

Marx In The 1990's - From A Feminist Point Of View.

Notes on 1. the shortcomings and 2. the continued usefulness of Marx's thinking.

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Introduction

My relation to Marx is a very close and personal one. I was socialized in the *Student Movement* in the late 1960's and early 1970's. We were the generation that rediscovered Marx and introduced his work at university. We read *Capital* in study groups at night. We needed new ways of thinking, in order to fight the struggles of the day.

One struggle was the university-internal one of critique of positivist social science. I was a student of sociology at that time, and the shortcomings of positivist market-analysis-USA-sociology were apparent. Marx (and Marcuse, and others of the Frankfurt School) gave us arguments for a social science that took more aspects into consideration and was felt to be more relevant than the positivist one.

Another struggle was the one linking university work to other types of work in society at large. "Research for the people" was a favourite slogan. We studied the history of the working class movement; we wanted to link university work to working class struggle. And here too Marx was useful, thinking social science in political terms.

But I was also socialized in the *Women's Movement*. For a long time we¹ struggled hard to make ends meet in all sorts of mostly unhappy marriages between Marxism and Feminism.²

I think I know every one of the (alas only few!) locations in Marx's writings where he happens to mention women, family, or reproduction of the labour force.

¹ Now 'we' is = the marxist/socialist wing of the Women's Movement.

² This expression is borrowed from a paper by Heidi Hartmann 1979: 'The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a more progressive union', *Capital and Class* no 8. But there were countless attempts along similar lines, among others an early volume of Scandinavian writings: *Kvindesituation og Kvindebevægelse under Kapitalismen*, edited by Karen Syberg and myself, 1974.

And I have tried to squeeze every one of them for meaning. In insistent attempts to fit our feminist ideas into overall Marxist thinking. Or the other way round: To fit Marx's analysis of capitalism into our feminist ideas.

We combined Marx and Freud in order to supplement Marx's politico-economist approach with Freud's concepts for analysis of consciousness and sexuality.

But in the long run we had to acknowledge that neither Marx nor Freud could give us what we needed to understand the situation of women from women's point of view. Under their patronage we could not reach much longer than Simone de Beauvoir with *The Second Sex* in 1949 seeing Woman (= ourselves) as "the Other".

Going in 1980 to the 3rd world³ made this even more evident to me. Seen from here the problem was not just that of women and gender relations not fitting in, or rather *being invisible*⁴ in even progressive, radical science like Marx's and Freud's. The 3rd world was equally invisible - beyond the horizon.

The experience of living and researching in Africa made me feel that in order to create concepts with which to understand a) gender relations and b) life in the post-colonial parts of the world, it would be necessary to go beyond both Marx and Freud, and our own history as "The Second Sex", to the very roots of what in Europe, the West, and globally we have come to see as "scientific thinking".

Happily, when I returned to university, libraries and books in 1984, I was to discover that in the meanwhile other feminists had been thinking along similar lines, creating with their writings a platform from where new concepts could be developed, and Marx's work could be reassessed - from a feminist point of view.⁵

This brings me to **section 1** of my presentation: Marx's most important *shortcomings*, as I see them now.

³ 1980-1984 I lived in Maputo, Mozambique, working as a sociological consultant to the National Women's Organization, the OMM.

⁴ If not totally distorted, as in some writings by Freud.

⁵ Important publications (among others) in the early 1980'es on a) feminist theory of knowledge and b) critical 3rd world feminism, are the following: a) Carolyn Merchant: *The Death of Nature*, 1980; Evelyn Fox-Keller: *Reflections and Gender and Science*, 1985; Sandra Harding: *The Science Question in Feminism*, 1986. b) Mona Etienne and Elanor Leacock (eds): *Women and Colonialism*, 1980; Maria Mies: *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, 1986.

That I still, and in spite of this, see Marx as an indispensable source of inspiration, however on a different level and in a different way from what I saw in the 1970'es, should be evident from **section 2** on the continued *usefulness* of Marx's thinking - from a feminist point of view.

The shortcomings

a) *Hierarchised dichotomies: Scientific thinking is made gender blind*

Feminist scholarship now phrase the questions in different ways. Talk of 'marriages' between Marxism and Feminism are outdated. Now critique is launched against modern scientific rationality as such, dating back to Francis Bacon (1561-1626) and René Descartes (1596-1650) among others.

What for centuries has been acclaimed as the birth of science, is now seen in a different light, with a focus on what was left out and pushed aside when modern scientific thinking was established.

Seen in this critical light scientific rationality turns out to be based on a series of *hierarchised dichotomies*: mind over matter, man over nature, fact over feeling, scientific knowledge over common sense, to name but a few.

By separating mind and matter scientific thinking was made *gender blind*.

Mind - *res cogitans* in the terminology of Descartes - is seen as different from matter: *res extensa*. To *res cogitans* belongs nothing but pure, abstract thinking; to *res extensa* belongs all physical things, including the human body: 'Outer nature' as well as 'inner nature' is seen as inert matter (*res extensa*), moved and controlled by the human mind (*res cogitans*).⁶

Scientific thinking thus is disembodied, and at the same time made genderless: Sex applies to bodies, not to thinking.

Scientific thinking officially is *gender neutral*. In reality however it is *male*.

Men and women are mind and body, women are, however, seen as being more confined in their bodies than men, whereas men are supposed to have greater abilities for abstract thinking. This matches the sociological realities: Those who did the

⁶ See for a feminist analysis of Cartesian thinking Susan Bordo: *The Cartesian Masculinization of Thought*, in: Sandra Harding et.al (eds): *Sex and Scientific Inquiry*, 1987.

'scientific' thinking in fact were men. The women were busy with other matters.

In his crusade for human control of and exploration of nature, Bacon sees nature as female: Man must conquer her, penetrate her and explore her secrets.⁷

In this kind of thinking 'man' is man and woman is the 'other', man over woman thus being another one of the hierarchised dichotomies on which modern scientific thinking is built: Man in control of 'outer nature' as well as 'inner nature' including his own and the female body.

Bacon is quite explicit regarding the gendered aspects of scientific thinking; he sees this kind of rationality as an explicitly masculine enterprise. But with time the female counterpoint, still present in the 17th century, disappears altogether.^{7a} The subject mind of science subdues its male origins and persists as 'man', a supposedly non-gendered human.

Thus scientific thinking being '*gender neutral*' means that it is *gender blind*. Blind to its own inherent gender bias, which is male.

And here the thinking of Marx (and Freud) is no exception. Marx is part and parcel of this modern, scientific tradition, seeing his own work indeed as scientific, believing in the existence of laws of economic/political life, parallel to the laws of (natural) science.

To Marx 'man' is male, just as he was to Bacon and Descartes.

Even if Marx is critical of the Homo Economicus-thinking of Adam Smith and David Ricardo, he shares with them a series of basic assumptions.

Marx is critical for instance of the way they see the individual as the starting point of history, rather than as a historical product. But as for other aspects of this fictive subject of economic theory, it seems true, as Marshall Sahlins has pointed out, that "the species to which Marx's 'species-being' [Gattungswesen] belongs is Homo Economicus"⁸ : Homo Economicus with an emphasis on *Homo*: The supposedly gender neutral human being just happens to be a man. And with an emphasis on *Homo Economicus*: The

⁷ See for an analysis of Bacon's thinking Carolyn Merchant: *The Death of Nature*, 1990, ch 7, and Evelyn Fox-Keller: *Reflections on Gender and Science*, 1985, chs 2+3.

^{7a} See Carolyn Merchant (note 7) regarding organic (gendered) vs. mechanist (gender blind) conceptions of science in the 16th and 17th centuries.

⁸ Marshall Sahlins 1976: *Culture and Practical Reason*, University of Chicago Press, p 161

rationalist, for whom human feelings have no importance; the *user and exploiter of natural resources*, with nature seen as a resource and only marginally (when Marx talks of the human body) as a limitation; the *producer and reproducer of capital*, with no concern for the reproduction of human beings.

Two further points can be lifted out of this. Again they are shortcomings that Marx shares with more or less the whole tradition of modern (social) science, to which he belongs, even if he himself (and indeed his followers) emphasised his points of critique and disagreements with other social scientists and economists of his time, and later.

The points/shortcomings that I want to emphasize in this context are the following:

b) Nature as an unlimited resource

To Marx as to most other scientific thinkers of his time, nature is just a resource to be exploited, raw material to be used in the production of commodities. Progress is seen in terms of the development of the forces of production. This progress is seen as linear. Hampered at times by forms of social organization: "At a certain stage of their development, the material forces of production in society come in conflict with the existing relations of production (...) From forms of development of the forces of production these relations turn into their fetters..."⁹ - but not by absolute scarcity of natural resources. And there is no concept of interdependency of man and nature. Man is the master, and the development of the forces of production is his tool for making the world better suited to his needs. When at a certain stage the narrow class interests of the bourgeoisie block this process, it is the historic role of the proletariat to take over.

Marx doesn't see 'outer nature' as posing any limit to the continued development of the forces of production. On the contrary, one of the great achievements of the revolutionary bourgeoisie is seen to be its "Subjection of Nature's forces to man, machinery, application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steam-navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of whole continents for cultivation, canalization of rivers, whole populations conjured out of the ground - what earlier century had

⁹ Marx: Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, 1859, quoted after T B Bottomore (ed): Karl Marx, Selected Writings, Penguin 1956, p 67

even a presentiment that such productive forces slumbered in the lab of social labour?"¹⁰

Today this kind of thinking seems to have more to do with the problem than with the solution. Feminists and others have pointed to the importance of thinking about Nature in different ways.

It should be noted, however, that regarding 'inner nature', the human body - or rather: one particular aspect of it: its capacity as labour power - Marx has a different approach. Whereas 'outer nature' is seen as an unlimited resource to be exploited, it is acknowledged by Marx that the human body has some very specific limits that cannot, and should not, be overstepped. The human body Marx is talking about, is the body of the capitalist wage worker, male or female, but most often male.

In a passionate passage in *Capital* Marx pinpoints capital's over-exploitation of the human labour force:

"In its blind unrestrainable passion, its were-wolf hunger for surplus labour, capital oversteps not only the moral, but even the merely physical maximum bounds of the working day. It usurps the time for growth, development and healthy maintenance of the body. It steals the time required for the consumption of fresh air and sunlight. It higgles over a meal-time, incorporating it where possible with the process of production itself, so that food is given to the labourer as to a mere means of production, as coal is supplied to the boiler, grease and oil to the machinery. It reduces the sound sleep needed for the restoration, reparation, refreshment of the bodily powers to just so many hours of torpor as the revival of an organism, absolutely exhausted, renders essential. (...) Capital cares nothing for the length of life of labour-power. All that concerns it is simply and solely the maximum of labour power, that can be rendered fluent in a working-day. It attains this end by shortening the extend of the labourers life, as a greedy farmer snatches increased produce from the soil by robbing it of its fertility.

The capitalist mode of production (...) produces thus, with the extension of the working-day, not only the deterioration of human labour-power by robbing it of its normal, moral and physical, conditions of development and function. It produces also the premature exhaustion and death of this labour-power itself. It

¹⁰ Marx: *The Communist Manifesto* 1888, quoted after Penguin Books edition 1967 p 85

extends the labourer's time of production during a given period by shortening his actual life-time." ¹¹

Here is a limit to capitalist expansion that has to be taken into consideration. But capital does not do it by itself: "Après moi le deluge! is the watchword of every capitalist and of every capitalist nation. Hence capital is reckless of the health and length of life of the labourer, unless under compulsion from society."¹²

Anyhow: Once enforced 'by society', pushed by the struggle of the working class, these limits - in terms of laws on the length of the working day - only pushes forward the development of the forces of production.

From overexploitation by the extension of the working day, capital shifts to overexploitation by the speed and monotony of factory labour: "At the same time that factory exhausts the nervous system to the uttermost, it does away with the many-sided play of the muscles, and confiscates every atom of freedom, both in bodily and intellectual activity. The lightening of the labour, even, becomes a sort of torture, since the machine does not free the labourer from work, but deprives the work of all interest."¹³

Thus, in Marx's work there is a concern for the human body, and an awareness of the limits posed by 'inner nature': physical and mental health.

Limits of 'outer nature', however, are not really seen to exist.

c) No concern at all with human reproduction

Marx's concern for the human body is the human body seen from capital's point of view: the body as labour force.

Even if he is disgusted by the cynicism with which capital treats this body, this very cynicism creeps into his own analysis.

The passionate passage quoted above appears in Marx's treatment in Capital of 'the working day'. When in a later chapter he comes back to the same theme, this time however contemplating "not the single capitalist and the single labourer, but the capitalist class and the labouring class, not in an isolated process of production, but capitalist production in full swing, and on its actual social scale"¹⁴ the tone is different. Now passion has gone, leaving behind just cool analysis - and analysis and conceptual treatment only of the exchange between labour power

¹¹ Marx: Capital, ch.10: The Working Day, section 5, p 252-253.

¹² cf. note 11, p 257.

¹³ Marx: Capital, ch.15: Machinery and Modern Industry, section 4, p 398.

¹⁴ Marx: Capital, ch.23: Simple Reproduction, p 536

and capital; the aspects of the working class' life which is not directly involved in capitalist production falls beyond the scope of Marx's analysis, just as it is of no concern to the capitalist:

"The individual consumption of the labourer, whether it proceeds within the workshop or outside it, whether it be part of the process of production or not, forms therefore a factor of the production and reproduction of capital; just as the cleaning of the machinery does, whether it be done while the machinery is working or while it is standing. The fact that the labourer consumes his means of subsistence for his own purposes, and not to please the capitalist, has no bearing on the matter. (...) The maintenance and the reproduction of the working class is, and must ever be, a necessary condition to the reproduction of capital. *But the capitalist may safely leave its fulfillment to the labourer's instincts of self-preservation and of propagation.*" (Emphasis mine, SA) ¹⁵

Sadly, not only the capitalist leaves the maintenance and reproduction of the working class to itself. So does Marx. This whole field is left out of Marx's analysis.

'Reproduction' to Marx is reproduction of capital.

Reproduction seen from the point of view of the working class, reproduction not (just) of a labour force, but of family members, children, men and women that are close to one another and important in each other's lives - this point of view is missing in Marx's thinking.

Working class life as such: Social relations, relations of gender and age, love, children, dreams and aspirations have no place whatsoever in Marx's work. No concepts are developed with which to understand the totality of working class life.

I see this as a fatal shortcoming in Marx's analysis. It becomes/became fatal when Marx's analysis is/was taken as basis for political action, not just for the overthrow of capitalism, but also - as it happened in the previous Soviet Union - as point of orientation for the construction of society.

The usefulness.

However. In spite of the shortcomings, Marx's contributions to social science thinking are immense, even from a feminist point of view.

¹⁵ cf. note 14, p 537

I shall limit myself to 3 aspects of Marx's thinking that I find important, not just from a feminist, but also from a development studies point of view.

a) *Doubleness and politics*

One of the characteristics of Marx's thinking that I cherish most of all is its way of *grasping the actual and the possible at the same time, linking the analysis to political action.*

In Marx's analysis of capitalism things are *not* black and white; it is *not either/or*, not subordination *or* development, but very frequently *both at the same time*:

Capitalism as such is *not just* oppression and exploitation; capitalism is also progressive, and a precondition for further development. Thus oppressive and exploitative as capitalism is, *at the same time* conditions are created for its possible overthrow giving way for new forms of socio-economic organization.

The bourgeoisie produces its own power, and at the same time, in the same movement, its own potential grave-diggers: the working class.

Conditions are created, yes, but changes do not happen automatically: *people* (men and/or women) *must organize and take action.*

With the bourgeois revolution, paving the way for the development of capitalist relations of production, *freedom and equality*, between individuals and between classes, is created as a *vision, an ideology.* But it takes political struggle in order to make it come true, as a reality for everybody: classes, genders, people in different parts of the world.

Below I'll give some examples of how I see this doubleness-cum-political-action thinking at work in Marx's writings, and discuss its usefulness in feminist analysis.

Example: Individual, organization, democracy

1. In the Introduction to Grundrisse Marx makes a point of showing how the individual is a creation of history, and *not* its starting point:

"The individual and isolated hunter and fisher who forms the starting point with Smith and Ricardo belongs to the insipid illusions of the eighteenth century"¹⁶ [phantasielosen Einbildungen der 18-Jahrhundert-Robinsonaden].

¹⁶ Marx: Grundrisse, General Introduction, part 1: Production, quoted after David McLellan (ed): Marx's Grundrisse, 1971 p 16

Robinson Crusoe is a totally fictional figure: socio-economic life does not start with the enterprising individual. On the contrary, 'the individual', the idea of an individual human being, is a fairly recent creation in the history of mankind.

"The further back we go into history, the more the individual and, therefore, the producing individual seems to depend on and belong to a larger whole: at first it is, quite naturally, the family and the clan, which is but an enlarged family; later on it is the community growing up in its different forms out of the clash and amalgamation of clans. *It is only in the eighteenth century*, in 'civil society', that the different forms of social union confront the individual as a mere means to his private ends, as an external necessity." (Emphasis mine, SA) ¹⁷

2. The socio-economic development that creates the individual is a violent tearing apart of communities, social relations and previous hierarchies: "All fixed, fast-frozen relations with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man at last is compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life and his relations with his kind."¹⁸

This violent process is, however, a precondition for the idea of the individual, which is again the precondition for the idea of equality. Capital, according to Marx, is "the great leveller". Capital puts human beings irrespective of age, of gender and ethnicity on an equal footing as human labour power.

3. This equalizing is a precondition for the revolutionary slogan of Freedom, Equality, Fraternity.

"Fraternity" points to the dissolving of the family hierarchy, the patriarchy: brothers are on an equal level. "Fraternity" however also points to the masculinity of modern thinking: The sisters are invisible.

The political thinking of the bourgeois revolution sees itself as gender 'neutral'. In reality it is gender blind: Blind to its own male bias.

4. Freedom and Equality are ideas. Reality however is class divided with the Bourgeoisie the owner of the means of production, the working class owning nothing but its own labour power which it has to sell in order to survive.

¹⁷ cf. note 16, p 17

¹⁸ Marx: The Communist Manifesto 1888, quoted after Penguin Books edition 1967 p 83

Bringing Freedom and Equality from idea and Bourgeois ideology into political reality necessitates the organized political struggle of the working class. Without this struggle, without the working class setting themselves as subjects on the scene of history, Freedom and Equality will remain ideology. "The liberation of the working class is the task of the working class."¹⁹

I see this line of thinking as inspiring also for thinking about *gender*:

The idea of gender equality, in principle born at the time of the French Revolution - in spite of the limitations of "Fraternity" some people, like for instance Mary Wollstonecraft (*The Vindication of the Rights of Women*, 1792) insisted on the equality being equality for women as well - was re-introduced in Europe and USA in the 1960's as a consequence of the capital (and state social service) expansion demanding the participation of women in the labour force on a much larger scale than what had previously been the case. This economic development is behind the Women's Movement which in its turn struggled for a) visibility, and b) social and political equality for women. Women organized and appeared at the scene as subjects with their (our) own agenda and their (our) own demands. Things did change to a certain extent. When they did not change further it had, I think, among other things something to do with the ideas and thus the demands not being far-reaching enough.

A similar line of thinking may be relevant also for the thinking about *race/ethnicity*: The 1st world / 3rd world divide. Even in a 3rd world context it seems to me as important that the demand for democracy is voiced and fought for by people themselves, by men and women of subordinated classes. Democracy if introduced from above is likely to remain just ideology.

Example: Evaluating Development

The indian author Vandana Shiva for good reasons, being a 3rd world woman, is very critical of the mainstream concept of development as measured by economic growth.

In her critique of this conception of development²⁰ she turns the matter upside down, by simply re-naming development Maldevelopment. She has good arguments for doing so: Much of what from a capitalist/economic point of view is production (like

¹⁹ I think Marx is somewhere saying something like this. I have not been able to find the quote, however.

²⁰ Vandana Shiva: *Staying Alive*, Zed Books 1989

for instance turning forest into timber and streams into electricity) from a peasant woman's point of view is nothing but destruction, as these changes spoil her means of livelihood and possibilities for maintaining herself and her family.

However, such a black-and-white analysis runs the risk of romantizing bygone days and simple living, fuelling types of protest comparable to the smashing to pieces of machinery in early capitalism: A protest against modernity that leads nowhere but backwards.

The Marxist thinking in doublenesses of actual and possible makes for a different analysis pointing in its turn to a different strategy.

The woods are ruined, but at the same time wage labour^{20a} is created. Wage labour has the potential of breaking up old hierarchies based on age and gender, creating new ones based on money. With wage labour ideas of freedom, individuality and equality are born. Freedom and individuality are born as partial and double-edged realities as well, equality mostly as an idea. Freedom in the double sense of freedom from property and freedom to sell one's labour power in the market.²¹ Individuality as a consequence of the "pitiless [tearing] asunder [of the] motley feudal ties, that bound man to his 'natural superiors'"²² like for instance family hierarchies.

The idea of equality grows out of these same processes.

This is to show that 'development' being a destructive process, in most cases contains also aspects of creation, creation at least of new social relations and new ideas. Ideas, visions and dreams that reach far beyond the often grim reality of 3rd world peasant life under conditions of 'development'.

An analysis and a strategy building on Marx's doubleness-thinking would take a point of departure in these creative

^{20a} In actual fact, what is created nowadays is not just wage labour, but also a variety of other types of dependent labour, in direct and indirect ways subordinated to capital expansion, for instance in the so-called 'informal sector'. My argument, following Marx, is based on wage labour. It is to be expected that similar lines of argument may be run for other types of capital-subordinated labour.

²¹ The wage labourer, according to Marx, is "free in the double sense, that as a free man he can dispose of his labour-power as his own commodity, and that on the other hand he has no other commodity for sale, is short of everything necessary for the realization of his labour-power." *Capital*, ch.6: The buying and selling of labour power, p 166.

²² Marx: *The Communist Manifesto* 1888, quoted after Penguin Books edition 1967 p 82

elements, focusing on the character of the new social relations and new ideas, investigating possibilities for the emergence of new types of organizations, based on the new social identities, with ideas and demands growing out of the position and the point of view of the particular social group in question - in casu a group of 3rd world peasant women - placing itself at the scene as a subject.

Vandana Shiva, in spite of her (at times) black-and-white analysis does point to this kind of perspective, based on not just an economical, but also a philosophical critique of the idea and reality of 'development': "To say that women and nature are intimately associated is not to say anything revolutionary. After all, it was precisely just such an assumption that allowed the domination of both women and nature. The new insight provided by rural women in the Third World is that women and nature are associated *not in passivity but in creativity and in the maintenance of life.*" (Emphasis VS's) ²³

b) *Organization, empowerment*

Equality and democracy has to be fought for, and the only power of the powerless is organization. A focus on organizing is another cardinal point of Marxist thinking: Working men of all countries, unite! ²⁴

I still see organizing as essential, in fact as a sine qua non for being about political change from below.

Organizations however are many things. It may be very difficult sometimes to distinguish between radically different types of organizations. They may look very much alike.

The type of organization related most closely to my interpretation of Marx is what in current language would be called a flat, non-hierarchical grass-root type organization. It is *not* a party, and certainly not a party in the Marxist-leninist sense. On the contrary it is a type of organization allowing for close connections between insight, discussion, analysis and strategy.

A precondition for sustainable change is insight and understanding. I see ideas and ways of thinking as being of paramount importance. Ideas may be shaped and prompted by the material living conditions of particular groups of people. But they

²³ Vandana Shiva: *Staying Alive*, Zed Books 1989 p 47

²⁴ This is the concluding sentence, the final battle-call of *The Communist Manifesto*.

are also greatly influenced and structured by language, religion, mass media.

Marx was aware of this power of ideas. He takes much trouble criticizing what he sees as wrong ideas in a political context. Lots of his shorter writings are of this kind. For instance his detailed and profound critique of the German Working Class Party Programme (the so-called Gotha Programme) 1891. And his whole analysis of capitalism was meant to be a tool and a weapon in the working class' struggle for a new social order.

Empowerment is a new word, originated in a 3rd world feminist context. Empowerment is closely connected to organization. "In an obvious sense, empowerment is about people taking control over their own lives: gaining the ability to do things, to set their own agendas, to change events in a way previously lacking."²⁵

Empowerment has to do with power: struggling for a different distribution of power. This "it also implies some degree of conflict: empowerment is not just about women acquiring something, but also those holding power relinquishing it."²⁶

The point of organizing is empowerment: "collective reflection and decision-making, developing the capacity for critical thought and undertaking collective action toward a goal which is of benefit to all."²⁷

I have quoted quite extensively from Kate Young: *Planning Development with Women* (1993) because she, in her analysis of possibilities for a type of 'development' that is not just *not gender blind*, but seeing development from women's point of view and with *women setting the agenda*, is focusing explicitly on the importance of organization.

I think she is very right. Types of organization - how they channel what information, how they allow, or don't allow, for the growth and development, collective reflection and capacity for critical political thinking of its members - this is an extremely important field of study, as well as it is an important field of political activity. In the 1st world as well as in the 3rd.

c) *Analysis of capitalism*

The last quality of Marx's thinking that I want to emphasize is simply his analysis of capitalism! Even in spite of its shortcomings

²⁵ Kate Young: *Planning Development with Women*, 1993 p 158

²⁶ cf. note 25, p 159

²⁷ cf. note 25, p 163.

Marx's critical analysis of capitalism is up till now unsurpassed. And capitalism is still with us! More than ever before.

Even if nowadays it is euphemistically re-named 'the market system'. This sounds much nicer: The market is something with liberal values of freedom and equality, closely linked to democracy.

In the capitalist ideology of today the link between 'market' and 'democracy' is frequently emphasized - so much that sometimes you have a feeling that when some people talk of supporting the development of democracy (for instance in the previous Soviet Union) what in reality they have in mind is supporting the development of 'the market system' ie. capitalism.

With Marx's analysis in mind this uninventive ideology is easily unmasked.

Capitalism must be analyzed on two distinct levels: the sphere of circulation (the market) and the sphere of production (the factory).

The economic relations in the sphere of circulation do not reveal the character of the economic relations at the level of production. On the contrary: the surface - the market with its (apparent) relations of freedom and equality - gives but a distorted [Verkehrt] picture of what in reality goes on under capitalism at the level of production.

In the sphere of circulation the buying and selling seems open to everyone, when considered in the context of the individual (and presuming that this individual is in possession of money).

When considered in the context of classes, the 'freedom and equality' changes character: The working class is forced to sell its only possession, its labour power, in order to survive.

And furthermore: This exchange may appear to be equal: Working power for X hours in exchange for a given wage, but in reality this is nothing but another surface phenomenon: Actually - according to Marx's analysis - the capitalist gets more value out of the workforce than he pays for its wage.

Thus the actual exploitation taking place in the capitalist process of production is doubly covered up by the seemingly free and equal exchange at the level of circulation.

From this point of view it is to be expected that a world market based on capitalist relations of production will create inequality and polarization. Just as in fact it does, in spite of all talk of freedom and equality.

This may not seem a very feminist point. But why should feminists be deceived by 'free market' ideology?

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