

*Critical realism as a paradigm and metatheory for explaining changes in the class system: a socioeconomic approach*

Abstract

The lecture analyzes the application of critical realism—a philosophy of science developed by Roy Bhaskar—to explain changes in the class system, integrating sociological and economic perspectives. Critical realism rejects both positivist and constructivist reductionism, emphasizing the existence of deeper, not always observable social mechanisms that generate changes in class structures. We will present Bhaskar's layered ontology (empirical, actual, and real levels) and its significance in the analysis of social classes. We will emphasize that class phenomena, such as the emergence of the precariat, are not solely the result of visible economic indicators, but the result of complex structural mechanisms (globalization, neoliberal reforms, changes in the model of work) . We will present a relational ontology of classes—classes not as “frozen categories” but as dynamic processes resulting from social, economic, and cultural relations. We will also discuss the impact of global mechanisms (center-periphery, financialization) on class transformation on a macro scale. The political and emancipatory dimension of class research will be emphasized, pointing to the potential of critical realism in combining structural analysis with the study of collective agency. This will allow us to identify practical implications for social and economic policy: the need to diagnose the deep mechanisms of inequality, not just their symptoms.