

DEMOCRACY AGAINST CAPITALISM: INDEX TO POSTS

This list will be updated with links to the conclusory post or posts on Democracy Against Capitalism by Ellen Meiksins Wood, and all posts are updated to include a link to this post. As a reminder, I read this book on a Kindle, and it didn't give page numbers. All citations are to the Kindle location, as best I could tell.

This book turned out to be very difficult going. Part of it was my own unfamiliarity with the vocabulary of Marxist thought, where even the definitions are hard to understand concretely. Part of it is that most of the previous books engage with a history I'm vaguely familiar with, while the primary issues of Marxist thought relate to the transformation of feudalism into capitalism, and from monarchy to liberalism. Wood adds detailed discussions of ancient Greek and Roman history that I didn't know about. Understanding these transformation required a lot of background reading. Another difficulty is that I'm not familiar with any of the work Wood cites. Unlike most writers, Wood only engages with Marxists, with the exception of Karl Polanyi, whose work she mentions briefly.

But mostly it was difficult because it is a criticism of capitalism from outside capitalism. All of the other books I've discussed take capitalism as a given, and do not even offer much of a definition. At most, they criticize it from inside the bounds of capitalism. This orientation makes it very difficult for those of us raised to believe that the only option to capitalism was pure evil.

I mention these difficulties because I think this perspective is worth the difficulties of learning a new set of ideas. Even if some of the book is jargon, the value is there, and it's worth wading through.

I did not write about Chapters 5, 8, or 9. Chapter 5 focuses on Wood's view of Weber. The latter two chapters concern the social issues on which the left was focused during the late '80s and early 90s. Wood argues that these issues are important, but that they were diverting leftists from the economic issues that have always been at the center of left theory. Maybe progressives are relearning the political reality that food and shelter are at the forefront of the lives of almost everyone. I generally agree with that view and have written about it repeatedly.

In my introduction, I mentioned a post by Eric Levitz, a writer at New York Magazine. I hope people will take the time to read this excellent discussion of relationship between capitalism and democracy, and the article by Jedidiah Purdy linked in it. As I have said throughout this series, you don't have to be a Marxist to see the problems capitalism creates, and I think these two pieces illustrate that nicely.

1. Introduction To New Series.
2. Competing Stories About Wages.
3. The Separation Of Politics And Economics.
4. Capital In A Fiat Money World.
5. Base, Superstructure and More Definitions.
6. Neoliberalism.
7. Class.
8. Notes On Class.
9. Markets.
10. Democracy.
11. Liberalism.

Conclusion, Part 1 on Capitalism

12. Democracy Against Capitalism: Conclusion Part 1.

13 Democracy Against Capitalism: Conclusion Part 2.