

# Commodity Fetishism Revisited: Discussion

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The circulated paper is part of a chapter of *The Wrong of Law*. As elaborated somewhat in the Introduction, it is there because the idea I have of the wrong of law is functionally very similar to what I take to be Marx's reason for including a section on commodity fetishism in the first Chapter of *Capital*. That is, I think that this section is for Marx a conceptual necessity of making a critique of political economy and more particularly getting an adequate theory of economic value. The basic idea of *The Wrong of Law* is, similarly, that it is necessary to work toward a concept of the wrong of law if (modern and post-modern 'law') is to be understood as it is.

While my rereading strategy entailed suspending judgment on various points of disagreement with Marx, in the context of law, colonialism and violence, the narrative of progress and European scientific, technological and cultural superiority in which his thought is embedded is an immense stumbling block.

Assuming the interaction of narrative and conceptual discourses in social and legal thought (cf. Van Roermund, *Law, Narrative and Reality*, Kluwer, 1997) my central question is how to deal with this. Otherwise put, how and where to revise Marx. One needs here, as far as I can see, a guiding idea. As I would formulate that at the moment it would be: to keep hold of a distinction and shift between pre-critical and critical 'science' of relations and forces of production, a science which is itself a product of European accomplishment and has both epistemic and technological power, in order to put it to other uses. In particular to make it available to possible communities of resistance to the very form of ethical life (i.e. of *Sittlichkeit* as deployed in Hegel's thought) from which this work emerges.

My belief is that an 'ethical turn' is not the way to go here but that is evidently up for question.

If one takes practical human activity (in this context the practice of exchange) and its place in concept formation (specifically equality) and in establishing 'truth' criteria from Marx, that question becomes one of theoretical practice. Divorced from engagement in 'politics' it leads thought toward reconciliation with the present. Interpreting it as an engagement in politics may confuse politics and political theory. Every day life/institutional contexts as a site of politics, may be too local to be effective. Perhaps then, at least as a supplement, practical human activity it should be directed to 'tēchné', qua method (but not method thought as external to or brought (from elsewhere)

to the theory concerned) and to 'the stake' of science and technology in Marx's thinking of fetish phenomena.