

Sample of Developmental Critique

by Reba Chaisson

Hello XXXX,

It is so nice to hear from you. At the risk of writing a mini dissertation, I want to try to respond to your questions as clearly as possible.

Given that 'greedy' has a negative connotation, I agree with you that the use of the term amounts to a value judgment. However, since greed denotes hoarding at the expense of others, then the term is appropriate when referring to capitalists such as T. J. Rogers. Today, workers are downsized and the wages of those remaining in jobs change each year at less than the inflation rate. At the same time, capitalists receive multi-million dollar raises, bonuses, and even golden parachutes upon being fired. Hence capitalists are in effect being rewarded (even for jobs done poorly) at the expense of others.

This is not to suggest that T.J. Rogers should take a pay cut. It is to suggest that he and other capitalists experience the same modest increases that are awarded to their employees each year in an effort to maintain or shore up the company's solvency. What happens instead is that the burden for this is always placed squarely on the shoulders of the workers. Hence capitalists are hoarding at the expense of the workers.

Having said this, T.J. Rogers does indeed epitomize capitalism. The effects of this are gross inequalities and a concern for himself – both personally and in terms of his priorities for his company. The life chances of the worker are not a priority under capitalism; only the utility or labor of the worker is of concern. As Marx stated, capitalism is an economic system based on the exploitation of the worker. And until workers achieve class consciousness, this system of exploitation will remain strong and intact.

With regard to capitalism as a mindset, it absolutely is – but this mindset is socially constructed through our socialization to ideology. From a very young age we are taught (overtly and implicitly) that we are to be responsible for our own self and not others. We are taught that we are expected to get a job and work hard for a living. We are taught to be obedient to authority (parents, teachers, bosses). We are taught to be loyal. These teachings are ideologies that support capitalism and its acceptance. To be selfish, to work for others (rather than oneself – hence we will never realize wealth), to not challenge the system, indeed to accept the system. By the time we reach adulthood, hegemony has been achieved; that is, we have been shaped to conform and adapt to capitalism to the point where we do not question the system itself. In fact, we even view it as good, preferred, the best system, even though we labor to age 65 and retire poor having never experienced the 'good life.' So yes, the acceptance of capitalism is a mindset, but it is an ideologically constructed mindset.

Finally, do some people simply not have the stomach for capitalism? When workers are under what Marx refers to as a 'false consciousness,' (that is they are unaware of how their mindsets have been influenced by ideology) then they will resist any challenge to capitalism, in fact they often defend it. But there are at least three reasons why people might challenge it:

1. They are informed of how ideologies have functioned to shape them into conformance to the capitalist mode of production.
2. The ideology says that if you work hard you will achieve 'it' (success and whatever 'it' might mean). However, this is often not the case. Overwhelmingly, people who are downsized have worked hard, yet they are out of jobs. People who work 2 to 3 jobs still struggle to make ends meet. People who have college credentials have worked hard, but still cannot find jobs, find only temporary jobs, or find permanent jobs but still struggle to make ends meet. These groups challenge the system because they realize there is nothing meritocratic about it (remember *Titanic*).
3. The recognition that there are gross differences in the quantity and quality of resources made available to persons based on race, class, and gender quite frankly pisses people off. They know that the system is neither meritocratic nor fair (again, remember *Titanic*). This is why marginalized groups are much more likely to challenge the system. The resources and opportunities to experience social mobility (in the ways they have been taught to achieve it) are not there due to racism, classism, and sexism.

The few at the top are, overwhelmingly, white men and their families. Why? Through racism, sexism, and classism this group is able to reproduce and perpetuate their dominance (i.e. via institutional discrimination, tax laws, spending policies, social networks.). Racial minorities, women, and poor/working class people are expendable in the capitalist system. In the vast wealth of the U.S., capitalists hoard at the expense of these groups. In short, they are greedy. I could go on, but I think that is enough. I appreciate your interest. Take care and I will see you on Monday.