

GOUDZWAARD, B. 1976. Kapitalisme en vooruitgang. Assen, Van Gorcum. Price: f29,50.

In this book consisting of four sections Goudzwaard gives an excellent exposition of the matrix of capitalism as we know it in the industrialized society of the West.

He points out that capitalism grew out of a new view of man and the world. Since the Renaissance nature and natural laws have occupied the prime position in this view and theism has brought about a clear division such as in Adam Smith's concept of use and morality (p. 33). The belief in progress prevalent in the period of the Enlightenment can be typified as the mother of all revolutions (p. 59).

This view of progress, linking with the striving towards usefulness of J.S. Mill, eliminates at the starting point all ethical considerations in the practice of economics and places the prime accent on economic growth.

These premises have brought about clear differences in the economy especially since 1850. The provider(s) of capital now recede into anonymity and the continuity of an undertaking becomes the real purpose of the entrepreneur (p. 109). Competition also changes gradually and in phases until in the oligopoly stress falls more on technological and marketing techniques than on price concurrence to the advantage of the consumer. Even government is accorded more authority than in the old laissez-faire system of capitalism.

In the third section the author indicates very clearly that real disadvantages adhere to capitalism. Pollution is assuming grave proportions, unemployment increases in seriousness and the whole pattern of man's life doomed to impotence. Within this society the entrepreneur is concerned solely with economic growth and his ethical codes merely mean loyalty towards his undertaking.

Goudzwaard consequently indicates that there is an inner line of tension, dialectically speaking, between the ideal of power and the personal ideal in the humanism of capitalism.

In the last section the author indicates that in the contemporary world various methods can be suggested to deal with the shortcomings of capitalism. The attitude of resistance is innately that of Marcuse. Roszak, who wishes to create a counter-culture, advocates flight. Galbraith on the other hand advocates revision on various points.

Goudzwaard feels that other avenues of escape should be sought with Christian premises in mind. In the spirit of the Reformation he pleads for an ethic of stewardship in business practice. He feels that healing can be

achieved only in a simultaneous assertion of ethical and economical norms. Society should, according to him, move away from the tunnel society ('tunnelsamenleving') in which everything has to contribute to progress towards the lighted end of the tunnel (p. 219). Society should then also move away from the materialistic concept of happiness prevalent in the West (p. 232). Economy, technology and science should be utilized in a different fashion in the economy of stewardship. The utilitarian concept of happiness should be breached to allow for an acceptance of lower wages and a more productive work ethic. As an example of this he mentions that wage increases should be channelled partially into a trust fund with a view to constant employment so that unemployment can be combated at a lower conjuncture (p. 262). He also pleads for the creation by government of a more ethical practice of business ('een normatief meer verantwoorde bedrijfsvoering') (p. 242).

This book, written by a professor of economics, and consisting of fundamental criticism of the capitalist system, alerts one to the over-emphasis of material progress and poses the ethical question to the Christian living in the system as to the possibilities of changing the system from within. Goudzwaard does not advocate another system — a fact which is somewhat disappointing. On the other hand it is clear that the Christian has to live within this system as a Christian and for that reason his positive suggestions are encouraging.

Still, there remain questions which are not adequately clarified in the context of the book. One would, for example, like to ask whether Liberalism does not constitute a much bigger contributory factor to the capitalist system than is acknowledged by the author, exactly because Liberalism stresses, unilaterally, individual freedom and realization. A further point of criticism might be found in the fact that capitalism sees man unilaterally as an individual in much the same way as Socialism sees man unilaterally as a social being. Should one not try, from the biblical view of man, to constitute a system incorporating the positive aspects of both systems, in which responsibility and ethical bonds constitute the point of departure? One wonders whether Goudzwaard's suggestions do not amount merely to a patching of an already ragged cloth.

In spite of these reservations the book contains much that is new, provocative, and scientifically justified. It is also an example of fundamental criticism in the economic sciences that is very welcome. It is highly to be recommended not only to economists but to business managements, leaders, entrepreneurs and practical economists.

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