



The Structure of World History: From Modes of Production to Modes of Exchange

Kojin Karatani

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In this major, paradigm-shifting work, Kojin Karatani systematically re-reads Marx's version of world history, shifting the focus of critique from modes of production to modes of exchange. Karatani seeks to understand both Capital-Nation-State, the interlocking system that is the dominant form of modern global society, and the possibilities for superseding it. In *The Structure of World History*, he traces different modes of exchange, including the pooling of resources that characterizes nomadic tribes, the gift exchange systems developed after the adoption of fixed-settlement agriculture, the exchange of obedience for protection that arises with the emergence of the state, the commodity exchanges that characterize capitalism, and, finally, a future mode of exchange based on the return of gift exchange, albeit modified for the contemporary moment. He argues that this final stage—marking the overcoming of capital, nation, and state—is best understood in light of Kant's writings on eternal peace. *The Structure of World History* is in many ways the capstone of Karatani's brilliant career, yet it also signals new directions in his thought.



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