



Considerations on Western Marxism

Perry Anderson

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This influential Marxist text by the longtime editor of the radical New Left Review studies the development of 20th Century Marxist theory. Anderson defends the political and economic "Classical" tradition of Lenin and Trotsky against the aesthetic and cultural "Western" Marxist tradition of Lukacs and the Frankfurt School.

The Economist labeled the book "by far the best guide to modern Marxism," though E.J. Hobsbawm accused Anderson of idealizing pre-1914 Marxism. Anderson's weakness, Hobsbawm said in his New Statesman review, was his assumption that Western Marxism "can return to the main highway after its prolonged detour."

Considerations on Western Marxism Details

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Bernardo Trindade says

Clear and concise review of western Marxism with naive brief explanations about the previous waves of Marxism until the third international. It still that Marxist biased insistence in calling Nazi Germany a product of the capital and bourgeois society and implicitly denouncing Stalin as if he were a traitor of Marxism, so to free the ideology from murder charges while not questioning Lenin and others.

Iany Mcgrawn says

this book is amazing I liked

C says

Perry Anderson's 'Considerations of Western Marxism' is philosophical history at it's apex. It's nearly impossible for any author, and his/her book to share the perfect trinity of non-fiction attributes: Laconic, edifying, and clear.

The book is a mere 105 pages. In such a short scope Anderson takes the reader on a quick tour (de force) through the Halls of Marxism dating after Marx death. Engels is his starting point, and Sartre and Althusser are roughly his ending point. His focus is Western Marxism; the Marxist theorist West of the USSR.

The edification comes from the fact that in so few words, Anderson says so much. One won't be well versed on any of the thinkers discussed, but they'll at least know what they're getting into upon approaching them in the future. Moreover, the reader will learn quite a bit about the genuine history behind the history of Marxism. By this I mean political parties, revolutions, shifts in National spirit, etc. Moreover, in offering glimpses into each thinkers history and thought, he also lobs what are ostensibly cogent criticisms at said individuals and whole schools of thought.

Finally, Anderson is clear. This is a nearly impossible task given the dilemma of keeping a text both short, yet stuffing each sentence with a bloated amount of information. Read for yourself and you'll probably reach the same conclusion that Anderson pulls it off.

Paribanu Freitas says

Excelente reseña sobre las derivas de una de las líneas fundamentales del pensamiento emancipatorio moderno. Panorámico y particularizante al mismo tiempo.

David says

This book didn't really need 120+ pages of history and criticism - Anderson could just have copied chapter 28 from "Quotations of Mao Tse Tung", in particular:

"Communists should set an example in being practical as well as far-sighted. For only by being practical can they fulfil the appointed tasks, and only far-sightedness can prevent them from losing their bearings in the march forward."

Nevertheless, a decent tap on the shoulder I wish I'd gotten before I'd spent so much time mucking about in Frankfurt territory. There's little to commend in *Considerations* outside of that fact - once you understand that the neglect of practice in western marxism, and in particular proletarian and politico-economic practice, renders its service to the cause of communism nearly nil, one automatically goes to look elsewhere.

The factors that detract from this book are twofold:

-In spite of the author acknowledging that western marxism accepts trotskyist precepts - and so implicitly separating trotskyism from revolutionary theory - he himself relies on trotskyist terminology ("Stalinism", "degenerated worker's state", the dearth of "internationalism" in AES, "bureaucracy" as the principal enemy, etcetera) and in a truly bewildering moment blames Stalin and the repression of trotskyist theoreticians in the USSR for the theoretical bankruptcy of Marxism-Leninism as conceived by him.

-Anderson's research into the Big Men of western marxism neglects the structural background and assumes every theoretician was a spontaneous, good-natured, nice guy. Questions on the connections between Adorno, Horkheimer, the Frankfurt institute and big capital (think, for instance, on the sponsors of Adorno's work on "Authoritarian Personalities" and radio studies) are not touched on, the paradox of expecting radical thinkers to sprout from universities in the imperialist core, much less these thinkers *leading* these institutions, is left unqueried. This is the aspect I'd have been much more interested in: a no-nonsense follow-the-money investigation of the cooptation of radical thinkers by capital.

Anderson did good work (view spoiler).

Liva Helio says

Det marxistiske skibskatalog.

Utopian says

Marx ve Engels'ten sonra Marksist teorinin hangi a?amalardan geçti?inin, ba??na neler geldi?inin derli toplu ve doyurucu bir özeti. Marksist fikirlerin Sovyet ve Almanya merkezinden Bat? Avrupa'ya kay???nda u?rad??? de?i?iklikleri sistemli bir ?ekilde gözler önüne seriyor. Odak noktas?n?n siyaset ve ekonomiden felsefe düzlemine kay???n?n ve Bat?'da üretilen Marksist teorinin kitle hareketlerinden kopuklu?unun, akademiye s?k???m???l???n?n teoriyi somut olan? aç?klama gücünden yoksun b?rakarak devrimci yönünü nas?l budad??? da görülüyor böylece.

mao says

- 1) Western Marxism = pessimistic; classical Marxism = optimistic
- 2) Western Marxism's primary field is in the academy and in the realm of philosophy and art (and with the exception of Marcuse and Althusser, more recently, psychoanalysis), as distinct from the classical Marxist's whose primary concerns were with politics and economics.
- 3) That Western Marxists differ from classical Marxists in that they divorced thought from practice, and because they remained within the ideological space of the university, were disconnected from the proletariat in practice. Classical (earlier) Marxists, on the contrary, rarely held academic positions and were themselves engaged in the practical struggles along side of the workers.

Sin embargo, las líneas históricas generales que percibe, en el devenir del "marxismo occidental", son muy iluminadoras: una separación de la teoría con respecto de la práctica revolucionaria, una progresiva inclinación a la filosofía más que a la economía y la política, un total pesimismo con respecto al futuro. Es muy injusto, por último, con Raymond Williams, a quien no considera marxista.

Eric says

A concise and critical review of the intellectual development of 20th century European Marxism, emphasizing the historical evolution from incisive, grounded analysis offered by revolutionary practitioners (Lenin, Luxemburg, Gramsci) to detached, heavily theoretical writing.

Yonis Gure says

Over the past couple of months I've developed a healthy obsession with Marxist Historian, social theorist, English don, Realist extraordinaire, Perry Anderson. His writings in the London Review of Books and New Left Review have really been the only things I've been reading the entire Summer. It's really incredible that one man could possess such a vast amount of knowledge about so many different parts of the world (India, Russia, European Union, Brazil, Turkey, America, China, etc.), branching off into each country's history, politics, economics, philosophy, culture and literature with such command and authority, often times consulting sources in different languages of which I'm told he's very much fluent in. His encyclopedism stems from a kind of genius that I think is not even to be aspired to. This small collection of Essays on Western Marxism only reaffirms that.

Willow L says

This expanded my understanding of Marxism, particularly what happened to it after the revolutionary movements of the early twentieth century in Europe subsided. Still, parts of it were difficult because of the limits of my knowledge. I would like to learn more about the thinkers mentioned in this book, particularly Gramsci and Lukacs.

David M says

Perry Anderson is one of my favorite essayists as well as maybe my favorite living Marxist (forget Jameson!). I'm not sure that any single volume does him justice, but this one probably comes closest. His diction can be hilariously patrician, but overall I adore his style. I love it when Marxists condescend to more establishment intellectuals (not unlike Henry James correcting the grammar of a vulgar thespian). Anderson is excellent at making connections between philosophical Marxism and the collective struggles of humanity.

Tomás says

No soy marxista, pero disfruté el libro por que de manera detallada y suficientemente neutral, me ayudó a comprender la evolución del pensamiento marxista y sus debates internos.
