

Contours of Contemporary Critical Theory
International conference
European Humanities University (Vilnius, Lithuania)
on June 14th - 15th, 2024

Dear colleagues,

We would like to invite you to take part in the international conference "*Contours of Contemporary Critical Theory*", organised by the European Humanities University (Vilnius, Lithuania) and dedicated to the memory of the Belarusian philosopher Vladimir Fours (1963-2009).

Reflections on rising alienation and new forms of unfreedom are becoming increasingly relevant in the contemporary world that is marked by in the context of the processes of de-democratisation, increasing consolidation and affinity between regimes as well as growing socio-political fragmentation in democratic countries. These circumstances give cause to the social theorists for returning to the ideas that were developed within the critical theory framework, built upon the principles of reflexivity and negativity in relation to contemporary socio-political orders. Critical theory has become part and parcel of the sociological scholarship after an intensive development of the discipline in the 20th century inspired by neo-Marxist approaches (including the Frankfurt School). However, new patterns of social change across Western and non-Western countries require a broader conceptual platform that would allow elaborate critical theoretical models that are relevant to current social and cultural conditions.

Contemporary critical theory employs transdisciplinary research strategies. It has moved away from a narrow continuity associated with the Frankfurt School to include numerous diverse discourses such as post-Marxism, psychoanalysis, cultural and postcolonial studies, feminism etc. Serving as an umbrella term rather than an integral approach, critical theory turns out to be a meeting point for numerous different approaches that enrich the understanding of the current social landscape.

The philosophical and intellectual project of Vladimir Fours was also primarily focused on the search for and comprehension of a critical theory of modernity that was relevant to the current processes of social transformation. V. Fours defined *social critical theory* as a research programme representing "a thought space of the possible, the partial realisation of which is a

variety of author's concepts". V. Fours formulated some components of this programme in his book "Contours of Contemporary Critical Theory" (2002):

- *A critical self-reflection of the modern type of social life;*
- *a holistic critique of the reification of social matter in the normative light of a visionary utopia of social emancipation;*
- *the construction of a multidisciplinary theory of social life with the integrating role of philosophical reflection;*
- *the constitutive role of the historical concept, revealing the ambivalence of social evolution in general and the genesis of modernity in particular;*
- *critical theory as a form of realisation of revolutionary politics.*

The conference is seen as an occasion, on the one hand, to honour the memory of the Belarusian philosopher by combining two significant dates - 60 years since his birth (2023) and 15 years since his death (2024). On the other hand, it aims to actualize and comprehend the conditions of prospects of critical theory approaches that were built on the experiences of contemporary social transformations in countries such as Belarus and its neighbours in Central and Eastern Europe.

Proposed topics for the discussion:

- Critical social theory: history and contemporary concepts;
- Critical hermeneutics and the multiplication of the social imaginary;
- Crisis of the discourses of globalisation : Fours's notion of regressive sociality;
- Concepts of modernity;
- (Post)Marxism and the critique of capitalism;
- Psychoanalysis: the diversification and denaturalisation of the concept of society and the subject;
- Feminist and gender theory in action: for Belarus and worldwide;
- Critical theory of media, Internet and technology;
- Postcolonial studies;
- Studies of politics within the framework of critical social theory;
- The normative ideal of autonomy and democracy today;
- The idea of a good university and critical pedagogy.

Working languages:

Belarusian, Russian, English

Forms of participation: onsite in EHU and online.

Applications are submitted until 15 March 2024 by filling in the [online form](#).

Conference time and address:

The conference will take place on June 14th - 15th, 2024.

EHU Campus, 17 Savičiaus Str., 01127, Vilnius, Lithuania

E-mail: conference_depsocial@ehu.lt

It is accordingly planned for the conference papers (based on the results of the conference) to be published in a dedicated edition of the journal *Topos* (EHU, Vilnius, Lithuania).