

Exploring the Nature of Capitalism

Capitalism and parables: It's all about gardening!

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There are a great many plants which a gardener might like to grow, and a few of them grow rampantly. Introduce plants which grow rampantly and the danger always exists that they will take over, choke out other plants, and become an ecological disaster!

Manage them correctly and they contribute to the whole.

I have such a plant in my gardens. I introduced it quite deliberately, knowing its potential for outcompeting everything around it. It's a couch grass. The particular variety I chose was Kikuyu Grass. I chose it because it is very drought tolerant (I've just been through a 15 year drought), is salt tolerant (I irrigate with marginally brackish bore water), needs very little attention, becomes dormant in winter (minimizing mowing), and produces a delightfully thick and relatively soft lawn (ideal for my dogs to frolic on and pleasant to stroll across as I enjoy the ambience of my surroundings (life is hell!)). I knew it was very invasive, but in gardening very little comes free of cost!

I have to protect young trees and shrubs from being overgrown, and any garden beds I decide to develop have to be insulated from its effects, but it has been worth it! Through the past very dry years it has remained green, an oasis of colour in a dusty brown landscape.

Being a little lazy, I use a very effective glyphosate spray to keep it under control, and, if I really want to check its advance into garden beds (my laziness precludes many of these), I surround the area with a black plastic barrier down to 50cm and control surface creep with glyphosate.

That's all there is to it really! Know what is being planted, have a thoroughly thought through means of controlling and directing

growth, and then make sure that it really is controlled.

So, what is the moral of this simple tale?

Look around you - wherever you live - and you will see the result of uncontrolled capitalism. It is rampant. It has out-competed all other forms of material need and want provision and, in the process, has choked communities and fouled environments.

Thoroughly regulated and subordinated to the requirements of communities, it can be a positive, very effective means of material need and want provision. Unregulated and internationalized, it rapidly grows into a rampant ecological and social disaster.

The problem is not capitalism, it is us!!

For reasons best understood through examining the historical emergence and philosophical justifications of capitalism¹, Western people have largely decided that capitalism should not be regulated. If I decided the same thing for my Kikuyu Grass I would soon find myself living in a world of kikuyu tendrils, choked shrubs, and dying trees. It will even grow through water - as my goldfish will attest as they struggle through its roots and shoots.

The problems spelt out by concerned critics of capitalism are, in the main, problems resulting from our failure to take our responsibilities seriously. It would be absurd of me to stand in the middle of my lawns and lecture the Kikuyu Grass on the iniquities of rampant growth - that's why it's there! If it is out of control that's because I have failed in my responsibility to regulate and manage it.

It is equally ineffective to lecture internationalized capitalism on its inevitable consequences. If it is out of control, that's because we have abdicated responsibility for regulating and managing it!

The genie is out of the bottle now² and it might be too late to re-regulate capitalism without a prior catastrophic failure of the international system (for the sake of my children and future generations I trust that this is not so!) but capitalism needs to be controlled and managed.

It is not the garden! It is just one of the plants in the garden which needs to be managed to contribute to the ambience of the whole. Let's ensure that it does not become an ecological and social disaster which will blight humanity for decades (and possibly centuries) to come.

¹ See [How Born Again Christians Rescued Capitalism](#) for an introduction to this.

² See [Global economic forces, Western realities](#) for a description and explanation of how the genie escaped!

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