

André Gorz and contemporary Frankfurt School Critical Theory: Alienation, eco-socialism and post-productivism

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journals.sagepub.com/home/jcs**Neal Harris** 

Oxford Brookes University, UK

Javier Zamora Garcia

Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain

Lucy Ford

Oxford Brookes University, UK

Abstract

We argue that Gorz's work offers a nuanced engagement with alienation that is instructive for contemporary social theory. In keeping with Gorz's broader politics, we contend that the utility of his framing of alienation derives from his insistence that progressive critique must challenge the ideal of productivism. We start the paper by presenting a sympathetic reconstruction of Gorz's understanding of alienation. Next, we explicitly detail the strengths his approach carries for furthering sociological research today. We then reinforce this point by arguing that Gorz's work offers particularly valuable theoretical resources for contemporary Frankfurt School Critical Theory, in which the study of alienation has been somehow hampered by the ascent of 'recognition theory'. While not sharing all the methodological commitments of first-generation Critical Theorists, Gorz was well versed in Frankfurt School scholarship and is therefore an apposite interlocutor to engage 'third-generation' Critical Theory. Gorz's insights are thus shown to be important for furthering contemporary social theory, and in particular, for helping to combat the unsustainable productivism of neoliberal capitalism.

Corresponding author:

Neal Harris, Department of Social Sciences, Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, OX3 0BP, UK.

Email: nharris@brookes.ac.uk

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Introduction

André Gorz's relationship to existentialism, phenomenology and political ecology has been well charted (see Bowring, 2000; Gianinazzi, 2022; Strange, 1996). Yet, with some notable exceptions (Shorthose, 1994, *inter alia*), the links between Gorz's work and Critical Theory remain comparatively under-theorized (see Granter, 2016). In this paper, we seek to spark a dialogue between Gorz's work and contemporary Frankfurt School Critical Theory (hereafter FSCT).¹ By doing so, we present the strengths of Gorz's theoretical imagination and demonstrate its continued relevance, both as a standalone body of work and as a critical interlocutor for contemporary social theory. Our objective here is not to present Gorz as a long-lost doyen of Critical Theory; on the contrary, we are conscious that important methodological divergences exist between Gorz and the Frankfurt School (see Browning and Kilmister, 2006: 84–104). Rather, through our analysis we demonstrate the continuing relevance of Gorz's work for critically engaging with progressive scholarship, to which the Frankfurt School has long been a principal contributor (see Jay, 1973; Wiggershaus, 1994).

Our paper begins with a sympathetic reconstruction of Gorz's framing of alienation. This is achieved through a targeted re-reading of *Farewell to the Working Class, Paths to Paradise, Critique of Economic Reason* and *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*. In contrast to utopian visions of unalienated work (see Bastani, 2019; Fuchs and Sevnigani, 2013), Gorz acknowledges a depressing reality: waged labour is alienating and likely always will be. This is a result of the requirement for individual participation in specialized labour roles that inevitably result from the demands of socially necessary production. As a result, we demonstrate that Gorz advocates for a 'dual economy' in which waged labour remains, but is drastically reduced in both the required time commitments and normative value. This is connected to Gorz's broader critique of capitalism's reliance upon ecologically unsustainable growth and the fetishization of abstracted production. In opposition to the waged economy, Gorz is shown to advocate for a second sphere of society in which people are able to engage in transcendent purposeful activities beyond the diktats of the market: be it through aesthetic contemplation, or the mindful production of artisan goods outside market imperatives, very much pre-empting the current discussions of contemporary political ecology. The particularities and contemporary merits of Gorz's post-productivist understanding of labour are presented at length in the first two parts of this paper.

In part three, we offer a dialogue between Gorz's framing of alienation and the dominant trends within FSCT today. Gorz was friends with Herbert Marcuse, and the theoretical fruits of this friendship are apparent across both scholar's outputs (see Shorthose, 1994). While the principal exponents of first-generation Critical Theory shared Gorz's explicit anti-capitalism and ecological sensitivities, contemporary Frankfurt School theorists increasingly embrace market norms (see Kouvelakis, 2019; Thompson, 2016) and have avoided critical political ecology (see Lysaker, 2020), though this needs to be nuanced. For Axel Honneth, the former director of the Institute for Social Research

[*Institut für Sozialforschung*],² the normative values enshrined within neoliberalism hold emancipatory potential in terms of their ability to further intersubjective relations of recognition (see Honneth, 2014; Thompson, 2016).³ In contrast to the ‘domesticated’ state of contemporary Critical Theory, we argue that Gorz’s framing of alienation offers a timely reminder that neoliberalism i) normalizes the colonization of human time by productivist logics and ii) reproduces pathologically induced desires which further social alienation and ecological collapse. As such, we argue that Gorz’s work, especially his post-productivist framing of alienation, offers a counterweight to ‘domesticated’ Critical Theory,⁴ disclosing the embrace of neoliberal norms, which occurred under Honneth’s stewardship. As such, throughout the paper, we demonstrate both the significance of Gorz’s work as a powerful eco-socialist critique of productivist capitalism in and of itself, but we also show how Gorz’s social theory can serve to disclose the limitations of contemporary FSCT.

André Gorz, alienation and post-industrial societies

André Gorz’s theory of alienation is linked to his analysis of how automation caused a transition from industrial to post-industrial societies. Drawing on the diagnosis of sociologists such as Alvin Toffler (1980), Gorz argues that the automation of labour brought about by the microelectronic revolution risks accentuating social inequalities in industrial societies, insofar as it divides the working class into two groups: an aristocracy of privileged workers who will hold stable and well-paid full-time jobs, and a mass of precarious and unemployed workers who will be forced to perform the more unpleasant, low-paid tasks in order to earn a living (Gorz, 1982: 3, 1985: 35). Moreover, these changes pose an additional challenge for the analysis of these phenomena from a Marxist perspective inasmuch as the scarcity of labour produced by automation displaces the traditional revolutionary subject composed of large masses of industrial workers (Gorz, 1982: 6 ff.). However, for Gorz (1985), these changes should not be understood as entirely negative. On the contrary, the scarcity of labour allows him to recover one of the most important historical slogans of the labour movement that was forgotten during the golden age of Fordism: the rejection of wage labour and the forms of domination associated with it (p. 48). For the French author, the only way for a socialist project to be able to confront the automation of production is to decouple employment and citizenship, thus separating the demands for a living wage from the actual fact of being at work at any given moment.

In understanding Gorz’s reasoning, it is important to note that he shares with the Marxist tradition the idea that wage employment is an alienating pursuit for workers in capitalist societies because of their inability to control the production process or to obtain the fruits of their labour (Gollain, 2016). For the working class, employment is a necessary activity as a means of ensuring survival, but it appears in itself as a meaningless, repetitive activity for individuals, being organized by forces outside their control. Gorz recognizes that many of these problems have to do with the capitalist organization of labour. Driven by the structural imperatives of competition and efficiency, employers turn labour activity into an alienating process. However, as Gorz points out, labour will never be a fully liberating activity even if these problems are overcome. In any complex

society, Gorz states, work will always involve a certain degree of alienation, since it is socialized and distributed among its members (Gorz, 1982: 91, 1985: 50). Under ideal conditions, such as self-management, workers can modify the organization of their tasks and make the work process more pleasant, but part of the alienation they experience derives from a fact that cannot be changed, namely that productive processes depend on social needs that transcend the desires of individual workers. In industrial societies, these social needs lead to a division of labour among specialized productive units that lose autonomy in exchange for their insertion into networks of interdependence and cooperation. This specialization and division of labour allows for more efficient social production, reducing the amount of socially necessary labour and thus freeing up increasing amounts of time (Gorz, 1982: 101, 1994: 61). However, such an organization of labour forces workers to perform certain tasks independently of their individual desires in order to produce the goods that society needs. For this reason, Gorz criticizes those tendencies within Marxism to believe that it is possible to make the free will of the worker coincide with social needs. For him, the free will of individuals can only flourish on the basis of heteronomously determined production, just as Marx understood that the realm of freedom could only blossom on the basis of the realm of necessity (Marx, 1991 [1894]: 959). In this sense, Gorz's proposal for a 'society of liberated time' does not aim to eliminate the sphere of heteronomy that derives from labour, but to reduce and subordinate it to the minimum possible through a social organization of production that frees as much time as possible for free activities (Gorz, 1982: 94). In his own words:

The priority task of a post-industrial left must therefore be to extend self-motivated, self-rewarding activity within, and above all, outside the family, and to limit as much as possible all waged or market-based activity carried out on behalf of third parties (even the state). A reduction in work time is a necessary but not a sufficient condition. For it will not help to enlarge the sphere of individual autonomy if the resulting free time remains empty 'leisure time', filled for better or worse by the programmed distractions of the mass media and the oblivion merchants, and if everyone is thereby driven back into the solitude of their private sphere. (Gorz, 1982: 87)

The reduction of working time in an egalitarian way is therefore one of the pillars of Gorz's political project. Yet, alone it is insufficient: true human emancipation necessitates the development of social infrastructures that serve to help citizens to use non-work time for purposes going beyond recovering from work. Based on the time saved by heteronomous work fairly distributed throughout society, citizens should be able to free themselves from the dependencies produced by the bureaucratization and commodification of human needs (Leonardo and Benegiamo, 2021). In this way, citizens should be able to re-appropriate those spheres of life that industrial societies delegated to institutions such as the state (health or education) or the market (entertainment or the manufacture of personal objects). In this sense, Gorz's (1989) proposal seeks for this non-work time to be devoted to activities 'with freely chosen aims' (p. 92), such as philosophy or art; but also to the self-production of objects, which may seek to satisfy a need of socialization, a desire for innovation or just the want to improve the objects produced on a macro-social level (Gorz, 1985: 60). In Gorz's (1993) work, the recovery of this capacity of citizens to produce their own objects of consumption and satisfy their own social and cultural needs is framed in a social project of self-limitation of needs coherent with his eco-socialism.

Viewed from this perspective, the liberation of free time beyond the heteronomous spheres of work and commodified consumption constitutes a way of freeing these activities from the productivist logic that, according to Gorz, grips industrial societies and reinforces the alienation of its members. Drawing on the ideas of Habermas, Weber and Arendt (Camargo, 2020), Gorz insists that this productivist logic contains an economic rationality that invades the different spheres of life, subjecting them to the demands of efficiency and productivity. However, contrary to what might be suggested, Gorz does not argue that this economic rationality should completely disappear. For him, this logic is particularly useful for the sphere of socially necessary work, since it reduces its time by improving the efficiency of processes and organizations. What is necessary, however, is to avoid the colonization of society as a whole by productivism, subordinating it to the sphere of heteronomy and thus making it serve the liberation of free time (Gorz, 1989: 127, 1994: 56). In that sense, in contrast to an economy that promotes the heteronomy of activities and their dependence to the state and the market, the project of a 'society of liberated time' aims to use the productivist logic to its advantage, promoting the generation of increasing amounts of free time that can then be distributed equally. Together with this subjection of productivist logic to the goal of the liberation of human time, the second limit that subdues production without limits is the eco-socialist character of the Gorzian project. An eco-socialism which, in his own words, seeks 'to restore politically the correlation between less work and less consumption on the one hand, and more autonomy and existential security on the other, for everyone' (Gorz, 1993: 65).

The relevance of Gorz's approach to contemporary social challenges

Today, it seems clear that the authors and reports on which André Gorz based his idea of a 'society of liberated time' were not entirely accurate in their diagnoses of the consequences of the microelectronic revolution. Yet it is true that both the automation of production processes, together with the offshoring and outsourcing of production chains (Sassen, 1991), have led to a decline in waged labour occupations in most Euro-Atlantic countries. Moreover, the microelectronic revolution has subsequently been joined by the digital revolution and the rise of artificial intelligence; processes that threaten to continue this trajectory of declining wage labour and market dependency (Srnicek, 2017; Wark, 2019; Zuboff, 2019). This combination of a heavy reliance on commodified consumption and a decline in available wage labour remains a problem for most post-industrial economies, whose political systems still operate on a close link between wage labour and citizenship. In this context, and despite the time that has passed since they were published, Gorz's writings remain useful for understanding possible ways out of the existential and economic uncertainty experienced by those who occupy the most vulnerable positions in these societies (Sennett, 1998). In this sense, Gorz's theory not only anticipates the attempts to think about the changes in the structure of the working class that have crystallized in concepts such as the precariat (Standing, 2011), but also offers a systematic, potential solution to the problems experienced by these groups.

Through its commitment to freeing up time, Gorz's theory offers an interesting proposal that combines the idea of a universal basic income with that of a reduction in working

hours, two ideas that have been gaining popularity in recent years (Coote et al., 2010; Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017). By proposing that wages should be decoupled from the time actually worked each week, Gorz advocates offering a stable source of income to each citizen in exchange for an amount of time freely distributed over a lifetime. In this sense, Gorz's proposal is interesting in two different but interrelated ways. Firstly, it lays the foundations for a post-industrial citizenship that confronts the effects of unemployment and precariousness on the traditional link between citizenship and employment (Alonso, 2019). Secondly, he addresses the effects of automating technologies through a concern for social and ecological justice. In the latter sense, Gorz's ideas offer a third alternative to the polarized debate that, in the heat of the social effects of automation, opposes two radically different utopias: that of a completely automated society in which work has disappeared thanks to technology (Bastani, 2019), and that which considers technology as a product of industrial societies that, because of its historic association with specific values and imaginaries, causes harmful consequences both for human beings and the ecosystems they inhabit (Almazán, 2021; see also Ellul, 1964). Through a convivial conception of technology inherited from Illich (1973), Gorz's ideas suggest a theoretical horizon that, without rejecting the technological products of industrial society, moderates the utopian desires of those who dream of a society where alienated work can be completely eliminated.

Despite this potential, those who distrust Promethean conceptions of technology can argue that the main obstacle to realizing Gorz's proposal has to do with the biophysical limits that the automation of labour intends to challenge. In fact, there is growing evidence that the automation and digitization of productive processes is a debatable horizon in the face of the demands of climate change mitigation or the scarcity of fossil fuels and materials that characterize the Anthropocene (Dusik et al., 2018; Lucivero 2020; Whitehead et al. 2014; Williams 2011). This increasing evidence ties in with Gorz's (1985: 12, 1987, 1989: 120 ff, 1993, 1994) own statements drawing attention to the material impossibility of unlimited economic growth, as well as with the fact that it was Gorz who coined the concept of degrowth as far back as 1972, pre-empting many of the debates within the contemporary degrowth movement (Akbulut, 2021; Gunderson, 2018). While it is difficult to elucidate what position Gorz would have taken in the debate between degrowth and the Green New Deal on the different technological strategies needed to make the transition to a post-capitalist society, it is certain that Gorz's position must be understood in the context of his commitment to eco-socialism, a project decidedly opposed to that shallow environmentalism that evades any discussion of the limits of neoliberal capitalism (Gorz, 1987, 1993, 1994; see also Ford and Kuetting, 2017). While his project consistently focused on Europe, his commitment to a broader eco-socialism does acknowledge the *global* dimensions of ecological justice (Gorz, 1993).

Gorz's wager is therefore capable of reflecting both the folly of continuing to propose an unlimited notion of growth on a planet with finite resources and the social contradictions that derive from an unequally distributed scarcity of labour. In this regard, a good part of these merits has to do with the recovery of alienation, a concept that has been underused in contemporary FSCT. Through his theory of alienation, as well as the triad that emanates from its combination with the ideals of autonomy and emancipation, Gorz manages to capture the sense of powerlessness that characterizes our contemporary experience. In contrast to those visions of freedom that make it depend exclusively on a

false individual sovereignty (Filip, 2020), Gorz is able to propose an ideal of autonomy that affects both societies and individuals, proposing to regain control of the economy by placing it at the service of a more dignified and fulfilling life. In our opinion, Gorz's project can be used for the critical reworking of FSCT. A tradition that, having once contributed centrally to the analysis of alienation from a materialist and socially engaged perspective, today increasingly sits closer to Ideal-Theory and Rawlsian liberalism (see Harris, 2022; Thompson, 2016).

Gorz and contemporary Critical Theory

First-generation Critical Theorists interrogated capitalism as a pathological social formation which induced restrictive forms of thought and self-sabotaging desires (see Marcuse, 2007 [1964]; Adorno and Horkheimer, 1997 [1944], Fromm, 1963 [1955] inter alia). Gorz saw merit in this project and there are clear threads linking his work to Marcuse's thought in particular (see Lodziak and Tatman, 1997: 93). The guiding question behind Critical Theory at this juncture was anti-capitalist in nature: why had the anticipated proletarian revolution failed to manifest? How had capitalism succeeded in containing oppositional forces despite its ever-worsening crises and contradictions? In their efforts to address this question, concepts and perspectives were refined which have impacted the critique of capitalism across disciplines.

Yet, with time, first-generation theorists retreated from sociological analysis and invested increasingly in abstract philosophical negativity and aesthetics, becoming removed from actual political struggles (see Wiggershaus, 1994). In this context, Jürgen Habermas reoriented Critical Theory to recover contemporary relevance. Habermas' (1968, 1986) work brought a new investment in 'human interests', intersubjectivity, discourse and communication. Gorz saw merit in Habermas' project, writing approvingly of his insights in relation to how it was possible to see a colonization of economic rationality over the lifeworld (Gorz, 1989: 31–32). However, Gorz's analysis adopted a more materialist perspective, concentrating on the specific mechanisms through which a productivist logic permeates other spheres of life through both the transformation of different activities into new forms of work and the commodification and bureaucratization of social reproduction.

While Habermas' new focus upon intersubjectivity did not inevitably necessitate a rejection of the critique of capitalism, it precipitated its increasing displacement. This movement was expedited with the appointment of Axel Honneth as director of the Institute for Social Research. Where Habermas' work retained an investment in the impact of systemic logics shaping the consciousness of subjects, Honneth's (1995) analysis presented the intersubjective moment as the sole necessary focus for social researchers (see McNay, 2008: 47 ff). For Honneth, the paradigm of 'distribution' could be entirely displaced by that of recognition, a polycentric Critical Theory was no longer required: all social challenges could be understood as being different intersubjective struggles for recognition (Fraser and Honneth, 2001).

As such, with Honneth's (1995) *Struggle for Recognition*, Critical Theory decentred production, alienation and the critique of capitalism. In contrast, identity, status, recognition and disrespect became central vectors of analysis. Again, such a displacement of the critique of capitalism did not inevitably necessitate an embrace of market norms and the

capitalist order. However, Honneth's work has culminated with exactly such a relationship with capitalism. In *Freedom's Right* (2014), he explicitly identified merits within the norms of the neoliberal order. As Thompson (2016: 2–11) argues, Honneth's endorsement of the normative potential within market dynamics for developing a rational, just social order has led to the 'domestication' and 'enfeeblement' of Critical Theory. Crucially, for Honneth, this normative potential is not latent, but manifest, since Honneth does not offer an immanent-transcendent critique of capitalism, but an endorsement of its active normative order (Bosseau, 2019; Thompson, 2016).

Through his normative reconstructive methodology, Honneth explicitly identified within the normative order of capitalism the foundations for intersubjective recognition. The market order is held to contain potentials for recognition. In this respect, Gorz's position on the market is worth commenting on. While Gorz grants some space to free enterprise and entrepreneurship as a way of revitalizing production and fostering innovation, he does so in the context of a radical critique of the fact that basic needs depend on a system of production governed by private interest (Gorz, 1985: 58–62). Therefore, while Honneth stresses that the market configuration is ultimately progressive in its normative foundations and no alternative productive domain was required, Gorz proposes a 'dual economy' in which the role of the market and its norms is restricted to a complementary function.

The abandonment of a perspective based on the critical analysis of capitalism and the processes of alienation associated with it perhaps explains the fact that Honneth's Critical Theory does not call for a 'normative revolution' (Schaub, 2015) beyond neoliberalism, but for normative uplift (see Bosseau, 2019). Rather than seeking a radical social transformation in which market logics are confined to the production of socially necessary goods within ecological limits, Honneth considers the market as holding positive normative weight and functioning as part of an enlightened emancipatory constellation. With this surreal embrace of market mechanisms in contemporary Critical Theory, the idea of alienation has been neglected. Today, where it is taken up by Critical Theorists, it is by those more distanced from Honneth's research programme (see Jaeggi, 2014).

As such, the social pathologies which Honneth identifies are 'second-order disconnects' between the subject's understanding of the normative order of capitalism and their social action within it (Zurn, 2011: 348). This theoretical formulation produced a research agenda in which poverty and alienation became results of 'second-order disconnects' in the heads of subjects, rather than results of irrationalities within the capitalist economic system itself (Harris, 2019). This has widely been presented as leading to the 'domestication of Critical Theory', hampering the efficacy of the research programme and betraying its socialist politics (Thompson, 2016, 2020).

In what follows, we demonstrate how engaging with Gorz's work, specifically his theory of alienation as outlined above, discloses the limitations of the social-theoretical foundations upon which Honneth's Critical Theory is based. We argue that Gorz reminds us of the need to restrict participation within the waged-labour economy, to challenge the productivist ideals of capitalism, and to question the idea that the normative foundations of capitalism are ultimately sound. Rather, we argue that Gorz's post-productivist account of alienation demonstrates that both production and consumption patterns are subject to socially mediated power relationships. As such, we contend that Gorz's work enables us to recentre the critique of capitalism within contemporary Critical Theory and aids in disclosing some of the limitations of Honneth's account.

Discussion: Resurrecting the ‘dual economy’ and repressive desublimation

While for Honneth the normative order of neoliberal capitalism holds the potential to enable healthy recognition relationships to flourish, for Gorz the values embedded within the market require critical interrogation and clear delimitation to a small sphere of human life. In his analysis of productivism, Gorz is mindful to circumscribe the role of economic rationality, forever conscious that it will remain alienating and contrary to the purpose of human self-realization. As long as they are permeated by this rationality, all forms of private production and market engagement need to be restrained, conscribed and delimited. Growth as an aspiration, maximal production as a macroeconomic objective and maximal consumption as an indicator of social welfare are all heteronomous guiding principles that restrain the free development of individuals and societies. In that sense, such normative values are fundamentally pathological and unsustainable in Gorz’s eco-socialist analysis and need to be curtailed and bracketed to a particular social sphere. In this regard, Gorz’s work underscores important considerations which are absent within contemporary FSCT.

Gorz reminds us that contemporary forms of capitalism serve to normalize the subjugation of more and more human activities to the logic of productivity. It is no longer just the work ethic that, from the Protestant ethic to the labour movement, glorified waged-labour. Rather, under neoliberal conditions, more and more spheres of life are being captured by an economic rationality that invites us to be more efficient and attractive to the market (Bröckling, 2016; Zamora García, 2019). This is not a ‘second-order disconnect’ in which the subject fails to optimally comprehend the normative order. Rather, this is a direct result of the existing social order itself (see Freyenhagen, 2015). In this context, Gorz’s materialist perspective serves to denaturalize the different mechanisms that contribute to this totalization of productivist ethics, linking them to the evolution of capitalist economies. Moreover, he reminds us that in order to understand the colonization of economic rationality it is important to understand not only the socioeconomic processes that are at play, but also the political forces that seek the increase of the market sphere. In his modest but illuminating account of how neoliberalism proposes to commodify new spheres of life as a solution to unemployment, Gorz anticipates a fruitful line of research that has tracked the expansion of markets (Brown, 2015; Dardot and Laval, 2013; Stedman Jones, 2012). Against such forces, Gorz’s proposal highlights the importance of institutional designs that are capable of guaranteeing a sphere of autonomy where productivist logics are set aside. This is crucially a challenge to the capitalist social formation itself, not merely a subjects’ comprehension of it.

Recognition-cognitive Critical Theory, as practised by Honneth and his followers, focuses on identifying how the normative order purportedly enables healthy intersubjective praxis. From such a perspective, subjects should strive to grasp and enact the objective rationality of the normative order of society. Rereading Gorz reminds us that such an approach is highly limited. Not merely must the productivist norms of alienating labour be challenged, but, Gorz stresses, so too must the pathologically induced norms of alienating *consumption*. The issue at all times is not merely ‘cognitive disconnects’, or psychic suffering. Rather, there exists a series of social dynamics that inculcate conformity to predetermined modes of consumption, which are anathema to the subject’s realization of their individual autonomy. In short, returning to Gorz reminds us that we are alienated

when we consume socially prescribed commodities. There is, as Fromm (1963: 86) worded it, an 'Insane Society' which is creating the 'Insane Subjects': the corollary of the dictum '*Mens sana in societate sana*' applies.

Gorz's work underscores that it is not merely enough to theorize the alienation of waged labour. We must theorize and challenge the norms and dynamics that inculcate conformity to the consumptive industries, theorized by the first generation of Critical Theorists as the 'Culture Industry'. It is no good to reduce waged labour time to 20 hours a week only to spend the liberated time enthralled to predetermined consumption patterns: this is no path to paradise. On the contrary, the phenomena that Marcuse theorized as 'repressive desublimation' must be constantly interrogated if autonomy is to be achieved. It is not enough to drop out of waged labour to tune into alienated consumption. Critical Theorists require a conceptual arsenal capable of interrogating this dual complexity, something Honneth's theoretical apparatus is clearly unable to provide.

Conclusion

Gorz's work remains of clear use today, both in its substantive analysis and as a critical interlocutor with contemporary social theory. Through his fusion of traditions and his sensitivity to counter-intuitive insights, Gorz enables us to see Critical Theory in a new perspective, demonstrating the limitations of contemporary FSCT. When we return to Gorz's nuanced eco-socialist understanding of alienation we realize that the productivism of neoliberal capitalism needs to be transcended. Gorz was clear that no sustainable, normative order could be built upon infinite growth. Further, we must embrace the Marcusean-Gorzian insight that it is not merely our labour that can be alienated, but also our desires, insights from Gorz that pre-empted the degrowth movement. Through a sympathetic re-reading of Gorz's work, we contend that more emphasis needs to be placed on the power of capitalism to colonize our living time, both at work and at play. As Gorz argues, a liberated subject is one who is able to be autonomous over their time, with alienating socially necessary labour restricted to a minimum, and autonomy held over decisions on consumption and relaxation outside the market sphere. In short, we need to recentre the critique of capitalism. Gorz clearly has much to teach today, both for social critique, and for the critique of contemporary social theory.

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ORCID iD

Neal Harris  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7336-1902>

Notes

1. By ‘contemporary FSCT’, we refer loosely to the work of Axel Honneth and the many theorists inspired by his Critical Theory of recognition.
2. The institute was founded in 1923 at Frankfurt am Main and has had periods of formal association with the University of Frankfurt am Main.
3. In addition, in his more recent plea for a renewal of socialism, Honneth (2017) explicitly underlines his anti-ecological stance.
4. This term has been used as a reference to Thompson’s (2016) *The Domestication of Critical Theory*. See also Harris (2022).

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Author Biographies

Neal Harris is a Senior Lecturer in Sociology at Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, UK. His publications include *Critical Theory & Social Pathology* (Manchester University Press, 2022) and *Capitalism and Its Critics* (co-authored with Gerard Delanty, Routledge, 2022).

Javier Zamora García holds a PhD in Political Science from the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, where he was also predoctoral FPU Fellow. He has carried out research visits in Canada (Western University) and the Netherlands (University of Utrecht).

Dr. Lucy Ford is part-time senior lecturer in International Relations at Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, UK. Her research is broadly concerned with global political ecology, most recently she has been working on integrating ecopsychology into the field.