

# A Review of “How to Philosophize with a Hammer and Sickle” by Jonas Čeika

By Postliterate

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Jonas Čeika, better known as the youtuber “CCK Philosophy,” wrote a book attempting to synthesize the ideas of Marx and Nietzsche. Knowing that it was written by an individual who exhibits an exemplary case of commodified philosophy — a philosophy *youtuber* — I did not expect the book to be the most profound or advanced exercise in philosophic scholarship. I hoped, rather, that its inevitable errors would not be too severe.

The result was rather interesting, in a cruel sort of way. The book rarely makes offensively bad claims about either Marx or Nietzsche. In fact much of it is all very innocuous. But somehow in this very process of writing shallow and inoffensive interpretations of otherwise very deep and very *offensive* thinkers, the end result was nothing short of poor scholarship — not in the sense of outright error in details, but rather grave mistake at the level of the conceptual aggregate.

The first problem is that Čeika’s understanding of Marx is terribly basic and utterly uninspired. This latter detail is the truly devastating part, and it poses a huge theoretical problem in writing about Marx. If one cannot approach Marx *as if he really were your own*, with all of one’s cut-throat criticisms intact, then it is impossible to intelligently write about him. Marx’s dogma is too deep, his critics too large in number, and the

practical consequences of his thought far too massive for one to simply take him at his word *on anything*. If you want to produce even halfway presentable Marx scholarship in the present day, you have to make him your own. Čeika has yet to realize this, and still approaches Marx like an innocuous thinker with wisdoms and truths that he can accept without much explanation. The most glaringly deleterious example of this is Čeika's unquestioning appraisal of the dogma of the positive development of productive forces in capitalism which produces the conditions for communism. In the current phase of ecological catastrophe there is absolutely no excuse for this Promethean delusion, yet Čeika seems to lack the intellectual will to question it — he would prefer to take Marx's word for it, according to his own already shallow conception of the man.

The second problem is with Nietzsche. Čeika presents a version of Nietzsche *qua* grand critic, lover of freedom, hater of capital, and overall iconoclastic radical. This also shallow conception of Nietzsche is then (even with numerous stretches throughout) tied together with the ideas of Marx. The pair appears almost comfortable, if at least highly possible, and Čeika's ability to interweave xeroxed quotes from both authors to make it appear as if they are so in agreement on things is rather polished.

The issue arises when one realizes that there is a Nietzsche far deeper and well beyond Čeika's shallow account of him — namely, the quasi-scientific doctrines of the will-to-power and the eternal recurrence, his notion of becoming, of individual truth, and his immensely complex relationship with reason itself. Čeika provides an inoffensive (yet shallow) account of the eternal recurrence, discusses Nietzsche's conception of objectivity as it appears in his *Genealogy of Morality*, and at least mentions (without explanation) the will-to-power. (The latter is likely not explained because it appears Čeika himself never actually grasped it, turning it into some normative claim about revolutionary will-power.) The significant point here is that Nietzsche has been greatly diluted in order to appear compatible with another thinker whose depth stretches in a completely other direction. By cutting off Nietzsche's depth, Čeika can more easily make

him appear to be in agreement with Marx (*look — they both hated work under capital! and respected the historical view of man! and despised the material conditions of religion!, etc.*) In truth, Čeika cannot afford to consider Nietzsche's depth because it would banalize all of the similarities he draws between him and Marx — the similarities would appear insignificant because the immense depth of both thinkers would be more clearly shown to have extended in radically different directions which are in no way compatible.

But of course, these huge problems are the consequence of a much larger issue — ***the book is not really even about Marx or Nietzsche at all.*** Once this is realized, all of the instances of poor scholarship on Čeika's part become greatly contextualized.

The book, really, is an attempt by a youtuber sympathetic to the cause of socialism to present an image of the latter which is palatable to a young and impressionable generation still raised under the partial specter of the Berlin wall's collapse. Čeika uses the phrase "*our socialism*" (his emphasis consistently) *ad nauseam* for this very reason. The entire purpose of the book is to make socialism appear viable for a new generation, and by infusing Marx with Nietzsche, Čeika thinks he can create a socialism ("*our socialism*") that bears no relation to the decrepit USSR or Marxism-Leninism — but is instead full of youth, vigor, and individualism. Čeika wants to make socialism look fresh again by bringing Nietzsche into it, and by doing so he does a incredible disservice to both Nietzsche and socialism itself. Čeika's book completely fails as a valid piece of argumentation on why socialism should be revived (taken alone, it certainly did not persuade me on any of its points), and it completely fails as a work of scholarship on either Marx or Nietzsche. It is not a work of intellectual rigor and determination. It is a work of commodified philosophy — and no less a painfully exemplary case of it.