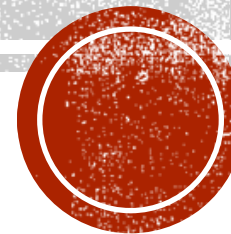


MARXISM

Week 4



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

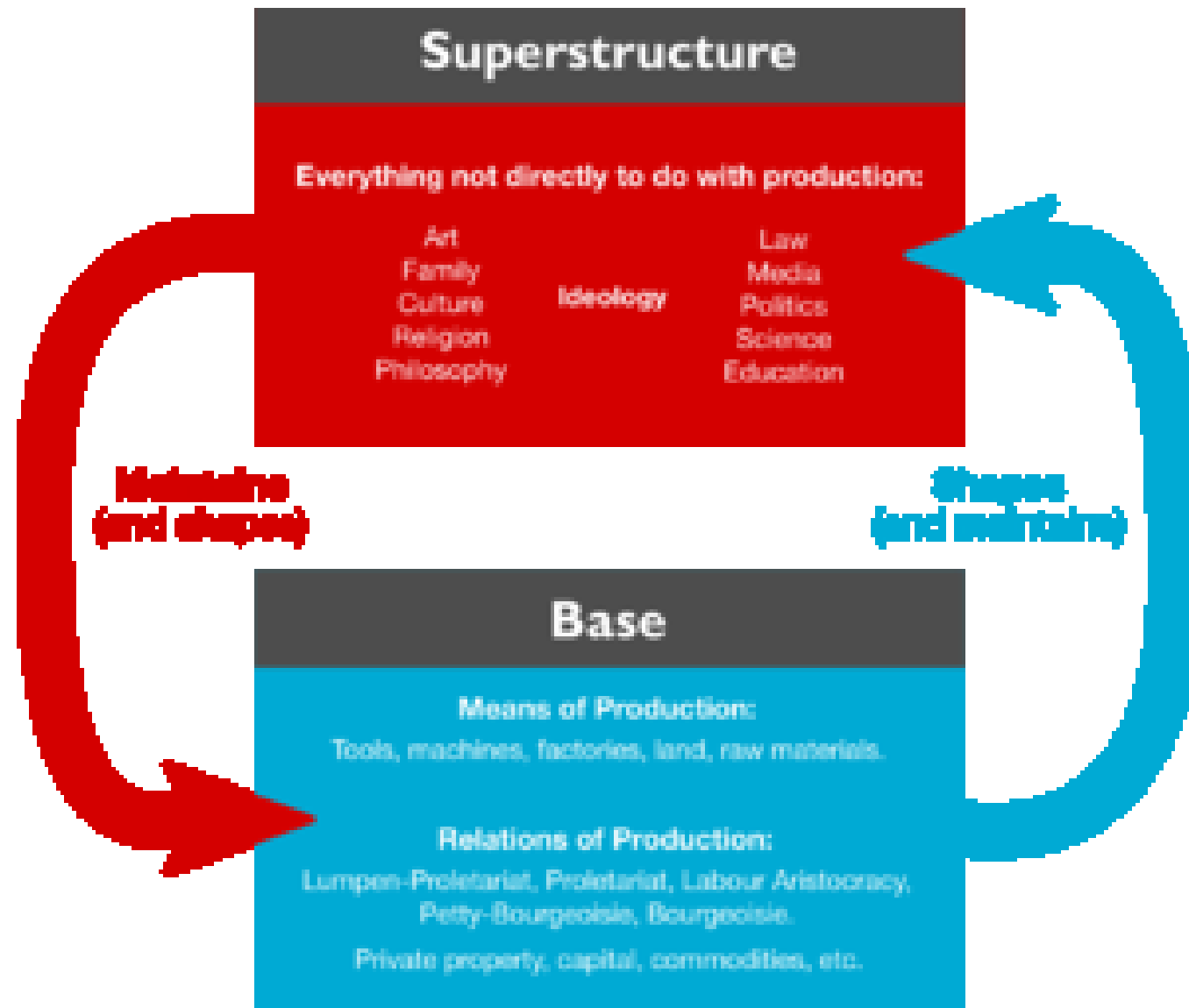
- Do you decide what happens in your life or is it fate?
- How is your identity related to your work?
Birth? Life choices?
- What does Marxism mean in the Czech Republic today?



KARL MARX: A *CONTRIBUTION* *TO THE CRITIQUE OF* *POLITICAL ECONOMY* (1859)

- The ideas of the ruling (material) class are the ruling (intellectual) ideas of society
- The ruling ideas are the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships (grasped as ideas)
- The division of labor = division of ruling class labor (mental/material)
- Ideas of the ruling class are linked to historical conditions of production and represented as “common interests” (rational, universal)
- Base and Superstructure
 - Men (sic) enter into relations in the social production of their existence independent of their will
 - The totality of these relations = the economic structure of society (the base; foundation)
 - From this foundation, a legal/political superstructure arises which frames the consequent forms of social consciousness
- The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political, and intellectual life processes in general; social being thus **determines** social consciousness
 - A change in the base = a reflected change in the superstructure





**This moves in a spiral pattern.
The base is generally dominant.**



KARL MARX

- Karl Marx himself gave little attention to the concept and working of culture in his own writings. As a result of Marx's focus on economical and political factors, it granted culture only a secondary position (part of the superstructure)
- Culture = something which abstracts the truth and creates "false consciousness" and an incorrect perception of social, political and economic reality endorsed by the ruling class.
- Extended Tradition
 - Frankfurt School/Neo-Marxists = Culture as repressive/culture as subversive



MARXIST THEORETICAL TRADITION

- A body of revolutionary theory with a purpose of changing the world
- Texts and practices must be analyzed in relation to their historical conditions of production
- History = construction around a mode of production (base) → production of social relations/institutions (superstructure)
 - “We make our own history but under very definite assumptions and conditions”
 - Texts/practices can be active agents in change/stability; must be “read” in relation to the historical conditions that produced it
 - Subtle dialectic between structure and agency (often overlooked by theorists)
- Frankfurt School - Discourse From Above (e.g. Arnold)(threat to cultural standards)
- Adorno: *Culture Industry*
 - Culture “**reproduces**” social authority - standardization, depoliticization = stunned political imagination & apathy
 - Culture industry deprives CULTURE of its critical function to challenge thinking
 - Leisure time is an escape; dumbing down - avoid pursuit of challenging arts
- Benjamin: Mechanical Reproduction - stimulates masses by extending the “aura” of authentic = active political struggle

MEANING = Mode of Production → Produced at the moment of consumption



MEDIA ECONOMICS AND THE GLOBAL MARKETPLACE

- Corporation - entity structured on the production of profit
 - \$/influence of elites (CEOs)
 - Deregulation
- Market Choice: Monopoly, Oligopoly, Limited Competition
 - Economies of scale
 - Consolidation/Conglomerates/Outsourcing
 - Convergence/Synergies/Niche Marketing
 - A global process (hierarchies)
- Common Sense: Free Market = Democracy; Regulation = “Communism”
 - Consumer choice/control
 - **Cultural Imperialism**
 - **Cultural Inequities**
- Media Reform Movements



BRIDGING THE MYTHICAL DIVIDE: POLITICAL ECONOMY AND CULTURAL STUDIES APPROACHES TO THE ANALYSIS OF THE MEDIA

- **Critical Political Economy** (CPE) = critique structural inequalities of production and the consequences for representation and access to consumption; how the economic structure of society impacts civic society/democracy
- **Cultural Studies** (CS) = analyses popular culture practices (over dominant/elite practices); emphasizes social agency; capacity to resist social determinations and dominant cultural agendas
 - CPE = media = dominant ideology/social stratification (justification/domination)
 - Production studies
 - CS = media = artifacts for empowerment/agency
 - Consumption studies
 - How to theorize culture and power; (**dialectically**)



BRIDGING THE MYTHICAL DIVIDE: POLITICAL ECONOMY AND CULTURAL STUDIES APPROACHES TO THE ANALYSIS OF THE MEDIA

- Frankfurt School (1930s); *culture industry* – textual determinism
- CPE
 - role of private business/logics in cultural production
 - dynamics related to commodification (capitalism)
 - ownership; consolidation; control of the media; media filters/frameworks
 - Inculcate individuals with the values, beliefs and codes of behavior to integrate them into the institutional structures of society
 - **Advertising**
- Seeks to explain how economic dynamics structure public discourses; inhibits a fuller understanding of the complexities and ambiguities of our social conditions
- Examine how consumption is inextricably linked to production (and vice versa)
 - Agency limited by structures
- Today: *complexity, contestation, ambivalence* of cultural industries
 - **Stress the blurring or fusing of cultural/economic boundaries (mutual constitution of culture and economy)**



BRIDGING THE MYTHICAL DIVIDE: POLITICAL ECONOMY AND CULTURAL STUDIES APPROACHES TO THE ANALYSIS OF THE MEDIA

- Birmingham Centre (1970s); *active audience* - interpretive work; polysemic texts
- CS - cross-disciplinary endeavor; critique of cultural configurations → social transformation
 - Critique ideology of class system; politics of (popular) culture
 - Individuals can undermine meaning of texts to subvert relations of power
- Everyday culture is serious point of study
- Challenges essentialist concepts of culture (culture as a complex space where different influences/interpretive potentials)
- Foregrounds, subjectivity (reflexivity), identity, discourse, politics of pleasure
 - The ways meanings can be delimited and circulate in society
 - Resistance is tempered by structural relations



BRIDGING THE MYTHICAL DIVIDE: POLITICAL ECONOMY AND CULTURAL STUDIES APPROACHES TO THE ANALYSIS OF THE MEDIA

Considerations to take away:

- Social totality of production, content, and reception of the media must be considered
- Resistance; gency (limited by structure) is the contemporary framework
- Power of cultural texts; absences/silences
- Dialectic of agency and structure; cultural production and consumption
- “The struggle over meaning takes place between the process of production and the act of reception - both of which are determined by their place in the wider social, political, economic and cultural context. Choices made by the audience must be looked at within the social context of their daily life and the content itself must be interpreted according to the social and political circumstances of its production”



AGENCY, STRUCTURE, YOU

What is at stake as you consider your “locations”:

- Your Culture
- Your Identity
- Your professional future



- Mikešová, Marianna; Skopalová, Markéta; Kříž, Jan - week 6 - Foucault
- Hornová, Pavlína; Havlík, Tomáš; Skalická, Veronika - week 7 - Debord
- Yalvacli, Volkan; Forethová, Monika, Soto Castro, Yessenia Lizbeth, - week 8 - Said
- Bečáková, Klára; Filanová, Petra; Damien Marenno Prado - week 8 - Stuart Hall
- Holotíková, Tereza; Bořutová, Martina, Vaisová, Michaela - week 9 - Bourdieu
- Pichaničová, Petra; Chroustová,; Aneta; Vyklická, Jana - week 10 - Feminism
- Fiero, Alana Rose; Hambálek, Tomáš, Fabian Sosa Franquis - week 10 - Queer Theory
- Valentíková, Martina; Sittová, Barbora; Patricija, Fašalek- week 11 - Gramsci
- Ševčíková, Kateřina; Reisiglová, Michaela; Fuente Robles, Marina Inmaculada -

