

Theses On Class Struggle - Postliterate - Medium

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I — The Personal & Political

- Class struggle cannot be understood at the level of the personal. Only in a non-objective and apologetic framework can its crimes be considered the result of exceptional circumstances that simply reoccur without reason.
- Even those exceptional situations precipitated by class struggle cannot be understood at the level of the personal either. By attributing crises, for example, to exceptional individuals (in the strongly negative) sense, antisemitism simply forms embryonic.

“The answer is almost always the same: the ‘real economy’ is healthy; the world economy is endangered by the insane mechanisms of a financial system that is totally out of control. [...] However, this artifice of reducing the arcana of the capitalist economy, when the latter is not functioning properly, to the schemes of an evil conspiracy, has a long and dangerous history.” [1]

- Class struggle cannot be understood as a struggle of opposing egos. Egotism, but merely transposed across two opposing sides, is not the driving factor behind class struggle. Neither the capitalist nor the worker is in control.
- Unbridled “egoism” is not the real dominating factor of capitalist society. By identifying humans with the self-destructive nature of capital

via “egoism,” post-capitalist politics is forced to identify with repression and not liberation.

“Currently, the established egoism has definitively freed itself from any content of material shortage under the money-form. The material surplus-product can no longer be defined as the object of appropriation for anyone’s use and benefit: it has become autonomous as a monstrous end-in-itself that anyone can see.” [2]

- Furthermore, this view identifies with the same utilitarianism with which capitalist apologetics takes place. By making society out to be measurable through the calculation of individual action, a total critique of political economy and of the presuppositions which sustain it becomes impossible. Political economy is partially *accepted* here.
- On a related note, if class struggle is a power struggle, the latter cannot be understood ever as “natural.” By identifying humans with an immovable will to dominate, the possibility of a liberatory post-capitalist politics is precluded.

“For proletarian revolt is a festival or it is nothing; in revolution the road of excess leads once and for all to the palace of wisdom. A palace which knows only one rationality: the *game*. The rules are simple: to live instead of devising a lingering death, and to indulge untrammelled desire.” [3]

II — Power

- Viewing power as a simple relation of oppressor/oppressed, whereby the oppressor forces her will upon a protesting other, has been a grave mistake. The oppressor does not emerge from an egotistical will to dominate, and the oppressed are not simply the less powerful who lost this power struggle.

“Even the rulers are ruled; in actuality, they never rule for their own needs or wellbeing, but for something that is simply transcendent.” [4]

- The oppressor does not come to rule nor rules because of a desire for enjoyment. This is not to say no enjoyment is derived from the position, but that it is not the primary experience of the ruler. Neither is it generally true that the oppressor personally feels a sense of quasi-sexual satisfaction in oppressing; the oppressor has little to no personal connection to her role as dominator as it is far too abstract.
- The oppressor, rather, is locked in a position as the oppressed are, and she is compelled to identify with her position as the oppressed do. In this way, the oppressed are easily susceptible to reinforcing and reproducing the oppressor.
- There are situations in which great enjoyment is derived from oppressing and in which great satisfaction is derived from controlling, but these are little people. Police, for instance, derive great pleasure from the personal domination of innocent people; they are not, however, the ones really in charge. Those that are have a much more impersonal role.
- Institutions of power are not defined by egos in particular positions, but by another consciousness altogether. This consciousness experiences power in the most positive way and reproduces it everywhere. It is not experienced as a downward push against something real, but as the framework for the real altogether. Most importantly, it turns all — even the most powerless — into little police officers controlling each other in service of the rules of the oppressor. The most powerless become the most fervent in ensuring all are doing “what they should.”
- Here, the oppressed identifies wholly with the power relationship. It is seen as not only necessary, but *not far enough*.

III — Revolutionary Class Struggle

- Class struggle cannot overcome capital. Class struggle is the political struggle over the value of labor-power — labor-power, uniquely, having a “*historical and moral element*” (*Capital I, Ch. 6*) that goes into the determination of its value.
- Class struggle does not endanger capital — it is integral to it. The wins of the working class in establishing better work conditions, better wages, etc. are unable to break free of the framework of capital itself.
- The “working class” is not a transhistorical category and neither is labor itself. That a class defined by labor exists and that such a struggle is integral to society as a whole, is unique to capitalism. Communism must seek to abolish the “working people” as a constituted form of identification.
- Capitalists are not “parasites.” This is neither true in the sense that they “steal” surplus-value, and untrue in that they do not labor while others do. Both arguments feed into the logic of political economy itself, in the first instance by simply claiming the right to a more equitable form of estranged labor, and in the second by simply (oft out of spite) forcing more groups of people under the already dominating force of productivism. Particularly in the latter case, the oppressed is simply enforcing the very regulations which oppress them.
- The proletariat does not have a privileged position in seeing through the illusion of commodity fetishism. They are victims of the same false appearances of the “value of labor” or the supposedly transhistorical nature of exchange.
- There are those who may see through fetishism, not as an intellectual exercise but as a material reality. They may emerge largely from the working class but their role must be precisely against the self-identification of the class relationship.
- The proletariat can be hostile to capital only when it ceases to identify itself with the class struggle. Only by refusing the position of prole-

tariat can they overcome their condition. A class acting as a class cannot abolish classes; however, a class which ceases to act as a class, can.

Notes:

1. Anselm Jappe, *Who Is to Blame?* → <https://libcom.org/article/who-blame-anselm-jappe>
2. Robert Kurz, *Domination Without a Subject* → <https://libcom.org/article/domination-without-subject-part-one-robert-kurz>, 1
3. UNEF Strasbourg/Situationist International, *On the Poverty of Student Life* → <http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/en/display/141>
4. Kurz, *ibid.*