

CRITIQUES & RECONSTRUCTIONS OF CLASSICAL HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

I. Five criticisms of historical materialism

1. Development Thesis

Critique: the forces of production do not have a systematic tendency to develop over time.

Response: Sticky-downward tendency of forces of production

2. Functional Explanation of relations of production

Critique: the level of development of the forces of production does not functionally explain the relations of production.

Response: to shift the functional argument from optimality to compatibility and with development to use of forces of production.

3. Inevitability of fettering of forces of production

Critique: No general reason to believe class relations always end up fettering development of PF

Response: shift from development fettering to use-fettering

4. Economic Reductionism: critique of the theory of the superstructure

Critique: Noneconomic phenomena are not generally explained by economic structures.

Response: shift from inclusive to restrictive historical materialism.

5. Transformation Thesis

Critique: Even if relations do fetter the forces of production, there is no reason to suppose that there will always emerge any historical agents capable of transforming those relations

Response: no effective response for the General Theory of History

II. Where does this leave us?