

Democracy and Social Unreason

Veranstalter Kritische Theorie in Berlin (KTB)

Veranstaltungsort Berlin

Termin 01.07.2019 10:00 Uhr - 06.07.2019 10:00 Uhr

International Summer School Critical Theory 2019 in Berlin

Democracy is in crisis. Various phenomena such as the electoral success of authoritarian leaders, distrust in public institutions and media, rising social tensions, neo-nationalism and reactionary family politics certify this. But what are the underlying reasons for such developments? Is this crisis democracy's own crisis, or does it originate elsewhere in the social order?

In the early Frankfurt School, analyses of regressive tendencies aimed at tracing political pathologies back to underlying social contradictions, questioning the very compatibility of liberal democracy and late capitalism. Even critiques of individual aspects, such as the authoritarian character, were primarily meant to criticize the societies which produce such effects. Irrationality, as well as reason itself, was attributed not just to individual persons, but also to their collective way of organizing life.

But what does it mean to speak of actual and potential reason in society? The idea originated in Hegel's reconstruction of ethical life and influenced later materialist and sociologist theories of society, which located rationality in societal differentiation, cooperation and integration. However, both the assumption of a systemic cohesion of society in its totality and the ideal of a fully rational order are theoretically demanding and have on various occasions been questioned by critical theorists themselves.

In the face of evident unreason, a new assessment of our frameworks for theorizing modern societies and their ensuing criteria for rationality seems pressing and can draw from the strengths of both social and political analyses. Besides classics such

as Hegel, Marx, Durkheim, Horkheimer and Adorno we will study contributions by leading contemporary theorists of democracy and society, several of which will be present as instructors.

The summer school will involve plenary lectures and discussions, reading sessions, smaller group discussions and panel debates. Only the latter will be open to the broader public.

[More information \(Link\)](#)
