

# Postscript on Moralism as Capitalist Realism - Postliterate - Medium

By Postliterate

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In a [past essay of mine](https://medium.com/@postliterate/moralism-religion-r eactionary-politics-and-authoritarianism-ef56e44fba09) → <https://medium.com/@postliterate/moralism-religion-r eactionary-politics-and-authoritarianism-ef56e44fba09>, I described the behavior of moralizers — those who allot much time and effort to moralizing about what individuals should and should not do and denouncing those that contradict their teachings. My thesis was that moralizing in such a scenario served but one purpose: to make the moralizer forget himself.

What I didn't realize at the time was that this was not merely a philosophical problem, and which could only at best be applied to authoritarians or particularly religious authoritarians. Instead, it was a material problem, and one of a large scale at that. The dynamic of moralizing has become ever-present in hearts and minds almost every place where modern conditions of production dominate. Furthermore, the dynamic has become a forceful machine in the ideology of capitalist realism.

Mark Fisher's "capitalist realism" — the prevailing notion in emerging post-industrial societies that capitalism is the only viable or even imaginable economic system — does not merely take form as something authoritatively imposed from above, although there are certainly examples of this, but also as its opposite: a sense of rebellious cynicism *against* what is.

How can a society so cynical and rebellious in its heart as this one do nothing to change things? The answer lies in the question itself: it is precisely in our cynicism that inactivity is created. As Fisher writes:

“We believe that money is only a meaningless token of no intrinsic worth, yet we act as if it has a holy value. Moreover, this behavior precisely depends upon the prior disavowal — we are able to fetishize money in our actions only because we have already taken an ironic distance towards money in our heads.”

We do it physically because our minds have done the work of deflecting it. In exactly the same way the moralizer can bear to be a hypocrite only because he allots all of his energy to denouncing hypocrisy — and so no longer has to bear the thought of himself being a hypocrite — today we denounce consumerism, denounce the dollar, and denounce “the system” and all who slavishly follow it, exactly so that we can bear to go on engaging in it.

This may be Rick Roderick’s missing piece; he spent much of his life as a lecturer in awe of the level of cynicism that was prevailing society — this was in the 90s. Today it must be worse, yet the prospects of change are correlatively worse also. The missing piece was the inherently detached nature of such cynicism; what it really was was empty moralizing for ourselves. Today we almost unconsciously cannot bear the horrors of continuing to engage → <https://medium.com/@postliterate/the-relevance-of-capitalist-realism-4fac46bc657> in the current global system; we moralize as an escape from ourselves, for the development of a sufficient amount of separation from our acts in our minds that we can bear to go on.

“Those who still vote seem to have no other intention than to desecrate the ballot box by voting as a pure act of protest. We’re beginning to suspect that it’s only against voting itself that people continue to vote.”

— Invisible Committee, The Coming Insurrection