to present many different voices that will offer a real theoretical discussion and will rethink contemporary critical thought. It will address concrete political, social and cultural situations, with the understanding that they are never presented at face value, nor that a readymade theoretical approach should be applied to them, but that instead they are the ones that generate the opening for thought. We will try to go beyond the accepted and obvious—including that which has become fixed in critical thinking—and find other modes and paths. Therefore, the journal will act as a counterbalance to the publication mill academe has fallen into in recent decades—forced production of as many articles as possible, articles without readers. It will be a different journal, with different writing, that contains theory and research, intellectual wandering and linguistic experimentation, a journal for readers who will really touch it, its pages, its words, the voices emerging from it and which it invites. **Theory and Criticism** calls for readers who will actually read it, and not just dabble in it; who will read not only the article that they need for their studies or research but also the one before it and the one after it, and thus also the connections that are created between them, their styles and their demands of both theory and practice.

The line-up of writers in this issue reflects a generational change in the journal: For all of them, this is their first article in **Theory and Criticism**. The line-up also suggests an interesting point about the sociology of knowledge: None of the authors has, as of the publication of this issue, a regular position in an Israeli university. Last year a **Theory and Criticism** research group was established at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute consisting of young scholars from various disciplines who are gathered to discuss critical theory here and now in an attempt to mark out potential directions for future research. The journal has also just launched a new website: In addition to the past issues, whose articles are accessible, there is a host of texts and activities. There you can find the writings of Giorgio Agamben about the coronavirus pandemic, which were translated specially for the journal, and the series of online conversations we held during the coronavirus period. At the end

of February and the beginning of March this year the journal, together with Sapir Academic College, held a research workshop titled Thought from the South. The two-day workshop took place at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute and at Sapir Academic College. In the near future we will continue to hold symposiums and other online broadcasts. The journal will not remain only within its covers but rather will be the platform and catalyst for the activity of the critical intellectual community in Hebrew. Under conditions of the privatization of knowledge; of growing isolation in intellectual work; of the empty counting of its products; of scholarly writing that is required to distance itself from the community from which it comes, its language and its form of life; a critical theoretical journal is making a sharp turn away from these conditions. It must offer the hope of generational and intergenerational collaboration, of socialization and friendship, in an attempt to actualize arrays of knowledge and modes of thinking and to transform the self, both the individual and the collective.

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