



## From Abstract to Concrete: The State as an Unquiet Ideal

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**ABSTRACT:** In this essay we attempt to interpret and develop Ilyenkov’s pioneering investigation of the nature of the Ideal as a philosophical category in relation to state transformation in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. In the first section we set out Ilyenkov’s category of the Ideal and its relationship to the Universal. We propose understanding the state as an Ideal, as a “concrete universal,” which, as a developing whole exists, or rather, is negated into, contradictory relationships with its various parts. In this way it is a component of social consciousness as well as social being, which constitutes the culture of any society or social system. We suggest that the category of a dialectical Ideal is vital in theorizing the nature and essence of the relationship between the contemporary state and struggles for democracy.

In the second part, we outline the evolution of the capitalist form of state, touching on the conflicted history of Marxist viewpoints up to and including contemporary state theorists. The British state is analysed as an “ideal” model, given its particular nature as the oldest capitalist state with its “mother of parliaments.” Rather than viewing the capitalist form of state as a simple reflection of economic categories, we see the state’s relationship with capitalist production, and with its subjects (i.e. its Other), as “semi-autonomous,” thus existing in a complex, uneven, simultaneously “fragile, unstable, provisional, and temporary relationship.” (Jessop 2012). This is exemplified by historic class struggles in Britain and ongoing political crises, post-Brexit. We propose that grasping the state as a dynamic, changing ensemble of contradictory forces, while at the same time having its own objective existence and logic of development, is vital in the light of the present transition towards autocratic and dictatorial forms of state rule with its attendant crisis of the democratic Ideal.

**KEYWORDS:** The state, neoliberalism, the Ideal, Ilyenkov, Lenin, Engels, Jessop.

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## Ilyenkov's Ideal

Soviet philosopher Evald Ilyenkov, whose centenary we commemorate this year, devoted a great part of his all-too-brief life proposing and developing the philosophical category of the Ideal. He first defined the nature of the Ideal in considerable detail in his essay for the *Soviet Philosophical Encyclopedia* published in 1962. He returned to the subject in the mid-1970s, with a long essay, *Dialectics of the Ideal*, which was never published in his lifetime.<sup>1</sup>

Ilyenkov's interpretation of the Ideal is drawn from Hegel. At the same time he works firmly through Marx's materialist perspective. In his entry for the *Filosofskaya Entsiklopediya*, edited by F. V. Konstantinov and published in 1962, Ilyenkov wrote:

The ideal is the subjective image of objective reality, that is, the reflection of the external world in the forms of a person's activity, of his or her consciousness and will. The ideal is not an individual and psychological fact, much less a physiological fact, but a social and historical one, the product and form of intellectual production. The ideal is realised in a variety of forms of human social consciousness as the subject of social production of material and intellectual life. In Marx's assessment: "The ideal is nothing but the material world reflected in the mind of man and translated into forms of thought." (Ilyenkov 2024)

The wider social and political implications of the category of the Ideal are set out in the English edition *Dictionary of Philosophy* (Frolov 1984) which may have been influenced by Ilyenkov. However that may be, it relates the Ideal to social consciousness, education and aesthetics. The definition sets out the Ideal as a contradictory category, reflecting the interest of reactionary ("obsolete") social forces as well as revolutionary strivings. It is thus defined not as a passive reflection but as a potential driver, for better or for worse, of social change: "The Ideal is the images created by mankind's history not only to understand but also to change the world." (Frolov 1984, 183)<sup>2</sup>

A decade or so later in the mid-1970s, Ilyenkov expanded his definition of the category to embrace all, even future, interpretations of the

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1. The full manuscript of this only appeared in Russian in 2009 and in English in 2014. (Ilyenkov, 2009, Levant & Oittinen 2014). For a summary of its tribulations see Lotz 2014.

2. Joost Kircz sets out the material power of Ideality in his essay on mathematics: "The Ideality transcends the materiality, not in the Kantian sense of finding a home outside the human body, but as a human activity shaped in human society. Ideas evolve as a result of socio-historical developments." (Kircz 2023, 18)

Ideal. “The Ideal here,” he wrote, “is understood in its entirety, as a complete totality of all possible interpretations—those already known, and those yet to be invented.” (Ilyenkov 2014, 26).

In studying Ilyenkov’s notion of the Ideal and developing it in relation to concepts of the state, his own Soviet state and our contemporary state, it must be borne in mind that Ilyenkov was obliged to function under constrained and oppressive circumstances. Openly critiquing the nature of the Soviet state was not an option in the Brezhnev-dominated 1970s, when Ilyenkov composed his extended essay *The Dialectics of the Ideal*. It took more than 30 years for it to be published in full, long after his passing (Lotz 2014). As David Bakhurst found during his time in Moscow (Bakhurst 2023), Ilyenkov and his closest colleagues could only speak freely in “в кухне” [in the kitchen], in the safety of their own homes. Ilyenkov’s private views and discussions with his contemporaries were only published a quarter of a century after his passing.<sup>3</sup>

Given these inevitable lacunae and the near half-century since Ilyenkov was writing, ours is not so much a reconstruction but an attempt to deepen an understanding of the state not only as a “historically specific social form,” to use Rob Hunter’s formulation (Hunter 2023), but as an externally and internally contradictory, developing phenomenon.

### The Ideal as a ‘Springboard’

We set out to examine Ilyenkov’s category of the Ideal as a springboard, a starting point, a lens that allows us to focus on the state as a simultaneously dialectically related abstraction and a concrete historical and social phenomenon. In other words, it is both a psychological/mental phenomenon as well as an external “object”—or rather, a physical and psychological force and power that exists both within and outside individuals in the forms of social being and social consciousness. The state exists through its manifold institutions which exercise power. In this sense it is both concept and category. As a form of the Ideal, the state exists as part of economic, social and cultural relations, while at the same time having a (relatively) independent existence, history, development and powers. It is this dialectical, self-relation of the state to the

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3. Memoirs, Philosophical Society Dialectics and Culture, Public Movement Alternative, Moscow 2004. <http://caute.ru/ilyenkov/biog/rem/index.html>. See also Ilyenkov’s Cry from the Heart, Corinna Lotz, *Studies in European Thought*. February 2024.

economic and social forms of society that we will go on to examine later in this essay.<sup>4</sup>

Through Ilyenkov's materialist definition, categories such as the Ideal are "crystallizations," not "as a psychic act of the individual but as the generic activity of man." (Kircz 2023; Ilyenkov 1977, 9). This understanding in no way excludes the most common understanding of the word "Ideal," which suggests something impossibly perfect that only exists in the imagination or in unreal, wishful thinking as opposed to any concrete, physical reality. Ilyenkov emphasises the contradictory nature of the Ideal, as simultaneously constituted by social consciousness and social being. Thus, his interpretation of the Ideal inverts and subverts the most common use of the word, becoming a rich philosophical form with a materialist and dialectical content. In our view it is his greatest contribution to philosophical thought, building on his theory of the ascent from the abstract to the concrete (Ilyenkov 1982) with an explanatory potential still to be further explored.

For Ilyenkov and for our present purposes, then, the Ideal is a "peculiar category of phenomena having a special kind of objectivity that is obviously independent of the individual with his body and soul" (Ilyenkov 2014, 30). It is a complex, and contradictory, internally-dialectical phenomenon that drives history and events. It reflects a multiplicity of interconnected social forces. It constitutes a universal whole that is larger than the sum of its parts. In relation to the contemporary state in particular, its Ideality has an objective existence and logic, not under the jurisdiction or control of any particular or individual nation or state. It forms part of a universal economic and social global totality that undergoes constant transformations, driven by and also driving the contradictory developments of the historic process itself. We shall review concrete examples of this in our review of the contemporary state.

Ideal phenomena exist in a dialectical self-relation both as abstract mental forms or representations and as living human activity. For the Ideal to be a concrete, rather than an abstract universal, it must be empirically examined as a unity, conflict, interpenetration and transformation of contradictory forces and tendencies. That dialectical whole is

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4. State theorist Rob Hunter in *The Capitalist State as a Historically Specific Social Form* (Marxism and the Capitalist State, HM 2023) explores this relationship, in Ilyenkovian terms of the "primacy of the logical [over the historical]," albeit without reference to Ilyenkov.

“sublated”<sup>5</sup> in the concrete, living object-oriented activity of individuals in society who themselves have internalized in a variety of ways the mental-physical practice of countless people throughout history. Ilyenkov clearly builds on Vygotsky here.<sup>6</sup>

And yet, the identity of thinking and being cannot be taken for granted, Ilyenkov warns. He explains how “universal products of human activity (both material and cultural)” are transformed into a force independent of people’s will and consciousness by way of “alienation” of the product of activity and the actual forms of human activity. This process leads to the results of human activity “standing counter to the individual.” (Ilyenkov 2024)

### Unravelling the Nature of the Ideal and Its Contradictions

In proposing the objective nature of the Ideal, Ilyenkov cautions against placing subjective constructs on any phenomenon. In other words, Ideal things and processes must undergo the same treatment by the researcher as Lenin proposed in his *Conspectus of Hegel’s Logic*. The concept and its contradictory nature must be determined out of the “Thing-in-itself... The objectivity of consideration (not examples, not divergences, but the Thing-in-Itself)” (Lenin 1972, 221)

Ilyenkov sums the Ideal form as follows:

The ideal form is a form of a thing, but outside this thing, namely in man as a form of his dynamic life-activity, as goals and needs. Or conversely, it is a form of man’s dynamic life-activity, but outside man, namely in the form the thing he creates, which represents, reflects another thing, including that which exists independently of man and humanity. ‘Ideality’ as such only exists in the constant transformation of these two forms of its ‘external incarnation’ and does not coincide with either of them taken separately. It exists only through the unceasing process of transformation of the form of activity

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5. The concept of sublation is taken from Hegel’s German ‘Aufheben’ which holds contradictory meanings and can be translated into English as: to lift, cancel out, negate, abolish, preserve and transcend. In Hegel’s dialectics the contradictory moments within any concept, or indeed any thing or process, are the motor of development in a spiralling movement. It is particularly apposite when discussing universal concepts and historical development, in this case, of the state.

6. “These techniques or methods of behavior, arising stereotypically in given situations, represent virtual, solidified, petrified, crystallized psychological forms that arose in remote times at the most primitive stages of cultural development of man and in a remarkable way were preserved in the form of historical survivors in a petrified and in a living state in the behavior of modern man.” (Vygotsky 1997, 55)

into the form of a thing and back—the form of a thing into the form of activity (of social man of course). (Ilyenkov 2024)

An Ideal form, therefore, is not reducible to subjective individual forms of thought or activity. It is a category of thought that arises from the need to distinguish between the fleeting emotions of an individual on the one side, and the “universal, necessary and because of this, objective, forms of knowledge and cognition, independent of one’s existing reality” on the other (Lotz, Gold, Cole, Feldman 2014).

This understanding of the Ideal as human activity looks forward to contemporary cognitive theories such as “4-E cognition: enacted, embodied, embedded, extended,” much of which, as Vladislav Lektorsky has noted, was anticipated by Ilyenkov.<sup>7</sup> It involves the activity of human minds and bodies in the reciprocal, material process and practice of changing the world, whether natural or social. In the case of any Ideal form, it is a socially evolving process, shaping the cultural history (including the class struggle) of humanity.<sup>8</sup>

Like the value form, any ideal form cannot exist apart from human beings; it exists perforce as a contradictory activity, in and through the relation of one human or collective bodies of people to another, acting upon and transforming a natural or social environment.

Ilyenkov noted that German classical philosophy “correctly identified them [ideal forms] as universal norms of that culture within which an individual awakens to conscious life, as well as requirements that he/she must internalise as a necessary law of his/her own life activity,” (Ilyenkov 1977, 153) in words echoing those of psychologist Alexander Meshcheryakov, his colleague and co-worker at the Zagorsk institute for the blind and deaf.

As noted earlier, the Ideal constitutes a “peculiar category of phenomena,” which are independent of an individual. It involves universal, commonly held image-patterns, as opposed to the awareness of an individual “soul” (Ilyenkov 2014).

However, the Ideal is not reducible to a form of social consciousness. As well as being socially constructed, the Ideal is also an attribute, with a potentially real objectivity and thus physicality because it partakes of, is under the auspices of, nature or matter (involving time and space).

7. See IFI.2022 Lektorsky 2022 and De Paolo 2022

8. In his *The Spectre of Capital* Christopher Arthur (2022, 19) discusses “the actuality of the Ideal” in relation to exchange value and use value in the commodity. Proposing a novel way of connecting the Ideal realm with the material realm, he describes the Ideal as a “peculiar ‘fold’ within material reality,” arguing that “the value form has itself an objectively ‘ideal’ character insofar as it may be presented as a logic of pure form.”

“It is *in man* that Nature really performs, in a self-evident way, that very activity that we are accustomed to call ‘thinking’.” (Ilyenkov 1977, 16). In this process, things created by human labour, or in the case of the state, **powers**, receive the “stamp (imprint) of ideality,”<sup>9</sup> just as an individual becomes a human personality in her activity of social action.

Ilyenkov began his *Dialectics of the Ideal* with a quote from Lenin’s notes on Hegel, namely that “the thought of the ideal passing into the real is profound, very important for history” (Lenin 1972, 114). We can add that the mutual transformation of the Ideal into the real and vice versa, is what human beings do every day as part of their material, social life-activity. Humans, through physical and mental labour produce not only material but also *ideal* products. That Ideal then “becomes a critical component of the material life-activity of social man, and then begins the opposite process—the process of the materialization ... of the Ideal” (Ilyenkov 2014, 35).

Tarja Knuuttila, in her contribution to the first full English translation of *Dialectics of the Ideal*, eloquently referenced Ilyenkov’s discussion about the work of an artist or an engineer. She concludes that “the ideal dwells in the relationship of representation, but that this is always in a state of becoming. It seems that the ideal is something fluid, flowing in the continuous stream of semiosis understood as practical activity, where meaning is constantly changing to its other” (Knuuttila 2014, 159).

To sum up: the Ideal is not reducible to the activity of an individual or a body or class of people. It exists as an Ideal action or actions, process or activity, each with its own inner contradictions and laws of development and transformations over time.

In the next section we consider how the category of the Ideal may mesh or interact with concepts of abstract and concrete universals. Can Ilyenkov’s approach inform an understanding of the state, past and present? Is the state a type of universal? If so, what does that mean?

### **The State as a Concrete Universal and ‘Universality’**

We seek to view the state through the category of the Ideal as described above, building on Marx’s sixth thesis on Feuerbach, which defines human essence as an ensemble of social relations. Ilyenkov elaborated on

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9. Ilyenkov uses the word “imprint” in his essay on The Ideal. (Ilyenkov 2024)

the complex, multifarious nature of social forms as an Ideal which is objective in a material way:

It is these spontaneously arising forms of the organisation of social (collectively realised) human life-activity that exist before, outside and completely independent of the individual mind, that in one way or another are materially established in language, in ritually legitimised customs and laws and, further, as ‘the organisation of a state’ with all its material attributes and organs for the protection of traditional forms of life that stand in opposition to the individual (the physical body of the individual with his brain, liver, heart, hands and other organs) as an organised whole that is ‘in-itself and for-itself’, as something ‘ideal’ within which all individual things acquire a different meaning and play a different role from that which they had played ‘in themselves’, that is, outside this whole.

For this reason, the ‘ideal’ definition of anything, or the definition of any thing as a ‘disappearing’ moment in the movement of the ‘ideal world’, coincides in Hegel with the role and meaning of this thing in social-human culture, in the context of socially organised human life-activity, and not in the individual consciousness, which is here regarded as something derived from the ‘universal spirit.’ (Ilyenkov 2014)

Understanding Ilyenkov’s category of the Ideal as a contradictory, objective, but vanishing moment rather than a static fixture is explanatory in relation to individual cognitive or psychological processes. It can also help us identify and analyse the state.

State theorist Bob Jessop’s strategic-relational approach which views the state as characterised by its “fragile stability” (Jessop 2002, 2015) can be seen as a further development of this view of the state as both stable and a “vanishing moment.” This is a particularly apt description, given struggles for self-determination, the existence of “failed states” and wars in Ukraine, Palestine-Israel and elsewhere.

The most basic definition of what it means to be a state reminds us that every country has a state, over which it exercises or seeks to exercise sovereign rule, defined in international law.<sup>10</sup> It is thus indeed a “universal” as shown by the membership of bodies such as the United

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10. Polish-British political philosopher Zbigniew Pelczynski (1984) sets out the difference already for Hegel between the abstract and concrete universal of the state, in his 1984 book, *The State and Civil Society*: “When Hegel has in mind a specifically political community, he calls it *der Staat* (the state). His definition of the state is therefore highly stipulative, and quite removed from the conventional meaning of this term. ‘The state’ for Hegel means any ethical community which is politically organised and sovereign, subject to a supreme public authority and independent from other such communities.”



Nations. An exception to this is Palestine, a stateless state, which proclaimed itself as a state in 1988 and presently has observer status at the United Nations.

As a universal category and concept, the state is an expression of the movement of complex social forces in history, a unity of relative parts of a historically-located totality, the form of the state and its content changing over time and geographical place. In its efforts to manage society, the state and state power are in concert and conflict with its own Other, which is the “non-state” or civil society, which consists of innumerable organised and non-organised entities and groups and individuals.

Both as an Ideal and in practice, therefore, the abstract universal of the state is the ensemble of all those institutions and public organs by which power or hegemony is exercised in a society, including the executive, judiciary, legislature, security forces and administrative apparatus. When Ilyenkov specifies that the organisation of a state stands “in opposition to the individual,” he immediately draws attention to the way in which the state stands outside any individual, i.e., in an alienated and alienating relationship.

### Abstract and Concrete Universals

Here we can usefully deploy cognitive scientist Richard Shillcock’s distinction between abstract universals and concrete universals. He notes: “We provisionally conclude that abstract universals are theory-derived entities that give us valuable multiple perspectives on the ordered relations within a domain, but which fail to provide access to the complete contents of the domain and understanding thereof” (Shillcock 2013).

Shillcock, who draws on Vygotsky and Ilyenkov, views the abstract universal as part of a cognitive, and developmental process. It may also be seen as, “the logical method of approach” apropos Friedrich Engels in his introduction to *Marx’s Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*.<sup>11</sup>

So, moving on to Ilyenkov’s exposition of the nature of the universal:

The ‘universal’ in them [phenomena of the same ‘kind’] may outwardly express itself equally well through differences, even opposites, which make these phenomena the mutually complementary component parts of the

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11. Engels 1859. See also Chapter 4 (Ilyenkov 1982) and Ninos 2023.

‘whole.’ Thus, we attain some genuinely real ensemble, or some ‘organic totality,’ rather than an amorphous set of units which are ascribed to that ‘set’ on the strength of some ‘similarity’ or ‘feature’ more or less accidental to each of them, or on the basis of a formal ‘identity’ totally irrelevant to its specific nature, its particularity or individuality.

On the other hand, that ‘universal’ which reveals itself precisely in the particular or individual characteristics of all component parts of the ‘whole’ without exception—in each one of many homogeneous phenomena—*is itself as ‘real as the particular,’* [my italics] as existing along with other ‘particular’ individuals, its derivatives. There is no element of mystery about this, for the father very often lives a long time side-by-side with his sons. And if not present among the living anymore, he surely must have existed at one time, i.e., must be conceived necessarily in the category of ‘existent being.’ Thus, the genetically understood ‘universal’ exists, self-evidently, not at all in the ether of abstraction, or only in the element of word and thought. Neither does its existence, by any means, nullify or diminish the reality of its modifications, its derivatives or the universally dependent, particular individuals. (Ilyenkov 1974)

Thus, Hegel’s “strictly political state” can be understood as the Ideal from which today’s contemporary state is descended, albeit not simply in an “emergent,” evolutionary way, but rather through social and political transitions and at times revolutions. In this respect we can view it as an **abstract universal**. From such abstract universals we need to elaborate the state further as a **concrete universal**, noting Shillcock’s useful distinction: “The **concrete universal** has a venerable philosophical history, beginning with Plato but finding more expression in Hegel, and being taken up by modern materialists in the Vygotskian [sic] tradition, but it is largely neglected in western cognitive science.”

Here is where Ilyenkov’s exposition of the movement from abstract to concrete is helpful: “The question of the universal character of a concept is transferred to another sphere: that of the study of the real *process of development*. The developmental approach becomes thereby the approach of *logic*” (Ilyenkov 1982, 76–77).

### The State as a Dialectical Ideal

We suggest that the contemporary state in capitalist society can be viewed in terms of Ilyenkov’s concept of the Ideal, as an internally-dialectical relationship of abstract and concrete universal identities, constantly developing in relation to each other.

As noted earlier in this essay, Ilyenkov developed the category of the Ideal drawing on Hegel as well as Lenin's conspectus of Hegel's *Logic*. Therefore, understanding the essence of the state involves grasping it as an ensemble of contradictions, as a fluid moment in time. In his *Science of Logic* Hegel emphasises that the very notion of essence is dialectical. Lenin refers to Hegel describing Essence as "a movement through different moments" and that

the *stages of Being* and Essence hitherto considered, as well as those of Notion and Objectivity, are not, when so distinguished, *something permanent, resting upon themselves*. But they have proved to be dialectical, and their truth consists only in being *moments of the idea*. (Lenin 1972, 134, 198, emphasis in original)

From a materialist point of view, the Ideal of the state as well as Hegel's Ideal, is "enfolded" in the material realities of time and place.<sup>12</sup> These point to the state as an unstable, constantly in adjustment, unquiet form of the Ideal, experiencing quantitative and qualitative transformations, which are relative to each particular, individual state and its histories. It is therefore incumbent on us to elucidate in an empirical way the emergence of the capitalist state as a concrete universal.

We shall examine how, for example, the contradictions within the ideal of the state have undergone a transformation during the neoliberal period of globalised capitalism. Consequences in terms of social consciousness include a weakening of the legitimacy and authority of the state. In terms of state forms, it can help explain the crisis of representative democracy and the rise of autocracy.

### Materialist View of the State

The outlines of a materialist view of the state were developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Marx (1859), in his *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, writes that relations of production, what he called the "economic structure of society" were the "real foundation" on which rises a "legal and political superstructure," or the state. Moreover,

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12. Compare Arthur's (2022) "homology" between the movement of exchange and the movement of thought in *The Spectre of Capital*: "The actuality of the Ideal results from the way the practical movement of exchange parallels that of thought, insofar as it generates a system of pure form. So the method here is not the application to our specific domain of one of universal truth, such as Hegel's logic. Rather, our domain itself generates a system of self-moving forms. Thus it is anticipated that there will be a homology between the economic forms and the categories of idealist ontology." (Arthur 2022, 26)

he added, how production was organized determined the “general character of social, political, and intellectual processes of life.”

In the *German Ideology*, published in 1845, Marx and Engels insist that the state is “nothing more than the form of organisation which the bourgeoisie necessarily adopt both for internal and external purposes, for the mutual guarantee of their property and interests” (Marx and Engels 1845). In other words, the state is seen purely as an instrument in the hands of the ruling class. It was Engels who went on to develop a fuller framework for studying the state. In his ground-breaking 1884 work on anthropology, the *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Engels (2010) writes that the state was a product of a society at a certain stage of its development:

It is the admission that this society has become entangled in an insoluble contradiction with itself, that it has split into irreconcilable antagonisms which it is powerless to dispel. But in order that these antagonisms, these classes with conflicting economic interests, might not consume themselves and society in fruitless struggle, it became necessary to have a power, seemingly standing above society, that would alleviate the conflict and keep it within the bounds of 'order;' and this power, arisen out of society but placing itself above it, and alienating itself more and more from it, is the state. (Engels 2016, 123)

Engels insists that “as a rule” the state was effectively the state of “the dominant economic class which in time became the politically dominant class” (Engels 2016, 124). These dialectical thoughts about the contradictory nature of the state indicated lines of inquiry and research for other Marxists to take on.

Vladimir Lenin wrote *State and Revolution* on the eve of the 1917 revolution. He quoted Marx and Engels positively in a polemic against those who watered down their views. Lenin particularly noted how Marx and Engels developed their view of the state following the experiences made by the Paris Commune. In their 1872 preface to the *Communist Manifesto*, they acknowledged that one thing especially was proved by the Commune, that “the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes” (Marx and Engels 1848) In his pamphlet, Lenin also writes extensively about the transitional nature of a state created by the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, which Engels (1877) had flagged up within his concept of the “withering away” of the state in *Anti-Duhring*.

Marxist state theory lay dormant for a long period after the Russian Revolution, with activists content to quote Marx, Engels or Lenin without further ado or describe specific state actions to substantiate their views. As the post-1945 Keynesian boom came to an end with an economic and political crisis, a renewed interest in a Marxist view of the state led to fierce disputes. On the one side was Greek sociologist Nicos Poulantzas and on the other Ralph Miliband, who taught at the London School of Economics.

Miliband reflected a view that held that the state in and of itself was neutral and was made capitalist by agency, or the actions of personnel who tended to come from upper middle-class circles (Miliband 2009). This, in practice, was a classic social democratic view of the state as a benign instrument in the wrong hands. Poulantzas, on the other hand, held a structuralist position and attacked Miliband's position in the *New Left Review*. Poulantzas contended that state structures were more important than the types of people who worked in its institutions. The structures, he argued, determined that the state was capitalist in and of itself. This outlook was criticised as vulgar materialism, in that actors' beliefs are treated wholly as a function of their material circumstances.

Attempts to overcome this impasse led eventually to a more nuanced, dialectical Marxist view, one which studies the relationships between structure and agency, the state and capitalism, the state and civil society in a concrete way. Bob Jessop, distinguished professor of sociology at the University of Lancaster, England, sees the state as a social relation within capitalism itself—a conclusion that Poulantzas eventually arrived at. This approach helps us understand how what Jessop calls a capitalist type of state functions, its contradictions, strengths and weaknesses.

As Jessop explains (Jessop 2015, 121):

[First] the state protects private property and the sanctity of contracts on behalf of capital as a whole. This supports capital's formal rights to manage the labour process, appropriate surplus labour, and enforce contracts with other capitals. Second, the rational organisation of capitalism requires free wage labour—which the state creates through its role in ending feudal privileges, promoting the enclosure of commons, punishing vagabonds, and imposing an obligation to enter the labour market... Third, the modern state does not engage in profitable economic activities on its own account—capital prefers to provide these and gets the state to undertake economically and socially necessary activities that are unprofitable.

There is thus a division of labour in society between economic and political power. While capitalists hold economic and financial power through corporations, shares and financial institutions, the exercise of political power is through the state. The economic and non-economic exists in a dialectical, social relation, Jessop (2002) argues.

He views the state as a relatively autonomous “socially-embedded” ensemble of institutions that is interdependent with the operations of the capitalist economy. In that way, the state is an “ideal collective capitalist” with the capacity to fund its own projects through taxation of economic activity together with borrowing. Jessop explains that neither capitalism nor the capital-labour relation can be reproduced purely through market relations. “Both require supplementary modes of reproduction, regulation and governance—including those provided in part through the operations of **the state**” [our emphasis] (Jessop 2002, 11). In that way, “bourgeois societalisation ... involves ... the relative subordination of an entire social order to the logic and reproduction requirements of capital accumulation” (Jessop 2002, 23).

For Jessop (2015), class power and domination is “limited” and those he designates as non-dogmatic Marxists, try to explain this “in terms of the contradictions and antagonisms inherent in the capital relation” which, as we have seen, includes the state. His approach enables a concrete analysis of the capitalist economy as it develops. He demonstrates how capitalist-driven globalisation is “linked to changing forms of state intervention that affect the definition, regulation and operation of market forces” (Jessop 2015, 119).

The capitalist state as a specifically social form is examined by Rob Hunter (2023). He explains how the present state is “historically specific” to the capitalist society of which it is the “political form of appearance.” A social form approach explains why the capitalist state “is not a state *in* capitalism but the state *of* capitalism.” [emphasis in original] (Hunter 2023, 233)

Specifically *capitalist* states are not anterior (either logically or historically) to capitalist relations of production and exchange. They do not subsist independently of the capitalist economy, and they are not pre-capitalist institutions that have been captured by capital or capitals. If the capitalist state is a historically valid category, then it is not possible to speak of the state either as being captured by the capitalist class or as being denatured or deformed through subordination to the imperatives of capital accumulation.

## How the UK Capitalist State was Built

In line with Hunter's approach, we provide a view of the emergence of the UK state in relationship to the development of the world's first capitalist economy. When capitalist forms of production first appeared in Britain in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the British state as we know it today was in its infancy. The landed aristocracy dominated politics. Within the first three decades of the nineteenth century, the rising capitalist class had won access to political power through electoral reform and the extension of the franchise.

A state-sponsored disciplining of labour ideologically and legally began. The modern state took shape and by mid-century, there was a police force in every town, for example. The abolition of the Elizabethan poor law—which provided state relief for the destitute—and the introduction of the workhouse in the New Poor Law of 1834 was far-reaching, both in daily practice and in the evolution of social consciousness. The original Poor Law of 1601, introduced under Elizabeth I, obliged each parish to collect taxes to support people who could not work. This pre-capitalist measure aimed at the rural poor, would not survive the first period of the industrial revolution, when millions were driven into towns in search of work in the new factories. Free-market imperatives demanded that workers accept wages dictated by the owners and that the state offer no financial support.

John Saville (1995) writes that the “acceptance of parish relief became an article of shame for many sections of the working population ... the social stigma and fear of the workhouse went some way towards creating the ethos and ideas which industrial capitalism required of its workforce” (Saville 1995, 27).

A significant step forward for capitalism came with the legalisation of joint stock ownership of banks in 1826. Then in 1855 and 1856, new laws introduced limited liability for shareholders and extended joint stock ownership to industrial enterprises. The significance of the invention of limited liability has been compared to that of the steam engine. It was an essential precondition for the development of shareholding corporations, stock markets and capitalist economies. As Saville (1995, 81) writes:

The effective consolidation of the British state by the third quarter of the 19th century was a product of a rapidly developing industrial society, of a middle class whose ideology of *laissez-faire* and the free market was a central article of faith linked with an unshakeable belief in a confident future ...The

transition to the industrial state ... was never smooth and even. On the contrary, it was turbulent, disorderly and in social and political terms often violent.

The “urbulence” included the emergence of the first working class party in the shape of the Chartists in the late 1830s. They struggled to win the vote by means of protests and petitions but were denied by Parliament on repeated occasions over a decade. A militant wing of the Chartists adopted a revolutionary, military-style approach to challenge and even overthrow the state but were suppressed.

Votes for some male workers were achieved in 1867 and extended in 1884. The extension of the franchise by a confident ruling class now engaged in large-scale empire building and dominating world trade protected by its navy, signalled a new period of social compromise effected through the capitalist state. The Trade Union Act of 1871 formally legalised trade unions for the first time, giving them immunity for claims for compensation by the employers during strikes. This was followed by the Factory Act of 1874, which set a 10-hour limit on the working day. Capitalists required workers who could read and write. But they were in no position to provide schools or teachers. Schools for poor children were financed from the 1830s and from 1876 all parents were legally obliged to send their children to school. Public health was another function assumed by the state. In this way, the supply of relatively educated and healthy workers required by capitalists was achieved by the capitalist state and this continues to be the case today.

The Conservative Party, which had opposed the initial extension of the franchise in 1832, adapted to the needs of the dominant industrial class. They managed the consequences of capitalist exploitation in wider society through a series of reforms. So, by the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the state itself was in effect a form of class compromise. After the convulsions of two world wars and inter-war class conflict, the compromise was re-established in the post-1945 economic settlement made at Bretton Woods, which produced state-managed economies and what is known as the Keynesian Welfare State. In the UK, major social reforms included a free National Health Service and subsidised housing, alongside state ownership of energy and transport industries. These achievements by the UK working class continue to have a significant presence in social consciousness.



## Enter Neoliberalism

The long period of social compromise was shattered in 1971 by the collapse of the Bretton Woods framework, with its fixed currencies tied to the dollar, restricted capital movements and budget deficits. On 15 August that year, the post-1945 economic framework became history after dollar convertibility was abandoned. A free-for-all in currency speculation began, the value of the dollar plunged, inflation soared—it reached 25% in the UK in 1975—leading to a tripling of oil prices by producers and a three-day week in the UK. A massive recession gripped the world economy.

In 1947, in opposition to Keynesianism, Austrian-British economist and philosopher Friedrich Hayek founded the Mont Pelerin Society in Switzerland. It included Milton Friedman, later a supporter of monetarism, among its thinkers. Hayek and Friedman led the way in advocating an open, market-driven economy which the state would encourage and help develop. This would replace the state-managed economy set out at Bretton Woods. Their theories began to find an echo in policy-making circles at the highest levels of the state and in actions by governments.

In 1976, with unemployment soaring, inflation at 16% and the pound under sustained attack, the UK Labour government negotiated a loan from the International Monetary Fund, the largest in its history. But the loan was conditional on substantial public spending cuts. Labour's austerity programme led to the so-called Winter of Discontent of 1978–9 and a major confrontation with public sector unions. Shortly afterwards, Margaret Thatcher steered the Tories to a decisive election victory. Bob Jessop (2003) writes that “1979 marked an important symbolic defeat for the post-war mode of economic regulations, its institutionalised class compromise between capital and labour, and its associated forms of crisis management. And in this sense it greatly facilitated further development and consolidation of neoliberalism.”

As David Coates (2018) notes:

Its [neoliberalism's] appearance as a dominant economic and political form was both a response to and a measure of the crisis of the Keynesian-based progressive politics that prevailed in the vast majority of advanced capitalism during some/all of the years of the long capitalist boom that followed World War II.

While Alison Ayers and Alfredo Saad-Filho (2015, 603) argue:

Neoliberalism is based on the systematic use of state power, under a “free-market” cloak, to transform the material basis of accumulation at five levels:

the allocation of resources, international economic integration, the role of the state, ideology and the reproduction of the working class.

State intervention has been transformed rather than reduced under neoliberalism. The power of financial capital is prominent, as SOAS academics Ben Fine and Alfredo Saad-Filho (2017, 690) say:

Currently, while the overall logic of state policies and interventions remains to promote economic and social reproduction and the restructuring of capital, the interests and role of finance have increasingly come to the fore either directly or indirectly. Such is evident, for example, from the policy responses to the global crisis and the continuing recession; but it is equally characteristic of the policies implemented over the entire neoliberal period, as the interests of private capital in general and of finance in particular have been favoured by the state.

From 1979, Tory governments, first under Margaret Thatcher and from 1990 until 1997 under John Major, put neoliberalism into practice. State assets like gas, water, electricity, telecommunications and the railways were privatised. Many local government services were outsourced. Vast areas like London's docklands were handed over to developers and planning restrictions scrapped to facilitate commercially-led regeneration. A panoply of draconian laws against trade union activity outlawed mass picketing and solidarity action. Historically, they reversed the gains of the 1871 legislation, which granted the trade unions legal immunity. The full force of the state was deployed in a year-long battle with the miners' union over closures, which lasted from 1984 until 1985. The union's assets were seized by the state and hundreds of miners arrested.

Among the most significant of all measures was Thatcher's 1983 agreement with the London Stock Exchange to restructure and essentially deregulate the UK's financial markets. When the City of London's Big Bang, as it was known, exploded in October 1986, electronic trading was introduced on the stock market in place of paper. Overseas investment banks were able to set up in the UK without restrictions. It was an essential part of finance-driven globalisation which was to change the shape and the nature of contemporary capitalism along neoliberal lines. A parallel process was launched in the United States when Ronald Reagan became president in 1981. He implemented 25% across-the-board tax cuts, higher defence spending, began financial deregulation and attacked the trade unions. The Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization staged a strike which was declared illegal. All the strikers were then sacked by federal authorities.

Neoliberalism was taken a step further by the Clinton administration which promoted the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). This established a free trade area between the United States, Mexico and Canada. Clinton's administration accelerated the deregulation of the financial sector. The firewall between commercial and investment banking activities, introduced in the 1930s, was abolished. Clinton claimed the new arrangements would 'enhance the stability of our financial services system.' It was in Clinton's first term that the World Trade Organization came into existence, replacing the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade which had been part of the Bretton Woods financial architecture. The WTO went on to become a key facilitator of capitalist globalisation, ruling against a whole range of measures designed to protect consumers and public services. It is the only international body whose rulings are accepted by the United States.

The new global framework built by Thatcher, Reagan and Clinton was wholeheartedly embraced by Tony Blair and what became New Labour in the UK. Self-regulation for the banking sector encouraged the growth of speculative financial instruments, was implemented. New Labour's policies included the marketisation of education through tuition fees for university students and privately-run academy schools. An internal market in the National Health Service was established around hospital trusts that operated like big business. So-called private finance initiatives imposed huge costs on the construction of public buildings like hospitals and schools. The invasion of Iraq on a tissue of lies and misinformation was a neoliberal project. Its aim was to turn Iraq into a market economy and political system in the image of the United States and Britain.

### **Contradictions within the Ideal of the State**

The capitalist state contains immanent contradictions, which have sharpened immeasurably during the neoliberal period. Limitations and reach of territorially-based sovereign state systems have been exposed by the power and influence of transnational corporations and an online global financial system operating throughout 24 hours. A "no-borders" globalised economy and financial system has reduced the impact of conventional economic measures. Attempts to sidestep these arrangements can spell financial chaos as the short-lived 2022 Tory government under Liz Truss discovered (Stewart and Allegretti 2022). The impasse over effective climate emergency measures is a consequence of the changed relationship between state and capital. The failure of Cop28 held in the

United Arab Emirates in December 2023, to call for a phase-out of fossil fuels is “devastating” and “dangerous” (Carrington 2023).

The capitalist state’s very existence as a power with means of enforcement of decisions is an immediate opposite to the society over whom it claims to rule “in the common interest” (Jessop 2015). The state is incapable of satisfying all “interests” at the same time and thus privileges certain “interests,” including those of the capitalist class. Depending on political and other considerations, the state may favor one or more sectors over others. This was the case when governments internationally deregulated the financial sector in the period from the late 1990s. During the 2008 financial crash, the state bailed out and nationalised some banks while others were allowed to go to the wall. On occasions, political considerations take precedence over the economy. Such was the case in the United Kingdom with Brexit. The high risk involved in withdrawing from the European Union with its tariff-free single market led to widespread opposition from global corporations with a UK presence as well as British firms. “For the last five years business and government have been at odds. Brexit was very divisive,” Confederation of British Industry director general Tony Danker admitted in 2021. State policy-making failures are commonplace. Few anticipated, for example, that freeing the financial markets would open up the road to the global financial crash; even fewer predicted that the UK would vote for Brexit. As Jessop (2003) points out:

Thus there is no guarantee that political outcomes will serve the needs of capital—even assuming that these could be objectively identified in advance in sufficient detail to provide the basis for a capitalistically rational plan of state action and inaction. The operational autonomy of the state is a further massive complicating factor in this regard. Indeed, to the extent that it enables the state to pursue the interests of capital in general at the expense of particular capitals, it also enables it to damage the interests of capital in general.

With its dependence on economic growth for revenue and the privileging of corporate interests, a state which claims to rule in the common interest, cannot in practice do so. The UK state’s spending totals around £850 billion pounds a year. That is almost half the total value of all goods and services, or what is known as gross domestic product. Where does the money for this come from? Income tax and national insurance contributions are the largest sources. VAT, which is a tax on consumers, comes next. Corporations are near the bottom, contributing just £53 billion pounds of the total in 2020–21.

What these figures demonstrate is that the UK state is dependent on economic activity and, above all, having people in work paying taxes and spending money as consumers. The bulk of that employment is provided by the private sector, by capitalist enterprises. So the state, whatever government is in power, is committed to creating the conditions for the private sector to grow and dominate. Labour economist Martin Carnoy (1992, 218) writes:

Economic activity produces state revenues and ... public support for a regime will decline unless accumulation continues to take place. State managers willingly do what they know they must to facilitate capital accumulation... Such managers are particularly sensitive to overall business confidence.

The state is utterly reliant on financial markets for borrowing. The loans are used to fund services throughout the year as tax is collected gradually rather than at one go. The state also borrows to fund spending deficits and, significantly, to pay for emergencies, such as bailouts in the wake of the 2008 crash, and furloughs and other funding during the Covid pandemic. Finally, the state is not a homogeneous body where all the parts fit harmoniously into a single whole with a defined purpose. Contradictions within the state can lead to various malfunctions, as institutions pursue their own culture and interests.

### **The Struggle for Democracy**

Antonio Gramsci (1999, 504) defined the role of the capitalist state as “the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance but manages to win the active consent over whom it rules.” The last phrase is significant. Active consent, not just passivity. We must consent to be ruled in a certain way. This is, however, not a stable or absolute consent. Nor is hegemony reducible, we should say, exactly to the ideas of the ruling classes or crude propaganda. They are refracted, popularised, turned into aspects of art and culture and into an approach to education. They become mainstream. Bryn Jones and Mike O'Donnell (2018, 6) write that neoliberalism has the effect of structuring the way

subjects think about the practices, techniques and rationalities used to govern themselves. Neoliberal governments represent the population's wellbeing as ultimately tied to individuals' ability to make market principles the guiding values of their lives, to see themselves as products to create, sell and optimise.

They describe neoliberalism as a “systemic discourse embodied in the dominance of market-like practices over social life and governance ... a pervasive commodification of most aspects of personal, public and cultural life, and well-being” (Jones and O'Donnell 2018, 6).

The struggle for democracy is the Other of the state, its opposite. In essence, the countless battles for democracy in all their forms constitute a resistance to the power of the state in both capitalist and pre-capitalist epochs. They are an expression of how the masses contest the right of the state to rule over them, to impose its will, policies and repressive measures and in this way constitute an integral part of the class struggle. The hollowing out of the state in the neoliberal period has an inexorable logic in terms of democracy in all its aspects. A crisis of representative bourgeois democracy is self-evident, with the emergence of autocratic regimes, the dismantling of many post-WWII social reforms and serious assaults on the right to strike and to protest in many countries like the UK.

The achievement of representative democracy opened the door to social reforms, especially in the long post-World War II boom. This form of class compromise was shattered with the further development of neoliberal capitalism from the early 1980s until today. With the eroding of bourgeois democracy forms and with it the effectiveness of electoral politics, the state's hegemonic ideological grip—essential for maintaining its authority and legitimacy—is weakened, deepening the contradictions within the state.

Rafael Khachaturian (2023, 86) notes recent scholarship on ‘authoritarian neoliberalism’ in which capitalist states are “beset by problems of crisis management stemming from austerity policies, weakened popular-representative capacities, and a general condition of ideological depoliticisation and lack of popular-democratic accountability.” These contradictions have prompted further moves towards authoritarian measures to try and resolve “what is a general crisis of legitimacy.”

Even before neoliberal capitalism entered its existential crisis in 2008, the state's legitimacy as a body claiming to represent the interests of society as a whole, was already considerably diminished. By introducing market criteria into new spheres of social life like education and care, the state abandoned its former role as provider. Whole areas of essential services have been moved from public to private sectors, from statutory to contract law. In many countries, mainstream parties converged in their outlook as the relationship between state and capital changed in favor of the latter, further weakening the effectiveness of the

existing democratic process. In countries like France, traditional parties of both right and left have disappeared altogether, replaced by managerial, populist groups. In the United States, the attack from within by the Republican Party at national and state level has created the conditions for a new civil war.

As Saad Filho and Sayers (2015, 604) explain, the neoliberal project sets out to reduce citizens with social and political rights to consumers. “Individuals are regularly invited to make a token visit to the polling booths, where they consume the freedom to vote by registering their preferences in much the same way as they express their identities by choosing soft drinks, clothes.” They describe it as a “sterilisation of the political process,” which amounts to a “depoliticisation of politics.” Where opposition to post-2008 austerity took governmental form, as in Greece, the full weight of neoliberal state structures—this time in the form of the European Central Bank and European Union came down hard to impose harsh bail-out conditions. When Jeremy Corbyn, as the Labour Party’s first elected left-wing leader, attempted to revive radical reformism, he was subjected to vilification and character assassination from within and without.

As a result, voters in many countries no longer view representative democracy as a vehicle for achieving meaningful change and improved life chances. This outlook is reinforced by the results of the last 40 years of globalisation. Inequality in the major capitalist countries has grown to record levels. The share of wages in gross domestic product (GDP) in the UK has fallen to 59.6 % compared with 69.7% in 1975. A growing hostility to the state is reinforced in many countries by a political class beholden to populism, anti-immigration rhetoric and practice. The capitalist state’s refusal/inability to deliver policies that address the climate and eco-systems crisis reinforce the weakness of the political system, especially in the eyes of new generations. As a result, trust in mainstream politicians has plummeted. Just nine per cent of the British public say they trust politicians to tell the truth, down from twelve per cent in 2022 (Ipsos 2023). Detailed research by the Constitution Unit, University of London (Renwick et al 2023) found widespread dissatisfaction with how democracy is performing in the UK.

### **State versus Anti-State**

From a dialectical perspective, the essence of the state is revealed as an identity, unity, interpenetration of a series of opposing forces. The self-related Other of the state is its “negative” or the absence of power; “the

Other of the first;” one presupposes the other. Lenin (1972, 226) emphasised the importance of grasping the essence of a universal concept, by drawing attention to Hegel’s thought that: “a universal first term considered in and for itself shows itself to be its own Other...” We should view the Other of the state not as an empty abstraction, but rather an assertion, definition and negative development of the Other. As discussed earlier, the state exists as the constant exercise of power over a whole range of “Others,” and there are a whole range of positive forces within the negative of the non-state. These can be described as civil society, the anti-state, the people or the Demos. The history of all states is characterised by opposition from the mass of society to assert its own rights and its power. This can also be seen as the struggle for self-determination of a people and the individuals who make up a people or nation or ethnicity. This is in essence, the struggle for emancipation from the state which is real democracy, as Marx put it.

We are living through a transition from neoliberal capitalism to authoritarian, illiberal forms of state rule. There are prolonged crises of the democratic form, including constitutional ones, in Brazil, Chile, UK, Sweden, Greece, Italy, United States, India, Israel, France and elsewhere. Neofascist parties have entered governments in Italy and are poised to win seats in Germany. To paraphrase Francis Fukuyama, it is possible to argue that there is an “end of history” moment here, with the incipient demise of bourgeois democracy. As Jessop (2012, 3) has argued: “Marxists tend to assume that all forms of social power linked to class domination are fragile, unstable, **provisional, and temporary** and that continuing struggles are needed to secure class domination, overcome resistance, and naturalise or mystify class power.” [emphasis added]

### Concluding Remarks

As the decline of the bourgeois state gathers pace, opportunities will arise for creating a revolutionary transition. To define richer and emancipatory concepts of universalism we can build on thinkers like Massimiliano Tomba and Slavoj Žižek. In their own ways they assert the validity of both abstract and concrete interpretations of emancipatory universality. Tomba (2019) rejects notions of “big thinkers” and unilinear time, proposing instead a multiverse of layers and temporalities in place of dogmatic stages. He focuses on the many anonymous actors of all these events, trying to pluralize the concept of revolution—making it multidimensional: “revolutions within revolutions.”



He refers in a semi-Ilyenkovian way to products of a ‘collective mind’ (Tomba 2020). This is a fruitful approach, allowing him to highlight emancipatory moments when revolutionary surges have thrown up novel forms of political and social organization. He describes the Paris commune of 1871 and the 1917 constitution in Russia as “temporalities” which form alternatives to existing oppressive hierarchical states. “The state was exploded, they were not building a state,” he said in discussion with Gabriel Rockhill at a Critical Theory Workshop, contrasting Lenin’s constitution with the Stalinist 1936 constitution. Noting that experiments such as the Zapatista’s can only persist while, “the state is taking a nap,” Tomba’s democratic ideal is not state ownership or nationalisation but organising ourselves, independently of the state, picking up strands of Italian autonomism and the Potere Operaio movement of the 1960s and 1970s, theorised by Antonio Negri.

In a different take on universalism, Slavoj Žižek has strongly championed the importance of democratic and emancipatory universalism against its far-right opponents. He warns about the material power of ideology (which we can rephrase as “forms of the Ideal”) in relation to the current onslaught on Ukraine, pointing to Putin and Dugin’s attack on universalism and all human rights as a form of ‘Westernism’ (Ukraine Solidarity Campaign 2023). This is a crucial consideration and the rise of authoritarianism—whether in the United States, France, India, Russia or China—makes it imperative to go beyond simply opposition to curtailments of democracy, but to theorise and elaborate twenty-first century concepts of democracy that can be developed in practice.<sup>13</sup> As Hunter (2023, 255) concludes: “Emancipatory struggle does not consist in the struggle to seize, or wield the power of, the capitalist state. Rather, such a state is an appearance of a social reality that must be abolished.”

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13. Wendell Kisner (2008) made a study of Žižek’s interpretation of the concrete universal and its political implications.

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## Biographies

**Corinna Lotz's** chief interest is a revolutionary approach to thought, political transformation and artistic creativity. She co-founded the International Friends of Ilyenkov in 2012 and also campaigns for the Real Democracy Movement. Writings include: *Finding Evald Ilyenkov* (Lupus Books, 2019); *Revolution 1968* (2008); *A World to Win* (co-author 2004); *The Right to Self-determination* (1996); *Gerry Healy: A Revolutionary Life* (1994, co-author). She co-curated *Hilde in Italia* in 2024. She lives in London. (corinna.lotz[at]btinternet.com)

**Paul Feldman** is an activist for the Real Democracy Movement who writes about the state with a view to transitioning beyond the present framework. He is author of *Unmasking the State* (Lupus Books, 2008), *Democracy Unchained* (2016) and co-author of *A World to Win* (2004), *Gerry Healy: A Revolutionary Life* (1994). He is editor of *Time's Up for Neoliberalism* (2018) and *Running a Temperature: An Action Plan for the Eco-Crisis* (2007). He lives in York, England. (paulfeldman[at]talktalk.net)