

OUTLINE Lecture 25. Sociology 621. December 3, 2013  
CRITIQUES & RECONSTRUCTIONS OF CLASSICAL HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

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**I. Introduction**

**II. Five criticisms of historical materialism**

**1. Development Thesis**

*Critique:* the forces of production do not have a systematic tendency to develop over time.

*Response:* Sticky-downward tendency of forces of production

**2. Functional Explanation of relations of production**

*Critique:* the level of development of the forces of production does not functionally explain the relations of production.

*Response:* to shift the functional argument from optimality to compatibility and with development to use of forces of production.

**3. Inevitability of fettering of forces of production**

*Critique:* No general reason to believe class relations always end up fettering development of PF

*Response:* shift from development fettering to use-fettering

**4. Economic Reductionism: critique of the theory of the superstructure**

*Critique:* Noneconomic phenomena are not generally explained by economic structures.

*Response:* shift from inclusive to restrictive historical materialism.

**5. Transformation Thesis**

*Critique:* Even if relations do fetter the forces of production, there is no reason to suppose that there will always emerge any historical agents capable of transforming those relations

*Response:* no effective response for the General Theory of History

**III. Where does this leave us?**