

# On critique and its potential in research and politics

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## *Abstract*

Based on the claim to present the study of social sciences as a foundation for collective agency, this contribution works with own experiences with teaching, with research, with doubt and critique. The Feuerbach theses are read anew, as are Antonio Gramsci's proposals for a philosophy of practice, and both brought into the context of own research on computerization, gender relations as well as memory work in the women's movement.

## *Keywords*

critique, practice research, memory work, learning and teaching

## **The question and problem-shifting**

I was asked to share some thoughts and experiences on the potential and practice of critique in research and politics. This request irritated me at first and urged me to search further, to piece together as if sewing a quilt. Until then I had assumed that a historical-critical method was the only way of doing research and that it was also a necessary foundation for politics. But then I quickly remembered a puzzling experience with my students. I used to teach at a university for second chance education - an institution that mostly attracted people from working life. In other words, the students had not entered University by having attended a *gymnasium*, but through an examination after having had some professional experience. There, I made a plan for a seminar that departed from their experiences at work and the goal of which was to show the usefulness of abstraction and conceptual understanding as a new foundation of sustainable change. In short, it was my ambition to make science a tool for understanding their lives; a scientific approach as something useful, even necessary. This was

not learning by heart and through lots of abstractions, learning in order to climb the social ladder, but learning as a possibility to understand capitalist societies in such a way that an alternative society would become a new perspective. I wanted to do this in such a way that my students would see their working experiences as a valuable point of departure, not as inadequate or something to be scorned upon. In other words, sociology and social psychology were wholly conceived as education of the entire person. I wanted to use the critique of political economy to develop enthusiasm for science with these worker-students rather than with those from the *gymnasium* with no experience in real life and who, if successful, were meant to automatically enter the higher professional positions. In short, I wanted to realize the leftist dream of Rosa Luxemburg: that the constellation of the ruling who knew and the ruled who knew not could be shifted in such a way that “all would learn to take over the government”.

This was the end of the 1970s, more than 10 years after 1968, the symbol for students' rebellion. At the universities there was an apolitical silence, the Marxist staff had mostly been cleansed and I remember the students being more or less bored and discontent. Those who taught there were left to compete with television, to make the seminars entertaining for the students; not to empower them to change society.

I was one of those Marxists who could no longer attain a position as professor at a regular university. Yet with the support of students and some staff I became an assistant at this university of second chance education that had been founded after the war in 1948 as an ‘academy of social economy’ by a joint effort by the state and the unions. I was strong-willed to use this situation as an opportunity to think of these very students as agents in changing the world, as students for whom the critique of political economy was especially fertile and who could simultaneously appropriate scientific work, a critique of social theory and an analysis of society. This was so self-evident, a conviction that doubt was an element of life, that I assumed every student would long for learning social criticism. And yet precisely at this early stage in the drama of learning-teaching, the flow of the movement was blocked. If I recall correctly, all students resisted in seeing critique as a weapon, as something constructive and productive, let alone in wanting to learn to practice it themselves. Some left the seminar, others just stayed expectantly. After a period of stupefaction and helplessness I had to recognize that I must start anew. I would have to put aside all my careful plans to include working experience in a way that would be fertile in supporting historical-critical work and therefore scientific advancement. It was critique itself that had to be put at the center of interrogation. But how to do so, if it was tainted as a taboo?

During that semester I learned much about myself from the students' refusal; I learned about my thinking and its many unexamined presuppositions; about how to teach, and about learning itself. Above all, I got to survey the huge lacunae to be researched. It began with my self-evident prejudice that working was necessarily a positive experience, an advantage of the students at the workers' university over those who came directly from the *gymnasium*. I had easily dismissed the fact that it was precisely the experiences with wage labor that make life unbearable in more than one way, that make people sick and shorten life. I had dismissed the fact that the experiences I wanted to depart from were nothing particularly fascinating for the students themselves, but rather something they wanted to leave behind. But a stinging thorn remained in that experience – sensuous practical activity — that should at the same time be a decisive departing point for creating knowledge.

My new approach was now not to take students' experience with work — which I could stubbornly only conceive of as wage labor — as a point of departure, but to start from students' experience with critique itself. The students wrote down their memories of their experiences with critique. This became the key for opening a treasure of lived and enduring experiences, of emotions, of suffering. Critique proved to be negatively connoted through and through; an act inflicted by someone else. Critique was devaluation, disrespect, destruction, affront, deprivation of love and friendship in all areas, whether the parental home, at school, in an apprenticeship, in everyday work. It was a weapon against the potential to feel at home in life, to be liked, supported, and wanted. All words at hand — and there were ever more, a stream of negative experiences — were written down. They showed that against such an arsenal of defense against critique it was impossible to even think of critique as a subject of teaching, as something to be used productively to destroy old habits, as a potential for something new, as an appealing alternative. I learned that in my initial approach I had even expected the students to become the actors of critique themselves and not just its victims. Probably it would have been easier and would have entailed far less effort to seduce them to cheat, to lie, to betray; to show them that the goal of learning was the art of selling themselves as expensively as possible on the market of social possibilities without much work.

The question had to shift a second time. I now looked for a positive experience with critique and approached this by appealing to the students' commonsense understanding of the world (*gesunder Menschenverstand*), that is the worldview that people hold in spite of a twisting of ideas, superstitions and opinion. Yet, the discussion with the students only revealed a deeper abyss: In short, the students wanted no critique at all, neither to experience it nor to practice it. Instead, they sought praise, and in the context of wage work this

meant a working environment in which flowers and congratulations on their birthday were proof that they were acknowledged as part of the company staff. In other words, they proved receptive to cheap strategies in creating a feel-good atmosphere, a strategy sold at every corner and which I was used to teach against as a resource in class struggle. The experience-based approach was obviously not possible. If you find yourself in a dead-end-street, it is wise to choose another road.

### **How did Marx use the workers' experiences in his critique of political economy?**

I therefore changed gears and examined how Marx dealt with workers' experiences in his *critique of political economy*. In the first volume of *Capital* there are lots of work-experiences – particularly in the footnotes to the chapters on *manufacture, machinery and large-scale industry*. Here, one finds detailed descriptions of work-activities and miserable conditions in factories, all of which are apt to sharpen the standpoint of critique. Yet they are not written from the standpoint of the workers, but instead look critically at these areas from the perspective of the development of the forces of production towards a society without exploitation. It remains obvious that Marx represents the standpoint of the workers, evaluating the reports of factory inspectors, carefully identifying resistance. But how are learning from experience and dealing with work experiences treated in his critique?

In fact, there is proof that Marx confronted this question using a well-known tool: *A Workers' Inquiry* (1938/1880). The questionnaire encompasses 100 questions which workers should answer in written form and extensively. 25,000 copies were distributed in France as printed in the journal, *Revue Socialiste*, and later translated into English and German. It is not surprising that there was no huge response and no great evaluation of the survey to follow. Responding to the questions would have been excessively demanding and would have also demanded workers' own research so that completing it could have taken many hours, days or even weeks. Yet it is remarkable that Marx breaks with typical social surveys — insofar as they even existed at the time — by calling upon the workers themselves as researchers in their own cause. Looking back, it is amusing to see how Marx puts together elements of his theory of surplus value and, step by step, seeks to translate it into the domain of conscious experience: Most of the questions are still appropriate at present for using them in contemporary seminars in which participants are not simply informed and taught, but their knowledge is recalled and collectively can be put to such

complicated concepts as the theory of surplus value (e.g., I, 15 and 16, 27, conditions at the working place, what belongs to it and its effects on health; II, 11, 14, 16 – time delays, children, school and learning content; III, 3 and 4, on justice - punishments if contracts are broken, 11,12, 13, labor done in advance, 24, necessary objects and their cost, 27-29, 30 changes in economy without an effect on wage relations, 35 perspectives in retirement, IV strikes, servant of the wage master, participation in returns). The questionnaire is thus a careful explanation to Marx' earlier famous sentence: "It will become obvious that the world has long owned a *dream of something* of which it must only become conscious in order to really own it" (Marx, 1843, p. 1). Dull suffering is replaced by consciousness of the situation as a precondition for agency; concrete knowledge regarding disturbance, lack of well-being or disease is a possibility to intervene.

After this ever-surprising approach in Marx in which one can also learn about his blind spots, about men at work and about forgetting women's work altogether, I continued with Marx.

### **Theses on Feuerbach**

In his famous writing on Feuerbach he sketches his whole project, his great *Critique of Political Economy*, presenting its main axes in a few pages. I include an excerpt of his text in original, a piece of his first and third thesis:

The main defect of all hitherto-existing materialism – that of Feuerbach included – is that the issue, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object or of contemplation, but not as sensuous human activity, praxis, not subjectively ... Hence, he does not grasp the significance of "revolutionary", of "practical-critical", activity. (Third thesis): The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-change can be conceived and rationally understood only as *revolutionary practice*. (Marx, 1888)

My politicization in the first generation of students — who in the mid 1960s began to read Marx seriously — unfolded such that we understood the words in the *Feuerbach Theses* as if they had been written in a foreign language. Even where they seemed to be everyday words, we did not really grasp them, including all the essential ones: materialism, issue, reality, sensuousness, form of the object or contemplation, sensuous human activity, praxis, subjective, practical-critical activity, self-change, revolutionary praxis. Even today, 50 years later, I discover something new whenever I read them; entire worlds of unnoticed analysis and

critique. I assume that this is a general experience that merits carefully being taken apart, an autobiographical historical-critical approach of its own. But at the time, though I studied in an environment that felt drawn to Marx, the *Theses on Feuerbach* remained mute; we spoke differently with the same words.

I belonged to the first generation of sociology students at the Free university of Berlin where I learned that the fundamental question upholding a theory of society was this: How is society possible? Until then – as difficult as it may be for later generations to imagine – to even use the word “*society*” was negatively connoted, it was a term associated with communism and materialism and implied transgressing a border into a forbidden zone. The Free University, where I immediately became politically engaged, was founded on making the invisible fence around this zone higher and less permeable. In studying sociology, we dealt with abstractions, something that was both difficult and new. These abstractions included structure, institutions, classes, stratifications. Our politics were targeted against our fascist past and war and towards its prevention. The distance between the new field we had to learn, and our individual pasts, did not leave space for dealing with ourselves, at least not in public. Thus, issues to be avoided included the sensuous, the subjective and its special praxes, self-change, all of which went unnoticed. Revolutionary change, which drew our enthusiasm as students in a process of change, thus became an abstract and far-away goal; an act that either took place somewhere in the past or if at present, only in faraway countries. As the cult-films of the time (such as *Maria and Maria*) showed us, revolutionary change was only connected to ourselves if we became followers in bloody or dangerous acts. The key to our life, “The coincidence of changing the circumstances and of human activity or self-change [that] can be conceived and rationally understood only as *revolutionary praxis*” could be filed away under a list of “things not understood,” one that became larger and larger in the course of our studies.

### **Critique of capitalism, women’s history and research of everyday life**

We studied Marx’s *Capital* in reading groups close to the journal, *Das Argument*. Our critique of capitalism developed with a critique of fascism and war, it was part of proudly being part of the Left; of being socialists with a sense of belonging. And yet we lacked consciousness about how society, both past and present, was related to our own constitution and that of “others”. We did not even ask how the state, capitalism, or ideology — conceived as external relations — were related to each of us, or how we as humans became who we are today.

This was the end of the 1960s and the protest of the students seized everyday life, its habits, norms, morals, but leaving aside women's inequality. The women's movement therefore logically resisted by founding consciousness-raising groups. There were huge assemblies of several hundred women, who one after the other stood up and spoke out against oppression, disrespect or cruelty as she lived it personally. On the one hand, this praxis seemed correct and adequate – how else could women's history could come from the unseen and into general consciousness? On the other hand, it also seemed inadequate because many wanted to speak out, but the many others who waited for their turn to speak were needed as listeners, not as speakers. Moreover, there the process was full of repetitions which made the process a dull one and did not improve our comprehension.

Over time the study of women's history took hold in many countries and universities, obtaining a dignified place as a discipline and faculty of its own. But in this redemption, the promise of the 3rd thesis on Feuerbach was lacking, namely that self-change and change of the conditions should coincide in revolutionary praxis. In the context of changing society through critical, revolutionary praxis, being concerned with oneself got from the smell, to be something for luxurious ladies, who have time and money and nothing else to do, in the context of changing society in critical, in revolutionary praxis. The exclusion of the one by the other, the either-or of studying oneself or the relations of production had, by a narrow uniting of those who exclude one another, becomes a movement forward. In a revolutionary praxis of change both sides are in movement, the critical individuals and the relations to be changed; this calls for continuous critical work, for self-reflection, for the study of the relations of forces wholly engaged in the direction of change. The demand to change oneself was no longer a moral demand for obedience and docility but, just the opposite, one that seemed to call for disobedience and permanent rebellion against various authorities. Antiauthoritarian education was the demand of the hour for some; restlessly, others understood this as a call to passionately join revolutions somewhere in the world, or to begin one in one's own city. The term "revolution" was understood as a sort of strange religion whose faith one must profess in order to become active against an outside enemy. This approach gained all the attention in the media and as a result acquired many new followers. In the meantime, the searching Marxist feminists in a process of change could not and did not seek to swim alongside mainstream feminists.

## Women also make their history themselves

The Marxist feminists of the student movement began to analyze how the subjection of the female gender (“their worldwide defeat”, as Engels (1884) puts it) was not simply to be understood as an overpowering force set into motion through a male conspiracy. They asked how disposing over the female body (through labor and sexuality) took place via the agreement of the oppressed who tend to produce and reproduce it throughout their life. The title of an early book in the women’s movement, *We are not born as women, we are made into women* (Scheu, 1977) rightly protested against the idea of an *a priori* female nature, but remains trapped in the idea that men are enemies and women their victims. The “*Victim or actor*”-debate (Haug, 1985) urged us to look for the “enemies” within ourselves; that is, to analyze the active role we play in co-producing our own oppression within the capitalist relations of production. Marx and Lassalle, each with different emphasis held as fundamental that people make their own history, even if not out of their free will. Rosa Luxemburg underlines: “At a first glance, all good and evil, the fortunes and the poverty of the peoples are the creation of single emperors or great men. In reality, it is the peoples themselves, the nameless masses, who create their fortune and pain” (1987, p. 206).

This insight was necessary for developing Memory Work — which most of you here might know as it was the most convincing approach during my teaching and talks in Denmark and Roskilde. It was convincing because it is a method engaging all participants — regardless of whether they are teachers or students — directly into doing research on themselves yet without embarrassing self-exposure and still simultaneously creating knowledge relevant to the issue at hand. As Marx does in his questionnaire for workers, Memory Work departs from the experiences of individuals’ own past (or present), assuming that each knows more about herself than she thinks. It is this knowledge that is brought forward and be conceptualized, liberated from dull, heavy and painful forgetting and brought into a form of conscious knowledge at the disposal of all participants. An analysis of societal relations is complemented by the microscopic analysis of individual autobiographies. The historical-critical method is Memory Work (Haug, 1992, 1999, 2016) and takes Brecht’s demand “to live in the third person” seriously. Among others, this entails overcoming the vain moralism in the discourse on self-change, an imperative towards self-reflection that demands reporting on oneself while remembering and writing as if one were a stranger to whom one shall be introduced. This sharpens the eye, rendering an account as to what is essential and what is not necessary. It avoids bribery and can detect complicity with domination and negate it.

The study of Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* (1991) was essential for the elaboration and continuous development of Memory Work. There, Gramsci makes a series of proposals that seem to be directly invented for Memory Work, giving, for each worldview, advice within a *philosophy of praxis*: "Immersed in the relations, at home in different and even opposite cultures; with modes of thinking filled with superstition and prejudice, they must work on themselves coherently, creating an inventory of oneself, working on oneself to gain social agency. This is a process that has no end." In a dense analysis, Gramsci puts forth that as a social being, "humans" (der Mensch) cannot appropriate this very being if they do not continuously promote their own self-change. This task is not only a psychological one, but above all a political one, because it necessarily includes the shaping of society. "Therefore, one can say, that each becomes different and changes himself by making the totality of the relations of which he is the center of entanglement (*Verknüpfungszentrum*), to become different by [actively] changing them" (Gramsci, 1991, book 10, § 54). This presupposes, "genetically recognizing [the relations] in the flux of their formation, for each individual is not only the synthesis of existing relations, but also the history of these relations. Thus, she is the summary of the entire past" (ibid.). In his *Introduction into the study of philosophy* (book 11) Gramsci returns to these thoughts and simultaneously summarizes other elements that serve towards further orientation. It is important to note that Gramsci writes in a certain emancipatory perspective and therefore begins "negatively" in the special sense of departing from an existing state of "not yet" being: "If a worldview is not critical and coherent, but haphazard and incoherent, . . . one's own personality comes together in a bizarre manner, including elements of the cave-dweller and principles of the most modern and advanced science; prejudices of all pasts, local, narrow-minded historical phases and intuitions of a future philosophy, belonging to human race united worldwide. To criticize one's own worldview is therefore to make it consistent and coherent, elevating it up to the point in which the most advanced thinking of the world is reached. It therefore also means criticizing the totality of philosophy insofar as it has left pieces that are stuck in popular philosophy. The beginning of a critical elaboration is consciousness of that which is real, meaning a 'Recognize yourself' as a product of the historical process until now that has left an eternity of traces, accepted without condition in the inventory. Such an inventory must be put together from the beginning" (book 11, § 12, note 1).

It should be noted that Gramsci's proposals were made eight decades ago already, but remained unheard and forgotten in spite of excellent translations in the 1980s. Then, in post-Marxist gender research it was proclaimed as brand new that women were a construction. In turn, this was used to disarticulate

Feminist-Marxist research, diverging from women as a solidary subject and also repudiating work on one's own coherence in favor of an acknowledgement of multiplicity and diversity in the inner self.

Back to memory work. Its goal is solidary agency in a political as well as in an epistemological sense. It focuses on collective self-determination, on learning based on presupposing a politics from below, a desire of self-development and of affirming oneself. In struggling to bring into consciousness that which is known — as does Marx in his questionnaire for workers — Memory Work works with language and meaning. It struggles continuously with everyday language, with its occupation by dominating ideologies and opinion, by habits, by that which is taken for granted. It strives for the good life where it has long gotten a bad taste and been occupied. It counts on the solidary reason of each individuals' common sense; its self-improvement in a collective striving towards the same goal and striving towards substituting generally avoidable misfortune with a possible good fortune.

### **Self-criticism**

Self-criticism is an elementary dimension of insights produced through Memory Work. A person guides the process, but as all others she is researcher and researched, subject as well as object. Like the others, she knows her experience in such detail that comparison is possible, mistakes and errors can be discussed. Prejudices can become visible to the politically correct person that would not have expected them as her own. In searching for how the relations in question reproduce themselves and are actively reproduced by all, it becomes possible and also imperative that doubt becomes productive critique, self-criticism a source of further knowledge (see in my latest book on Marxism-feminism, 2015, the chapters "The misunderstood emancipation" and "Defense of the women's movement" under the Gramscian motto of the inventory without condition).

As a confident researcher from below, there was the disquieting question as to whether one could at all justify a leader in collective memory. Moreover, this doubt had to be extended to us as teachers. We had criticized school up to the point of repudiating it as an institution that blocked the learning process (see Holzkamp's 1995 book on learning). Learning through curricula was rejected, and it was asked whether only an autonomous individual could be a source of further learning. I went as far as radicalizing the question: Why do students need teachers at all? Following more enduring doubts, I then came back to the paradigm at the point of departure, to experience. Teachers are necessary for leading experiences into a process of crisis, in order to begin a process of

unlearning, of disrupting the continuous reproduction of domination through habits. Until today, this argument is contested within Critical Psychology and must be further elaborated. This was a lesson from Brecht who speaks of bringing views into crisis (1967, p. 153). In numerous notes and elaborated prose (e.g., writings on politics and society), one can distill his procedure, which we can call scientific, as follows: a concept, a worldview, a conviction or opinion, even if “flattened out”, is not to be proved wrong or to be contradicted. Rather, one must study how it is generated, asking what experiences allow the judgments made; looking for counter-experiences, whether on the same level, whether analytical and abstract; and thus, calling for a crisis in which it imperative to study on its own, to think it over again, to come to a new judgment. “Good has a bad aftertaste”, “don’t moan that the fish is caught in the net, but study how the net has been thrown”, “look for your issue in the flow of the movement in the direction of where things change, start there”, etc. In short, Brecht gives advice for permanent self-reflection.

To perceive self-critically in the world liberates imagination as well as learning processes. But what exactly does critique mean, or what do we mean when we speak about critique? Until here it was assumed that a critique that builds on incrimination, accusation, denunciation — which obviously elicited resistance by the students as they embarked on their scholarly studies — and whose productivity was to be shown for research and recognition, was not productive for research and praxis. Here is not the place to discuss in depth the concept of critique, its language, origin, epistemology etc. (see Haug et al, 2012). For our questions in carrying out research on labor, pedagogy, gender research or psychology here we ruthlessly reached into the pool of historical knowledge, seeking for pieces we deemed fertile for further work. I briefly mentioned some ideas as I developed by working with Marx for involving the workers as researchers; with Gramsci for memory work; and discussed some more of our praxes.

### **Contradicting oneself**

On critique there is much more to learn from Marx than his questionnaires. He criticizes subjects, relations, ideas, science, theories, and behavior. Above all, he studies inverses, effects that take on the status of objects through the active involvement of actors; how work comes to be part of the value form; how the things that people do confront them as something that can be bought and traded on the market; and how this practice structures society as if the workers had nothing to do with the process. How other human practices unfold, such as how

humans sustain themselves – in scarcity or with pleasure; how they procreate – without conscience and with pleasure or need, how they organize the upbringing of children in specific forms (e.g., family), how all of this comes into the form of religion (the holy family), of morals and values. Our own activities become foreign powers that determine our actions as we in turn subject ourselves. In other words, Marx studies the practice of contradicting oneself in different forms. He does not study a single phenomenon by looking at its opposite — friends and enemies; good and evil — but looks for the genesis of a praxis. He looks at what form a particular practice assumes and how the form determines a particular view. The entire undertaking is one of critique that studies the issues in their connection, differentiates among them, judges them, puts them into a new correlation with the goal of gaining clarity about human relationships and relations so that the possibility of a perspective without domination can be a guide for action.

Critique is interesting here as tool for detection. Socrates had suggested something similar with his proposal for talking through things that got stuck, using dialogue for loosening concepts that had become rigid in order to finally reach an immanent resolution. In our research group on automation (PAQ) we made use of this well-known method and invented the *group interview led by contradictions*. We looked for practical experiences in learning the use of new technologies about which we already knew that the introductory courses were mostly taken by males, while the women who were the majority in administration and public service immediately took on tasks such as making the workplace comfortable, making coffee and running all sorts of errands. We also knew that it would not be easy to start learning “as equals”, as long as the new equipment was perceived mainly as technical in nature and not just as a typewriting machine. We foresaw that all prejudices on technical giftedness in contrast to the natural orderly diligence of women would all at once take the floor. But we also knew that the acceptance of the old division of labor in new relations also needed workers’ own consent. In the group conversation nothing exciting happened for some time; tenaciously, each repeated why they had taken up which task as if it had been done out of their free will. This was where self-contradictions come in. It is best to choose a contradiction that is commonly experienced but is not seen central source of insight. In the workplace — and almost everywhere else — these are the gender relations. It is a general consensus in our industrialized capitalist countries that the different sexes should have equal rights and duties, acknowledgement, even wages. Possible inequalities are seen as non-simultaneous and in need of reform. At the same time, everybody knows that in practice, things look different. In the case of learning new technologies, it would suffice as a contradiction to invoke equality; and against it, insist that there

already was the equality in the learning process. In our case, the otherwise harmonious conversation was immediately interrupted by wild discussion in which one sex accused the other of numerous mistakes, omissions, disregarding, pushing aside etc. In this situation, we could not clearly elaborate on how learning took or did not place in practice and what disturbances came up. One can also find out how many crises are necessary to bring about real changes in the old division of labor and their respective habits.

### **Gender relations and the four-in-one-perspective**

Although I do not know whether rapidly changing technology will continue to reproduce of old divisions of labor, I choose the example of computerization in the office to underline the strategic relevance of gender relations — dealt with by Marx but without receiving careful explanation in order to be fruitful in discussing critique, recognition, politics.

I summarized my analytical approach to gender relations as such: “The concept should be suitable for critically investigating the structural role that genders play in social relations in their totality. It presupposes that which is a result of the relations to be investigated: the existence of ‘genders’ in the sense of historically given men and women. Complementarity in procreation is the natural basis upon which what has come to be regarded as ‘natural’ has been socially constituted in the historical process. In this way, genders emerge from the social process as unequal. Their inequality then becomes the foundation for further transformations, and gender relations become fundamental regulating relations in all social formations. No field can be investigated meaningfully without complementary research into the ways in which gender relations shape and are shaped” (Haug, 2001, p. 493).

Thus, we can say that women’s oppression as well as the use and incorporation of traditional modes of production are embedded in the fundament of capitalist modes of production. These relations of production are extremely prone to crises that deepen divisions in society, produce armies of the superfluous and exhaust resources. Capitalism developed by knotting together major divisions of labor (town and country; head and hand; men’s and women’s work). In order to overcome it, a dissolution of this collusion is required, as well as an analysis and processing of its defeat in the spheres of culture, politics, in wage labor and in reproduction. For this process I proposed a project that should serve as political orientation and should support knowledge creation. I call it the *four-in-one perspective* (Haug, 2009, 2011). After years of unsuccessful fighting for including women’s unpaid labor in home and family in the critique of political economy and to rupture the spontaneous hierarchy of what is important

or unimportant, I outlined a model in which the equality of the spheres of everyday life are presumed and at the same time opens up a perspective of the own political project. It starts to realize the disposal over time as a foundation of all domination and suggests therefore another regime of time. Each sphere of activity should be on equal footing as the others. Each should be carried through by all. Each should be granted as a right and each should be in responsibility of each. With this new junction the different sorts of activities change in their meaning for the social whole as well as for each. Changing the conditions of life and self-change coincide such that the demand that everybody participates in shaping society is no longer a mere phrase but becomes socially necessary.

As a precondition and at the same time as part of its always new result, critical thinking cannot unfold in simple negation, by mere opposition, by substituting obedience through disobedience, by replacing subjection through taking over power, by striving for being superior, but by unravelling self-contradiction. As obstacles grow, there are conscious resistances, crises, wars. Counterforces are to be found in existing structures and economic interests supported by the state, as they are also to be found in the interior of each. This is especially true of women in their natural division of labor as in the respective ideologies, values, morals, the structures of protection-dependence as backed up by the state. A continuous study of the relations of forces is a major task of critical thinking including, the investigation of thought and language-politics. To confront the different forces that shape domination individually would create ever stronger fetters. It is necessary to wrestle with them simultaneously, something that presupposes a different division of labor, including that between men and women and also demands the responsibility of others in producing time for self-development and for shaping politics.

I refer to this as the knot of domination, woven together by different threads that support and maintain one another. Some are not visible, but together they nonetheless keep the capitalist economy running. Braided in this knot is the profit-driven operation of capital, which assimilates living labor in the form of wage labor, thereby always further developing the productive forces, so that labor — its source — is cut back and dries out. This already is a complicated dialectical context in which are interwoven invisible unspoken actions without history, all of which are necessary to reproduce the life of humans und their external nature. These form a special thread, they have a different temporal logic in that they are not easily rationalized or optimized in order to bear profit: In their different forms, these include the loving mother, the heroic nurse, the volunteer, the protector of the environment. These are as well-known as are the catastrophes that attack the people from behind, from the brutalization and the deprivation of entire generations and peoples to the end of the habitability of the earth. Many of

these activities remain invisible and many have taken the form of labor in the developed capitalist countries where they are tolerated in poorly-seen and poorly-paid prestige.

In this context the neglect of people as humans goes unnoticed – individual development is branded as luxury, something that only the rich can afford, whereas the impulse to unfold human potential is suffocated in the intoxication of consumption which at the same time is the basis for economic growth, etc. Unnoticed is also that humans are kept in subaltern immaturity with respect to the shaping of society – that which we call the political. The four strings are woven in many ways, secured, embellished, they can be found in our habits, our actions, morals, in hope and desire, in the commonsensical. Taken together, these actions which are necessary for change are the revolutionary praxis that appeared as foreign in the *Theses on Feuerbach*. In spite of all uncertainty regarding the further development of the social forces of production through the natural sciences, including biology, and through new technologies, the categorical imperative remains to continuously improve the conditions of life for all, to use critique as a driving force for change.

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