

Not a Spoiler Alert: Preface to the Serbian edition of *Beyond Capital: Marx's Political Economy of the Working Class* (2017)

This is not a spoiler alert. Revealing the ending, it is often said, spoils the story. But not when it comes to politics. Knowing where you are going can make the journey more meaningful, allowing you to grasp the significance of each step. And that, I believe, is the case with *Beyond Capital*. The book ends with a focus upon human development and practice (or Transformative Practice and Human Development, the programme that I set up in 2006 at Centro Internacional Miranda in Venezuela). It ends, in short, by emphasizing the importance of Marx's concept of revolutionary practice--- that simultaneous changing of circumstances and human activity or self-change.

And that concept of revolutionary practice is a red thread that runs throughout Marx's work. From his stress upon the way the struggles of workers against capital transform "circumstances and men", expanding their capabilities and making them fit to create a new world to his understanding that in the very act of producing, "the producers change, too, in that they bring out new qualities in themselves, develop themselves in production, transform themselves, develop new powers and new ideas, new modes of intercourse, new needs and new language", Marx was aware that every human activity generates a double product. There are always two products of human activity--- the change in circumstances and the change in human beings.

What happens if you forget the second product, the human product? Politically, you may try to build socialism by changing circumstances for workers (i.e., without the real self-government and self-management required for workers to transform themselves as they transform society); the result is to produce a working class with neither the capacity nor the will to prevent the restoration of capitalism. Theoretically, you may focus solely upon capital and its inherent self-destructiveness (accordingly, calculating rates of profit and chronicling every capitalist economic crisis in anticipation of the Big One); by not stressing the second product, the worker deformed within capitalist relations who looks upon capital's needs as common sense, one-sided Marxists inevitably fail to understand why the working class does not rise up on the occasion of yet another capitalist crisis.

*Beyond Capital* ends by focusing upon the side of workers--- upon the nature of workers produced within capitalist relations and how they produce themselves outside those relations. It ends by stressing the one-sidedness of *Capital* and the necessity to continue Marx's project. But this is not how *Beyond Capital* begins.

The book proceeds by demonstrating that the categories introduced in *Capital* are not a combination of separate concepts plucked from mid-air and juxtaposed externally. Rather, we understand them as part of a dialectical unity. In the first dialectical moment, concepts are interrogated to see what they imply, what is outside them and how their completeness depends upon the incorporation of that second term. In the second dialectical moment, the unity of the first two terms is explored, considering each side in turn as end and mediator, and then examined as a new first term to be interrogated. Thus, Marx begins in *Capital* by studying the commodity and showing that it contains within it the concept of money. From there, he considers the

relations of commodity and money [C-M-C and M-C-M] and shows that the unity of commodity and money implies the concept of capital in circulation. The subsequent sequence is clear: from capital in circulation to capital in production to capital as a unity of production and circulation. But can we stop there? *Beyond Capital* argues that Marx demonstrates that capital needs wage-labour for its existence [K-WL-K] but postpones consideration of the other side of the relation [WL-K-WL], ie., the worker as a subject with her own goals.

Tracing the implications of the one-sidedness of *Capital* leads us to consider the one-sidedness of concepts introduced in *Capital* (eg., productive labour and wealth), the one-sidedness of a focus upon the worker only as a wage-labourer in relation to capital (thus omitting consideration of other relations that form those specific human beings, e.g., patriarchy and racism). And how this one-sidedness underlies the failure to stress class struggle as a process of production.

*Beyond Capital* thus ends with an emphasis upon how workers transform themselves through their own activity--- that key link of human development and practice. An ending but a new beginning.