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# **Human Freedom/Capitalist Un-Freedom**

## **Introduction to Marxism**

Summer University Critical Psychology

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# Structure of the Talk

1. Critical Psychology as an Anthropology of Freedom
2. Historical Society and Individual Learning/Development
3. Historical Origins of Marxism
4. The Nature and Logic of Capitalism
5. Un-Freedom in Capitalism
6. Critical Psychology As a Marxist Science from the Standpoint of the Subject

# Critical Psychology and Marxism I

- Psychology: Social Science or Science?
- Critical Psychology's rejection the genetics/environment dichotomy
- „Grundlegung der Psychologie“: second qualitative leap → purpose/means inversion (transmission of tools) → human freedom of decision-making/human natural relations
- Anthropology of freedom

# Historical Society and Individual Freedom I

- „The relationship between humans and their environment does not constitute itself in individual learning and development processes. Instead, crucial determinants are already in place before the individual interaction with one's own environment begins... In particular individual ways, this overarching humans/environment matrix is then merely *modified* in the individual learning and development process. Therefore, we can only understand this process of individuation if we know the overarching matrix, because only then do we know *what* in particular is being modified here.“  
(Klaus Holzkamp, 1977)

# Historical Society and Individual Freedom II

„...The fact that traditional psychology excludes this historically developed humans/environment matrix and attempts to explain individuals in their contemporary environment through themselves so to speak is, on the one hand, the result of its imprisonment in the forms of bourgeois private relations and, on the other hand, the decisive reason for its inability to understand humans' individual modes of living scientifically.“ (Klaus Holzkamp, 1977)

# Historical Society and Individual Freedom III

- „Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past.“



# Critical Psychology and Marxism II

- Capitalism as the objective societal structure and *Bedeutungszusammenhang* for subjective freedom of action
- Critical Psychology as a sub-discipline of Marxism: Subject Science (KH 1977: „particular subject science“)
- Marxism as (1) critical theory of society and (2) philosophy of praxis

# Transzendence versus immanence: Marxism as liberalism's child and opponent

- The divine right of kings → rule of the church
- Economic rise of the bourgeoisie in the cities/shift in relationships of forces
- Immanence as an *ideological* weapon (natural right/epistemological individualism/equality)
- Parlamentarianism as the *political* weapon
- Equality for whom? („possessive individualism“)
- Liberalism ≠ democracy

# Three Sources of Marxism I

1. German philosophy
2. French socialism
3. English classical political economy

# Three Sources of Marxism II

- German philosophy: Historical-dialectical method (Hegel), materialism (Feuerbach)
- French socialism: French Revolution 1789ff = democracy versus liberalism, history as a history of class struggles, social equality (Lorenz von Stein)
- English classical political economy: material foundations of human life, analysis of economic tendential laws, social classes and antagonisms

# Marxism as a critical theory of society *and a philosophy of praxis*

- „Die Große Methode ist eine praktische Lehre der Bündnisse und der Auflösung der Bündnisse, der Ausnutzung der Veränderungen und der Abhängigkeit von den Veränderungen, der Bewerkstelligung der Veränderung und der Veränderung der Bewerksteller, der Trennung und Entstehung von Einheiten, der Unselbstständigkeit der Gegensätze ohne einander, der Vereinbarkeit einander ausschließender Gegensätze. Die Große Methode ermöglicht, in den Dingen Prozesse zu erkennen und zu benutzen. Sie lehrt Fragen zu stellen, welche das Handeln ermöglichen.“ (Bertolt Brecht, Meti: Buch der Wendungen, S.63)

The background of the image is a dark, marbled pattern with swirling veins of brown, black, and gold. The text is centered and written in a serif font. The quote is in a larger, bold font, and the attribution is in a smaller font below it.

Die Philosophen haben die Welt  
nur verschieden interpretiert,  
es kommt aber darauf an,  
sie zu verändern.

Karl Marx

# The Nature and Logic of Capitalism (I)

- Social division of labor: society of exchange
- Freedom of contract: no more political appropriation of societal surplus products
- Private property in the means of production (class antagonism)
- Commodity production by means of commodities (Sraffa), humans/nature: fictive commodities (Polanyi)
- Factors of production: means of production, raw materials, labor power, ground rent
- Cycle of accumulation:  $M-C-M'-C'-M''$  (money – commodity – money+)
- Marx: use value/exchange value

# The Nature and Logic of Capitalism (II)

- Logic of profit maximization, but why?  
→ General Law of Competition + insecurity in the sphere of distribution
- Key question in mainstream/bourgeois economics: Why this price?
- Key question in Marxist political economy:  
(1) What's the origin of profit? (2) Why this particular form of organizing social production and reproduction?

# Capitalist Un-Freedom I: Humans as commodities

- Market  $\neq$  market
- Markets in pre-capitalist societies: opportunity
- Markets in capitalist society: compulsion (compulsion to sell oneself and one's own labor power as a commodity)
- „Industrial reserve army“
- Inherent logic of the capitalist mode of production: unionization or death
- Alienation: abstract vs. concrete labor

# Capitalist Un-Freedom II: Systematic Exploitation

- What is the origin of profit? How can its existence be explained? (Cl. Pol. Ec.: additional theory etc., neo-classical: not interested)
- Marx: exploitation of human labor force („surplus value“)
- Absolute versus relative surplus value → Social class struggles over time (eight hour work-day)

# Capitalist Un-Freedom III: Dictatorship of exchange value production

- Why do humans starve to death? Because the earth is overpopulated?
- Why do people still die from Aids or Ebola? Because we have not developed antidotes yet?
- Why do „we“ produce and deliver arms into warzones? Why don't we invest more in teachers, doctors, nurses, social workers, etc.?
- Limits of bourgeois democracy at the factory and office building's gate
- Anarchy of production: capitalist planning versus democratic planning

# Capitalist Un-Freedom IV: Cut-off societal freedom

- Capitalism's historical „mission“:  
Development of productive forces → material foundations of social and individual freedom
- Capitalist crises: problem of „too much“ rather than „not enough“ (overaccumulation, free trade, international conflict and war)
- Economic crises etc. as a quasi second realm of nature? → social relations (master/serf, creditor/debtor, capital/wage labor, etc.)

# Capitalist Un-Freedom V: Capital as an „automatic subject“

- What to do with surplus capital?:  
Compulsion of economic growth (ca. 3 percent GDP/year)
- What to do with surplus labor?: Social compulsion of economic growth (ca. 2.5 percent) → advances in technology and productivity as curses, not blessings
- What to do with surplus production?:  
Ecological un-sustainability

# Capitalist Un-Freedom VI: *Landnahme*

- External versus internal *Landnahme*
- Internal *Landnahme* → Historical anti-capitalist achievements („welfare state“) stehen zur Disposition („post-democracy“/„democracy vs. capitalism“)
- Commodification: education as a commodity, health as a commodity, basic services as commodities (water, etc.)
- „Socialism or barbarism“ (Karl Kautsky/ Rosa Luxemburg)

# Critical Psychology as a Marxist Science from the Standpoint of the Subject

- „dual possibility“
- Restrictive/universalizable capacity to act
- Interpreting (deuten)/comprehending (begreifen) (→ ideology)
- internal compulsion/motivation (→ interiorization of domination)  
defensive learning/expansive learning  
(→ traditional vs. Critical Theory)

# „Wer wird die Welt verändern?“: Erkenntnis und Parteilichkeit

