

Further Notes on post-Marxism, 9/2/22 - Postliterate - Medium

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1

As Endnotes elucidated in *The Moving Contradiction* → <https://endnotes.org.uk/articles/the-moving-contradiction>, capitalism is defined by a set of contradictions which exist almost in no particular order and which all imply and reproduce each other dialectically. What this makes clear is that no particular contradiction of capitalism — be it class struggle, labor/capital, use/exchange-value, etc. — can be overturned without necessarily overturning all of the others. The contradictions of capitalism may be read in terms of most to least abstract (e.g. from the “value-form” to the commodity), but its more concrete units, such as commodities or concrete labor, should be understood as existing in no particular order.

This goes against the more common understanding of Marx’s critique of political economy. Engels claimed Marx’s *Capital* was an analysis of capital which progresses both logically and historically (i.e. by following capital as it develops from simple commodity exchange, to capital accumulation, to the money-commodity and beyond.) The reason this view should be understood as restrictive and lacking foresight is from the experiences of past “market socialist,” centrally planned, or even social democratic schemes.

In order to demonstrate how these schemes, in preserving the abstract qualities of capital (i.e. the value-form), reproduce all of its material qualities as well, it becomes necessary to analyze these contradictions as they may develop in a very different order to the one seen in *Capital*. For example, how would these contradictions form in a “market socialist” system which has already done away with individual pursuit of profit? How would they form in a centralized planning scheme which has done away with much of the “anarchy of production”? These plans are a far cry from free barter exchange or mercantilism and possess in them “socialistic” qualities at the forefront. But because they still retain value-form relations, it is inevitable that they will reproduce all of the other contradictions of capital. In order to demonstrate as much, the contradictions of capitalism must be understood as essentially *synonymous* with one other. They may develop out of each other temporally, but no matter the order they do so, they always emerge.

The relation of labor/capital, exchange/use, or abstract/concrete labor is synonymous with proletariat/bourgeois, and as historical record has shown, abolishing only one is an experiment doomed to reproduce all of the others, letting revolutionary potential fall backwards.

2

If we are to see the two sides of each of capital’s internal contradictions as both entirely manufactured by capital itself, rather than adding onto categories deemed ahistorical (i.e. labor or use-value), it becomes necessary to adopt a new theory of class struggle.

Marx’s somewhat ridiculous attempts to apply his economic ideas of “use-value” and “forces of production” to the non-productivist economies of feudalist or even primitive communist societies say as much. His obsession over production and labor do not reflect some bold moralism which allowed him to cut through the supposedly brutal anti-labor or

counter-productive nature of capital — it merely reflects to what degree Marx’s ideas were unconsciously derived from capitalist ontology and prevailing bourgeois ideology itself.

Communism, as the real movement which seeks to abolish the current state of things, cannot be understood as more productive, efficient, or pro-labor than capitalism. Marx’s productivist method must instead be used to destroy capital’s logic of productivism itself by providing the most radical imminent critique of it and effectively drawing the barriers between it and communism.

Viewing communism as freeing labor from capital or use-value from exchange-value misses the fact that both categories of each are capitalistic. Pre-capitalist societies did not have one category but not the other — they had, in effect, neither. Capital had to first distinguish “labor” as an estranged and quantifiable unit of life-time before it could then divide it into concrete and abstract labor. If “concrete labor” is to be considered the communistic relation which must be freed from the evil “abstract labor,” our communism will only be a half-measure *still stamped with the birth-marks of the old society from whose womb it emerges* (Gothakritik.)

What is so interesting about political economy is not that it placed the exchange-value over the use-value, the abstract labor over the concrete, the capitalist over the worker — but that it morphed both categories of each beyond recognition so that neither can be retained.

Applied to class struggle, this means that proletarian liberation is not the liberation of the proletariat from the bourgeois, but from the category of “proletariat” itself. The contradiction derives not from the fact that one is strong and the other weak, but from the fact that either, even alone, remain at all necessary to be categorized.