

Title: “Dionysian Socialism?”: Discursive Economies of Theory and Praxis at the Korčula Summer School

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For a decade, beginning in 1965, leftist intellectuals from all sides of a divided Europe convened on the Yugoslav island of Korčula to bathe in the crystalline waters of “really existing socialism.” The Korčula Summer School brought figures such as Ernst Bloch, Herbert Marcuse, Eugen Fink, Jürgen Habermas, Lucien Goldmann, Thomas Bottomore and Agnes Heller, along with the members of the Yugoslav-based Praxis Group, to the sunny Dalmatian island in order to discuss the theory and practice of Marxist Humanism. The reception of these philosophical meetings, which were widely covered in the Yugoslav and Western-European press, varied. Some responses exalted in the intellectual prestige of the international guests, while others celebrated Yugoslavia’s non-aligned form of “really existing socialism.” Still others criticized the meetings as indulgent. For instance, in 1973, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* covered the events under the headline “Dionysischer Sozialismus?” while *Borba* (the official newspaper of the Yugoslav communist party) ran the headline: “Instead of Marxism—a Cocktail.”

While participants did quietly question the luxurious isle of Korčula and its literal and figurative isolation from the masses, the central tension that animated discourse at the Korčula Summer School centered on the competing authorities of theory and praxis. The debate was underpinned by an implicit discursive economy; on the one hand, the luminaries of the international New Left imported theoretical “capital,” while on the other, the Yugoslav hosts offered the political authority of really existing socialism—the “capital” of praxis. This paper documents how the participants exchanged these two types of discursive capital, and analyzes the impact of this economy on the Summer School’s philosophical production.