

The end of history? - Postliterate - Medium

By Postliterate

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The fundamental realization to which all theoretical production in the realm of value-theory and the critique of political economy must return, that must be confronted and to which it must find a resolution, is the realization that the capitalist mode of production is *historically unprecedented*.

It may have been conceivable, in Isaak Rubin's time, to interpret the system of generalized commodity production as merely a particular historically-specific mediation of the social production process. Today this is no longer possible; modernity has revealed itself to be historically privileged, and instead of showing itself to be an aliquot part of the history of modes of production, shows itself to be the *deadly end of human history itself*. The contemporary fear of metanarratives and of vulgar historical materialism — while quite reasonable in the wake of the fall of the Eastern Bloc — breaks down within the very historical context from which it is born. Capitalism refuses itself to be treated as merely another mode of production, and instead tears apart virtually the entire planet in a grand existential catastrophe, asserting itself to be something historically unique and unprecedented in the history of human affairs.

Capitalism thus cannot be dealt with theoretically merely at the level of transhistorical social ontology; it is not merely another social mediation of metabolic processes — with its trials, tribulations, and eventual possibility for succession. It is something we've never seen before, a disruption of hitherto transhistorical natural processes, now dominated by capital in a manner not even conceivable using our traditional modes of historical interpretation. Alienation is not the expression of the capitalist form of

social mediation, the social mediation specific to our historical epoch; alienation is an *unprecedented* phenomenon whose historical emergence must now be understood as the breakdown of our understandings of social ontology hitherto, and the beginning of a deadly historical downward slope.