

Lecture 2

Diagnosis & Critique:

What's So Bad About Capitalism?

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OUTLINE

I. Emancipatory Social Science

II. Normative foundations

III. Ten Criticisms of Capitalism

I. Emancipatory Social Science

Definition:

Emancipatory social science seeks to generate scientific knowledge relevant to the collective project of challenging various forms of human oppression and creating the conditions in which people can live flourishing lives.

The Three Tasks of Emancipatory Social Science

- 1. Diagnosis & Critique*
- 2. Alternatives*
- 3. Transformation*

II. Normative Principles underlying the Critique of Capitalism

- 1. Social justice: *In a socially just society, all people would have broadly equal access to the necessary material and social means to live flourishing lives.***
- 2. Political justice: *In a politically just society, all people would have broadly equal access to the necessary political means to contribute to the collective control of conditions and decisions which affect their common fate.***

Taken together these constitute a *radical democratic egalitarian* view of the just society.

Key ideas in the *radical democratic egalitarian* conception of justice

Social justice:

- *all people*
- *broadly equal access*
- *necessary*
- *material means*
- *social means*
- *to live flourishing lives*

Political justice:

- *political means*
- *to contribute*
- *to the collective control*
- *of conditions and decisions*
- *which affect their common fate*

III

TEN CRITICISMS OF CAPITALISM

A methodological point on the logic of the critique of capitalism:

The task is to identify mechanisms that are inherent in capitalism as a system of production and examine the nature of the effects of those mechanisms. The diagnosis is of capitalism itself, not just of specific forms of capitalism or of capitalist *societies* which may contain all sorts of mechanisms that counteract the distinctive effects of capitalism itself. The premise, therefore, is that it is possible to identify the “effects of capitalism as such” in spite of all of the variations in the concrete historical forms that capitalism takes. This is a form of essentialism.

TEN CRITICISMS OF CAPITALISM

1. Capitalist class relations perpetuate eliminable forms of human suffering.

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TEN CRITICISMS OF CAPITALISM

1. Capitalist class relations perpetuate eliminable forms of human suffering.
2. Capitalism blocks the universalization of conditions for human flourishing.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
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TEN CRITICISMS OF CAPITALISM

- 1. Capitalist class relations perpetuate eliminable forms of human suffering.**
- 2. Capitalism blocks the universalization of conditions for human flourishing.**
- 3. Capitalism perpetuates eliminable deficits in individual freedom and autonomy**
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5. Capitalism is inefficient in certain crucial respects.
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9. Capitalism corrodes community.
10. Capitalism limits democracy.

Additional possible criticisms

- 1. Capitalism promotes militarism**
- 2. Capitalism promotes economic imperialism**
- 3. Capitalism destroys indigenous cultures**
- 4. Capitalism promotes and reproduces racism and ethnic division**
- 5. Capitalism reproduces patriarchy/male domination**

**The full text of book-in-progress,
Envisioning Real Utopias
can be found at:**

www.ssc.wisc.edu/~wright

Task 2: Envisioning Alternatives

I. Desirability

II. Viability

III. Achievability

