



The European Graduate School
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Seminar with Professor Frank Ruda (4.5 ECTS credits)
Division of Philosophy, Art and Critical Thought
October Session Session/October 9–11 2019

Worsenings. Imaginary, Symbolic, Real

In his *Conflict of Faculties*, Immanuel Kant raised the “old question” if mankind is progressing over time (eudaemonism) or things keep on getting worse (moral terrorism) or if there is eternal stagnation (abderitism). Empirically, all things seem to point to stagnation: there are so many bad things, it is difficult to make an argument for eudaemonism; and moral terrorism is conceptually flawed. Things cannot keep on getting worse forever, at one point we reached the worst (mankind self-destructs) which invalidates the idea. Yet if mankind were in a situation of eternal stagnation, life would be a “mere farcical comedy”. Kant will therefore attempt to concoct a different version of eudaemonism. The course “Worsenings. Imaginary, Symbolic, Real” will not follow Kant’s solution, but will examine if one can conceive of a non-empirical version of moral terrorism. We will discuss how failure and things going not only wrong but worse can create the very conditions for the something genuinely new. This will urge us to think differently about nature, history and politics, art and subjectivity and we will see how assuming that “the worst already happened” has a genuinely emancipatory value. We will thus be in permanent company of Samuel Beckett and his “Worstward Ho!”.

Readings

For session 1:

G.W.F. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences*, Vol. 1 (any edition) §§ 237-244 and
G.W.F. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences*, Vol. 2 (any edition), “Introduction”
and §§245-251.

For session 2

Hegel and the Human Spirit: A Translation of the Jena Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit
(1805-1806), pp. 162-183.

For session 3 and 4:

Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (any edition), especially sections 4 and 7

For sessions 5 and 6:

Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, transl. by John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson (Oxford: 1962), 179-182; 228-235; 310-311; 391-395

And: Alain Badiou, *Theory of the Subject* (London: 2009), 158-176.

And: Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book X: Anxiety* (Cambridge: 2014), 55-85.