

My Own Quick Self-Critique - Postliterate - Medium

By Postliterate

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#1. *“Value-form theory is the theory which exploded all previous understanding of communism. Through this theory, communism and the revolutionary movement towards its realization, take on a whole other meaning to the more traditional Marxist view.”*

The first issue with my contribution to the latter half of our joint essay is my use of the term “value-form theory.” Such a thing, as a unified “theory,” most certainly does not exist. There exists, rather, an abnormally large number of disagreements between most every theorist lumped under the category of “value-form theory.” It can at best be said that “value-form theory” is a discipline, a project which combines anti-modernist critical theory with exegetical work in Marx’s *Capital*. It is not, however, a perspective or a worldview — let alone a “theory.”

#2. *“The critique of the value-form — the form which designates abstracted labor for the production of abstracted commodities — is the central idea of **Capital**, and possibly of all of Marx’s work.”*

This is veritably false. “Value-form” is a term which lives buried in footnotes to *Capital* and in a short appendix; it is anything but “the central idea of [...] all of Marx’s work.” Marx did not title his magnum opus, nor any of his works, nor even a single chapter in the main body of *Capital*, something even approximating “value” or “value-form.” Rather, Marx refers to capital, commodities, and surplus-value. This point seems pedantic but becomes crucial in the context of understanding value dialectically — not as the starting point of Marx’s work, nor its “central idea,” but as

something constituted by all of the categories of his work. Value is not the base on which surplus-value, capital, and finance stand — just the opposite: until surplus-value, capital, finance, etc. are understood, value cannot be fully either.

#3. *“Communism would be the end of ‘commodity fetishism,’ or the domination of the value-form over society, i.e., the end of the domination of the inhuman body of capital, of profit, over man.”*

My critique of capitalism, it seems, essentially boils down to humanism. Man can be so good if only she was truly free: “wherever humanity can make and take, create and use freely...”

This is, of course, the very ideology of the system which I seem so vehemently against. The “freedom of the market” and the individual pursuit of profit have been everywhere and always portrayed as the “freedom of the individual” — and certainly also of humanity as apart from nature — to “make and take, create and use freely.” Regardless of outcomes, the destruction of nature by man and the domination of man by man has always been excused by humanism in the first sense and individualism in the second. A critique of capitalism on these grounds amounts to either claiming that capitalism didn’t go far enough in allowing humanity to freely “take” and “use” from nature as she wishes, or that capitalism didn’t fulfill its own ideological demands. The latter proposition only makes for a movement with no discernible radicality. The former proposition is not even anti-capitalist.

The relation of man to nature will have to change if we are to overcome ecological crisis, but the potential for this change is only deprecated by my desire to yet again seek the good spirit of man and her freedom as a species apart from the rest. Communism is “freedom,” for lack of a better word, but it is not man’s freedom. The ideology of man’s freedom has caused enough damage to the world already, including the cases of Soviet faux anti-capitalism and its derivatives.