

It's the last day of '86, and among our dinnerguests last evening was one who's about to teach a 2nd-semester college course in "Christianity & Capitalism." Offhandedly, as he was leaving, I remarked to him "There's a paradoxical correlation of both capitalism & socialism with both freedom & oppression." We both sensed a profitable discussion not to be had, for he had to leave....but this Thinksheet, which of course I'm sending to him, sketches my side of the conversation (I procapitalist but only in leaning; he, socialist).

1. All successful economies, now, are mixed, since "capitalism" & "socialism" are terms describing, in an increasingly complex and internetworked world, the one reality of the accumulation & management of what Marx called "surplus value" (ie, capital). I'm not sure the U. of Moscow professor of Marxism Gorbachev is married to believes this, but he does; and it's a factor in his phoning and releasing Sakaharov this month. What was fatal, in 1968, to S's freedom was the publication of an essay of his advocating economic miscegenation, the mixing of the best in capitalism & communism.

2. China's Deng is stretching the Marxist-Leninist lexicon to cover his capitalist-leaning reforms. Currently, I think, the world's most important instance of ideological softening--and may the student protests, aimed to speed up the change, not slow it down.

3. Reagan's capitalism is working as disastrously against reality as are most of the world's communisms. God is giving us syntheses growing out of chastening theses and humiliated antitheses. (See my #2119, "The human need to have things go...wrong.")

4. This diagram is nothing but a visualizing of my statement above to the "Christianity & Capitalism" teacher. NOTE:

(1) All four of the terms are maddening abstractions! Each points not

to a star but to a constellation. Yet in the heat of political argument & action they

acquire pseudo-concreteness & fervid vitality. One "defines"

each of them from one's angle of the moment, ie what one is up to. The other definitions, being nonexistential, seek academic escape both from abstraction and from pseudo-concreteness, but fail.

(2) This grid makes painful the inter-embarrassment of the four terms. The embarrassment would increase were we to lay on additional lexical layers; eg, what would "democracy" do to this double set, and what would the double set do to it?

(3) Of the four words, only "oppression" points inarguably to evil. But it does not escape ambiguity: in a particular context, is it active or passive: does this verbal noun mean, here & here & here, an evil somebody (or class of somebodies) is doing to somebody (or class of somebodies), or (passively) an evil condition someone (or some class) is suffering? And, when the latter, are we, in this particular instance, to give a causative account of the condition as due to an individual/group/class/environment/history? My articulated critical consciousness in this interrogative examination has in mind the actionist's temptation to "identify" (1) a clear target-cause (2) swiftly, either with little ad hoc analysis or by imposing a readymade one (eg "class conflict").

5. "Evil (says Flannery O'Connor, M&M, 209) is not simply a problem to be solved, but a mystery to be endured." And Flora Lewis in today's NYT: "accidents, miscalculations and ignorance that play so large a part in human affairs." But love must act through it all.

FREEDOM OPPRESSION

CAPITALISM

SOCIALISM

CF	CO
SF	SO