



Historical Capitalism with Capitalist Civilization

Immanuel Wallerstein

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In this short, highly readable book Immanuel Wallerstein provides a condensation of the central ideas of his monumental study of capitalism as an integrated, historical entity: *The Modern World-System*. In developing an anatomy of capitalism over the past five centuries, Wallerstein traces those elements that have constantly changed and evolved, while giving equal attention to features of historical capitalism that have necessarily remained constant.

Particular attention is focused on the emergence and development of a unified world market, and the concomitant international division of labour. Wallerstein argues forcefully, against the current of much contemporary opinion, that capitalism has brought about an actual, not merely relative, immiseration in the countries of the Third World. The economic and social problems of underdeveloped countries will remain unresolved as long as they remain located within a framework of world capitalism.

Historical Capitalism, with its continuation *Capitalist Civilization*, is a welcome and stimulating synthesis of one of the most challenging and influential assessments of capitalism as a world-historic mode of production.

Historical Capitalism with Capitalist Civilization Details

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Ferda Nihat Koksoy says

TARİHSEL KAPİTALİZM

-K.Marx KAPİTALİZMİN 3 BÜYÜK ÇELİKLERİNİ kısaca şöyle anlatmıştır:

- 1) Özel sektörün KAPİTALİZMİN ÇIKARI ile KOLEKTİF/KAMUSAL ÇIKAR arasındaki PARADOKS
- 2) MALİYETLERİN AZALTMAK İÇİN ÇELİKLERİN ÇIKARIMINI ve ÜRETİMLERİN DAHA ÇOK İNSANA SATIP KARINI ARTIRMAK İÇİN SİZ-PARASIZ BIRAKTIĞI BU İNSANLARIN MÜHÜRLENE MAHKUM OLMASI
- 3) Kendisinin en büyük MOTORU olan "REKABET" ile yine kendisinin en büyük TUTKUSU olan "TEKELLEME" arasındaki PARADOKS.

-DEVLET, İTTE BU AÇMAZLARDA TIKANDIĞINDA KAPİTALİSTE YARDIM EDER

-DEVLETİN VERGİLENDİRME-VERGİLERİ AZALTIP ARTIRMA GÜCÜ, SERMAYE BİRİKİMİNİN DOĞRUDAN MÜDAHALE GÜCÜDÜR; RİSKLERİ TOPLUMA YAYARKEN KARLARI ÖZELDE TOPLAR ve SERMAYEYİ YÖNLENDİRİR.
DEVLET, ENERJİ-TAİMA-LETİM-BİLGİ TEKNOLOJİSİ gibi vazgeçilmez ve pahalı ALTYAPILARI KAMU KAYNAKLARI İLE YAPAR ve yapılan bu zeminler üzerinden elde edilen KARLARI İSE ÖZELE YÖNLENDİRİR.

DEVLET, ayrıcalıklar KAPİTALİST KULLANSIN, DİĞERLERİN YOKSUN BIRAKSIN siteminin KALDIRACIDIR. Gerekli bulduğunda, elindeki EN BÜYÜK GÜÇ olan SİLAH KULLANMA TEKELİNİ devreye sokar.

DEVLETİN BU SİLAH KULLANMA ve YARGILAMA HAKKINI TEKELİNDE TUTMASI, ilk büyük diğe-diği savaşılar konusu olmuştur. Aristo'nun 3. NÜN OLMAZLIĞI yasası (kontrol eden ve edilen dikkatinde başka güce izin yok-FNK-) gereğince davranılmaktadır ve devletin sınırları içerisinde başka bir yargı hakkına izin verilmemekte ve üretim/emek kontrol altında tutulmaktadır.

-KAPİTALİSTLERİN ÇIKARLARININ ORTAKLAŞMASI, DEVLETLERİN DEVAM ETMESİNİN NEDENİDİR; HEPSİ KENDİ AVANTAJ ALANINI SÖMÜRMEYİ SÜRDÜRMEK İSTEDİĞİNİN SINIRLAR VARDIR.

-KAPİTALİST sistem, giderek daha da çok ÜST TABAKALARIN ÇIKARINA HİZMET eder hale gelmektedir.

-KAPİTALİST ise, AYAK DEĞİRMENİNDE DAHA DA HIZLI KOŞMAK İÇİN GİTİMDE DAHA HIZLI KOŞAN BEYAZ FAREYE benzemektedir.

-EVDEN üretime katılarak çalınan YARI-PROLETERLER, ÜCRETLERİN DÜŞMESİNE ve DAHA ÇOK SÖMÜRÜYE yol açmaktadır.

-DİN ve MİLLİYETÇİLİK KAPİTALİZMİN DAYANAĞIDIR. KÜLTÜREL KİMLİK HAREKETLERİ ise SINIFLAR ARASI DİYALOGA İZİN VEREREK gelişebilecek DİRENİMLERİ GECİKTİRMEKTE ve KAPİTALİSTLERE NEFES ALDIRMAKTADIR.

-DİN KİTLELERİN (K.Marx), HAKİKAT (veritas) ve MARKSİZM ise AYDINLARIN AFYONUDUR

(R.Aron); ACILARI HAF?FLET?R.

-SEÇ?NC?L?K, SOSYAL?ST TAHAYYÜL TA?IMAYAN SAF EVRENSEL?L?K ve B?L?MSEL KÜLTÜRCÜLÜK, SINIRSIZ KAP?TAL B?R?K?M?N?N AKILDI?ILI?ININ MASKES? OLMAKTADIR.

-Gelir uçurumu, yoksulla?ma, i?sizlik, toplumd???l?k, yabanc?la?ma, ruhsal rahats?zl?klar artmakta iken, di?er tarafta ise onar?labilirlik s?n?rlar?n? zorlayan inan?lmaz israflar sürmektedir.

-GELECEK DÜNYA DÜZEN?, önceden söylemeye çal??may?p ANCAK DÜ?LEYEB?LECE??M?Z B?Z?MLERDE, "AZAR AZAR" KURULACAKTIR.

-TAR?HSEL SOSYAL?ZM, e?itli?i ve adaleti en üst düzeyine ç?karan bir tarihsel sistemin asgari tan?mlay?c? özelliklerini ta?yan, insanl???n kendi ya?am? üstündeki denetimini (demokrasi) art?ran ve imgelemi özgürle?tiren bir sosyalizmdir.

Yakup says

Sermaye üretim ekseninde, ya?amlar?m?z dahil her ?eyin metala?t?r?lmas? sürecini ele alarak ba?layan Wallerstein, standart Marksist yakla??mdan farklı bir perspektiften halen nedir diye kafa yorulan Kapitalizm sisteminin tarihselli?inin tüm i?leyi? çeli?kileri ile net soru ve cevaplar? ortaya koyarak etkileyici bir dü?ünü?e sevk ediyor. Sermayenin konumlan???, yeni Pazar anlay???, be?eni yaratma prati?i, modern bilim ayn? zamanda iktidar ayg?t? olan Devlet kurumunun Kapitalist sistem ile iç içe yürüyü?ü, ve bunun gibi bilinen birçok ayr?nt?ya ba?ka bir yönden bak?? at?p ?ktisadi yakla??m olarak size katk? sa?layacak bir eser oldu?unu dü?ünüyorum.

Corazón Rodríguez Soriano says

À pesar de ser un referente para la explicación del capitalismo histórico, puede llegar a ser pesado. termina explicando un capítulo en las últimas 2-3 páginas del final de cada capítulo.

Rallie says

A good primer/introduction to world systems analysis, world economy, and (although unspoken) the concept of time-scales of history (derived from Braudel).

Wendy Liu says

Not perfect but very much worth reading. Longer review forthcoming.

Robert Giambo says

A book that makes sweeping generalizations with no evidence. Apparently historical capitalism is the cause of sexism, racism and runaway liberal individualism (all at once). My favorite quote: "by no means self-evident that there is more liberty, equality, and fraternity in the world today than there was one thousand years ago. One might arguably suggest that the opposite is true.." Take your pick - live in 1014 or 2014.

Ellen says

A decent beginning and the world system stuff is pretty good. A complete jump ship at the end though, where he suddenly decries all communism at utopian, and says we should go for something else, but offering no theory behind that something else. I'd just recommend reading the first 2 chapters and leaving it there.

Yavuz Kestane says

Wallerstein is one of the finest thinkers of 20th and 21st centuries. His argues are more clearly and more informative than most of the writers. Capitalism is also a good subject which Wallerstein's thoughts can be seen. For Wallerstein, capitalism is a condition which high class people more and more earn while middle class people want to participant high class people -later on, most of them give up to it- and low class people's conditions are getting worse. I recommend everyone who want to understand economic and sociological area of capitalism.

David says

A swift, lucid narrative of just what's happened these last 500 years. Wallerstein writes with wit, clarity, and concision, and his analysis swoops through time gloriously. Also admirable: his clear explanation that though Marx was a great thinker, Marx himself recognized that he was a man of his time, and that thinkers in the future would need to keep up the analysis and develop understanding of the ways Capital always continues to mutate. Wallerstein has thought, deeply, about this stuff for so long that he's well prepared to breeze through the quick version here. The book's a page-turner that you can finish in a day or two, and his predictions, made in the early 90s, are hair-raisingly accurate.

If you wonder what all the Marxian fuss is about, this is a great primer on how Capital works, from someone with a healthy willingness to disagree with Marx (or anyone else) when necessary. (He's particularly convincing in his quibble with Marx about the myth of progress.)

Highly recommended.

Andy says

A really good predecessor to Woods' work on the history of capitalism. Interesting to learn more about world-systems theory and Wallerstein's sort of post-Marxism.

Andrew Feist says

Really Really important reading for everyone. A much better description of capitalism than any abstract 'model' of how markets work or anything.

Filled with deep insights and illuminating descriptions.

Short, easy, very very worthwhile read.

Tacodisc says

I don't know why the author insists on "historical capitalism": the word capitalism has worked fine so far. But alright...

While otherwise fine and sometimes insightful (particularly on the "ethnicization of labor" and the role of racism in propping up "historical capitalism"), Chapter 3 takes a hard turn into a screed against the Enlightenment ("ideology of universalism") and at times explicitly equates nationalism and labor socialist movements. Both, he argues, have fallen into the "trap" of inevitable progress, but he goes no further to mention their incredible differences. It's incoherent at best and poisonously confusing at worst.

At some point the Enlightenment is nearly blamed for racism (!) - and as for an alternative, the author offers none except maybe "civilizational alternatives" by which I think he means something like moral relativism. Frustrating little book.

The author's political forecast becomes clear in the last pages: "Communism is Utopia, that is nowhere... There is no interest in a 'socialism' that claims to be a 'temporary' moment of transition towards Utopia." The choice society faces is not socialism or barbarism. Rather, everything hinges on whether the world bourgeoisie chooses reforms ("assuming 'socialist' clothing") or simply allows the system to perish. As though the oppressed have no decision in the matter...

Sat?r Aras? says

Sat?r Aras? grubu olarak 14. oturumumuzda Tarihsel Kapitalizm'i yorumlayacakt?k, ancak hi?birimiz kitab? bitiremedik. Bu duruma ?evirinin ?ok k?t? olmas? ve kitab?'n asl?'nda ?ok ciddi bir akademik arkaplanda yaz?lm?? olmas? gibi sorunlar sebep oldu. Dolay?s?yla, ger?ekten ?abalamam?za ra?men bu kitab? hi?birimiz yar?layamad?k bile. Bu y?zden t?m takip?ilerimizden ?z?r dileriz.

Biz yine de oturumumuzu ?ektik, kitaba biraz dokunduktan sonra farkl? konulara kayd?k ister istemez :)

YouTube'da videoyu izlemek i?in (sadece ses kayd?) : <https://youtu.be/MNpuXJ8bdTk>

Podcast olarak dinlemek i?in: <http://bit.ly/2MAdrHX>

Blog yaz?s?: <http://bit.ly/2wtPtDA>

Telegram grubumuza kat?lmak i?in: <https://t.me/satirarasi>

Bize kitap ?nerisinde bulunmak i?in kitap ?neri formumuzu doldurabilirsiniz: http://bit.ly/sa_form

Adam says

Still reading this one, so perhaps premature to give it a review. This more detailed and sometime laborious work is focused on capitalism as a system. Some may find it overly dry as it reads like an economics text, with almost a technical feel in some parts. But in short W cuts to the meat of various forces at work in capitalism historically. Some of the arguments do not seem fully developed for reasons of space, but at just over 100pg its not a difficult undertaking. Also included is the essay "Capitalist Civilization" which attempts to provide a balance sheet around the merits of capitalism as a system. He weighs in on the debate over whether there are any progressive qualities or fringe benefits of capitalism (such as technology, medicine, modern political rights, etc). He is solidly in the 'no' camp and that even made me rethink a few assumptions.

Scriptor Ignotus says

In these two deceptively short essays, Wallerstein lays out what he believes to be the overriding principles governing the development of capitalism as a socio-economic phenomenon. He writes very broadly and vaguely, which is unsurprising given that, as he places the beginnings of "historical capitalism" in the fifteenth century, we are talking about a very long-term process which has undergone various adjustments. Unfortunately, I found the book's broadness to be a weakness, when I was hoping it would be a strength.

Wallerstein gives a rather generic account of the rise of historical capitalism. He talks about how capitalism as a self-perpetuating system of the endless pursuit of wealth accumulation developed when fully-formed capital circuits were formed; i.e. all parts of an individual's productive process were commodified. He talks about the ongoing-but-not-ubiquitous "proletarianization" of society. He says the state is an economic, rather than a merely politico-military entity, and that the balance-of-power arrangements between states have been formed out of fear of economic over-extension. He argues that sexism (the relegation of women to "non-productive" labor and the exaltation of productive labor as a status symbol) and racism have been integral parts of historical capitalism. He predicts that the capitalist system will be superseded by another, more egalitarian system when it fails due to its internal contradictions.

I didn't any of this particularly revelatory.

In "Capitalist Civilization", Wallerstein makes another standard-fare Marxian critique of the liberal idea of "progress". In addition to being antiquated, I found Wallerstein's arguments against the notion that people are generally better-off now than they were before historical capitalism (that is, before the fifteenth century) rather weak. Yes, he says, in the Middle Ages we had the Black Death; but now we have...the AIDS crisis? As horrible as the AIDS crisis was and is, I don't think it compares to the plague which killed one-third to one-half of Europe's population.

He claims that people in capitalist societies work longer and harder than those in pre-capitalist ones, but i'm not so sure. Unlike proletarians, pre-capitalist people didn't "go to work", or clock-in when they got there. Whether they were hunter-gatherers or farmers or shepherds, their work was their way of life; their entire existence was organized around it - as opposed to people in today's developed nations who work an eight-hour shift and get their food through the Burger King drive-thru instead of through days, weeks, and months of plowing or hunting. Wallerstein's criteria for our supposed lack of progress is, in mild terms, questionable.
