

Agenda #2, February 7, 2008

Session 3. What is so bad about Capitalism?

Note: I have only included agenda items from the interrogations that are directly connected to the reading for this session.

1. Definition of capitalism

- Capitalism as social system vs form of economic organization and concept of the state as a noncapitalist institution (Rudolfo Elbert, Sung Ik Cho)
- How do we distinguish “the role” of the economy and of the state? (Julia McReynolds)
- What about the varieties of capitalism and the cultural/legal/political contexts of capitalism: do these undermine the idea of a critique of capitalism qua capitalism? (Sung Ik Cho)

2. Exploitation

- How general is the argument that capitalists have an interest in the vulnerability of workers? How do we explain the exceptions when workers are paid good salaries with job security? (Catherine Willis, Pablo Dalle)
- Do capitalists do better with full employment or crisis conditions? (Pablo Dalle)
- The text does not discuss the link between expropriation and exploitation (Julian Rebon) pr the ways in which expropriation generates a “surplus population” without jobs. (Rodrigo Salgado)

3. Erosion of ascriptive characteristics: is it really correct that the market erodes discrimination? (Molly Noble, Edo Novat)

4. The Middle class:

- how do they fit into the analysis? (Molly Noble)
- Does the middle class obscure the core relation of capitalists and workers? (Pablo Dalle)

5. The problem of beliefs, preferences, identities

- Don't people give their consent to capitalism for reasons other than fear? Doesn't the consumerism of capitalism generate identities that make people happy with capitalism? (Eduardo Cavieres)

6. Interesting work & work autonomy

- How can everyone have interesting/challenging work – who will sweep the floors? How can everyone have autonomy and self-direction when many jobs need people to follow strict procedures? (Hanif Nu'Man)

7. Imperialism, global uneven development, dependency, militarism.

- Are these intrinsic to capitalism? Should they be a distinct criticism? (Julian Rebon, Guillaume Neault, Tod van Gunten)

8. Which of these criticisms require transcending capitalism for their solution and which are containable within capitalism? (Edo Novat)

9. Is there a normative basis for linkages between people who oppose capitalism for different reasons – environment, poverty, community, etc.? Wes Markovski)