

Marxism as Capitalist Realism - Postliterate - Medium

By Postliterate

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I could state forthright that most people's grasp of marxism is unbelievably terrible (at least in the US), but this could be easily explained away. US education is terrible, marxism is not taught anywhere, most people don't care nor think about it, etc. But what I find unique about marxism when compared to other fields, such as physics or history, is that, in the minds of most people, rather than there being an absence of knowledge on the subject, there is *prevalence* of specific misconceptions. With most other fields, many people when asked would say "I don't know anything about that." But with marxism, many people will state their opinions, clearly and based off of a command of marxism they believe to possess, and yet still be unimaginably wrong (in both their command of marxism and their subsequent conclusions on the topic).

I believe marxism exists as a special kind of ignorance in people's minds for a reason deeper than mere lack of education. This is because there is — instead of an absence of knowledge — a *prevalence* of confident misconceptions; there must be no lack of so-called "education" on marxism in this society, so much as a vast array of what can be equated to propaganda.

The vast majority of people have it ingrained in them that communism (whatever that refers to) is bad (however that is measured). I see potential change in the new generation, but for the most part it remains so. Any criti-

cal debate on the true actions of former communist states is not present, only this maxim existing in isolation.

Because the maxim lives in isolation, anytime people happen to pick up bits of marxism from the media (or what they believe to be bits of marxism), it does not serve much purpose in their minds other than attempting to pace backwards their story as to how this detail leads to the eternal truth that communism is bad. If someone tells them communism means sharing everything, some of the first thoughts they will have which uses this new information will be to piece it to the puzzle of why communism is bad. They may quickly decide, “if communism is sharing, communism is bad because not everyone wants to share,” or something along those lines. Every detail of marxism they happen to pick up serves to piece together the grand narrative in their head of why communism simply doesn’t work. Each individual, based on their (often merely alleged and misguided) exposure to marxism, will have only mildly differing narratives as to how we get from Karl Marx to the titular “100 million dead”.

This is, in large part, the cause of capitalist hegemony (control of the media by a capitalist regime which has a vested political and economic interest in ensuring that capitalism stays alive). However, what is more interesting to me is *how* the hegemony went about ensuring ignorance regarding marxism (marxism being the largest philosophical threat to the hegemony). For the most part, they are not concerned with hiding marxism as “forbidden knowledge”, they instead ensure the creation of a popular zeitgeist which is completely averse to philosophy and even the word itself.

It is a brutally efficient process, much more so than hiding marxism could have done. The latter case would have made it *more* popular merely by the fact that it is hidden, or attempted to be hidden. As Anton LaVey writes in *The Satanic Bible*:

“By making something taboo, it only serves to intensify the desire. Everyone likes to do the things they have been told not to. ‘Forbidden fruits are sweetest.’” [1]

It is therefore much more effective to allow marxism to exist but while ensuring absolutely nobody has any clue what it actually teaches. In this way, the most absurd misconceptions can be created so that it becomes merely *common sense* to reject marxism. To use a common example, Marx's Labor Theory of Value is purported to claim that the value of a chair which took 2 hours to make has twice the value as one which took only 1 hour to make, even if the quality of the former is worse than the latter. Many people believe this to be the case, and it therefore takes less than a minute of reasoning to conclude the theory must be nonsense. The misconception is so efficient firstly because it is *almost* true (and so anytime the person happens to bump into a piece of marxist theory, they can skim it in bad faith and conclude their assumptions are still correct), and secondly because it is so ridiculous only an *idiot* would accept it (such would be the popular conclusion). This way, marxism becomes the philosophy only for idiots, and this way marxist ideas can exist peacefully in the world, but with almost total certainty that the vast majority of people will never give it thought. It can be silently discarded in everyone's minds, put to rest, and be ensured by the capitalist class that it will never seriously be considered by anyone ever again.

Here we are at Capitalist Realism. Marxism's children, socialism and communism (in their most popular forms), present themselves as the major alternatives to capitalism. But none of these systems will ever even be ambivalently accepted by the populace as long as their foundation, marxism, is brutalized in the way it is today. It is brutalized specifically in a way in which people can come to seemingly logical conclusions about marxism based on the information about it they are given; the issue is the information they are given is purposely and dangerously wrong. From broken information comes broken conclusions, and it is then assumed that if the alternative to capitalism simply does not work, capitalism must be the only realistic economic system. As so here we are:

“There is no alternative.”

[1] Anton LaVey, *The Satanic Bible*, pg. 44