

*From Feudalism to Capitalism: Transition or Transitions?**

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ABSTRACT

Discussion of the so-called transition from feudalism to capitalism is confused because three separate phenomena are compounded together: the initial and unique *transformation* of the feudal variant of a redistributive world-empire into a capitalist world-economy, subsequent *incorporations* of outside arenas into this latter system, and the extension of the *proletarianization* of labor and the *commercialization* of land within the ongoing capitalist world-economy. Clarification of the nature of these three separate processes will aid us in comprehending the nature of the contemporary transition from a capitalist world-economy to a socialist world-economy.

The debate on the appropriate definition of terms like feudalism or capitalism is pervasive in discussions of the modern world. I should like to review the nature of this debate and show how it governs what one may mean by a spongy term like "transition."

Let me start with capitalism. It seems to me that there have been three perspectives that have governed the use of the term. I associate these respectively with Adam Smith, Werner Sombart, and Karl Marx.

Adam Smith suggests in *The Wealth of Nations*, in an oft-quoted phrase, that the division of labor is a necessary consequence of a "certain propensity in human nature . . . to truck, barter, and exchange one thing for another" (13).

It logically follows from this starting point that capitalism is not one of several historically successive social or economic forms but simply "what comes naturally." To be sure, there have existed historically many political "systems" which have interfered with these natural propensities of man, but these interferences are the path of human unwisdom:

It is thus that every system which endeavours, either by extraordinary encouragements, to draw towards a particular species of industry a greater share of the capital of the society than what would naturally go to it; or by extraordinary restraints to force from a particular species of industry some share of the capital which would otherwise be employed in it, is in reality subversive of the great purpose which it means to promote. It retards, instead of accelerating, the process of the society towards real wealth and greatness; and diminishes, instead of increasing, the real value of the annual produce of its land and labour (Smith, 650-1).

Werner Sombart's approach in *The Quintessence of Capitalism* is strikingly different. Far from capitalism reflecting man's inner nature, Sombart's psychology starts with the opposite presupposition. Capitalism is *unnatural*:

The pre-capitalist man was a natural man, man as God made him, man who did not stand on his head or run on all fours (as is the case today in economic activities). The pre-capitalist

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man stood firmly on his two legs, by the aid of which alone he moved about. His economic outlook is therefore not difficult to ascertain; it springs quite easily from human nature (13).

Although capitalism is unnatural, it does not necessarily follow that it is good or bad. Capitalism has its virtues and its vices, although it may one day be "played out."

And when the capitalist spirit has lost its power of expansion what then? That does not concern us here. Possibly the blind giant may be condemned to draw the wagon of a democratic civilization; possibly it may be the Twilight of the Gods and the gold will have to be restored to the caverns of the Rhine. Who shall say? (Sombart, 359).

The key point Sombart was trying to make about capitalism is that it was made possible only by the emergence of a "capitalist spirit," and all expressions of such a spirit were "due to personal qualities inherent in the individual." Sombart thereupon drew two conclusions from a look at empirical reality: "(1) All peoples have the qualities necessary for capitalism. . . . (2) Each nation has the qualities in a varying degree" (210).

Marx had a third standpoint. For him, the issue of whether an entrepreneurial orientation was "natural" or not was metaphysical mystification.¹ For man's economic behavior vis-à-vis other men was a reflection of a particular set of what he called "relations of production," and these relations evolved historically. In that sense, man's "nature," as deduced from his economic behavior, changed over time. Of course the change was neither sudden nor capricious, since:

No social order is ever destroyed before all the productive forces for which it is sufficient have been developed, and new superior relations of production never replace older ones before the material conditions for their existence have matured within the framework of the old society. Mankind thus inevitably sets itself only such tasks as it is able to solve, since closer examination will always show that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions for the solution are already present or at least in the course of formation (b, 21).

For Marx, therefore, the problem was to explain what was the material base of a capitalist mode of production, precisely as distinguished from other modes of production, and what were the historical circumstances and modalities by which social systems shifted from one mode of production to another.

What is the implication of each of these approaches to the question of transition from feudalism to capitalism? A Smithian approach led logically and inevitably to a total absence of concern for the problem. Capitalism was simply the money economy. The "transition" was made somewhere in pre-history. Hence our question was an intellectual non-problem or at most a minor footnote in the Whig interpretation of history. Economists were interested in universal formulae, and once the remains of mercantilist thinking were liquidated in the heart of the capitalist world-economy, the problem ceased to be a matter for political polemic. Thereupon Smith's successors, the neo-classical economists, turned away from historical and "institutional" data and concerns with disdain.

The Marxian critique of the classical economists and liberals in general centered around the argument that their "universals," whether political (the rights of the individual), economic (the self-regulation of the market), ethical (the categorical imperative) or scientific (empiricism) were in fact all class-bound, the

reflections of the perspective of the socially dominant group, the bourgeoisie. Marx accepted much of their analyses *as far as these analyses went*, but insisted that they were historically time-bound and erroneous if expressed as natural laws or eternal truths.

Hence, capitalism *followed* feudalism, both being “natural,” if by that is meant that they occurred and somehow fit into a historical sequence. The “transition” too was natural, in the sense that it was the culmination of the contradictions inherent in one mode of production that led at a certain point to the qualitative transformation of the social order.

For Sombart, as for Marx, the problem of transition was historically real. But a Marxian perspective, centering on the class conflict, was not to his liking. Sombart was looking for ways to explain (and overcome) “backwardness” that had less horrendous political implications. However, the power of the Marxian critique was too great to ignore. It had rather to be deflected. The evils of capitalism had to be acknowledged without actually denouncing the perpetrator of the evils. The solution was to make the capitalist system unnatural, but the capitalist heroic.

What was it that was “unnatural” about capitalism in a Sombartian perspective? It was that men presumably sacrificed the gratification of immediate values (whether of material consumption or “spiritual” fulfilment) for long-term economic reward. Although such a perspective can lead one to be highly critical of capitalism (viz., Carlyle’s denunciation of the “cash nexus”), it can also lead one conversely to be a great admirer of the “individual” who stands against the inertia of the masses, Prometheus who steals fire from the gods, in short Schumpeter’s entrepreneur.

Since presumably there had always been Promethean men but since also their historic successes had always been momentary, how can we explain success at last, the rise of capitalism in the Western world? This is Max Weber’s contribution. To put it in crude outline form, for Weber the creation of a capitalist *system* was the consequence of a historically unique conjuncture of a certain level of technology, a particular political framework (“European feudalism”), and the resurrection of an unusual religious tradition (the “prophetic”) in the form of Protestantism, especially Calvinism. This conjuncture enabled the entrepreneurial groups to create protective institutions against the forces that were hostile to them. Thus Sombart’s “unnatural” state of affairs comes into being via Weber’s exceptional conjuncture.

It is in this context that we turn to the issue of transition. For who makes a transition, to what, and when? We must begin by distinguishing between three uses of the concept, “transition,” frequently lumped together—not so much by either Marx or Weber, be it said, but by many who claim to be their disciples. For there is enormous confusion in the fact that this same term has in fact covered three rather separate phenomena, and thereby has distorted a historical interpretation of the process of social change.

The first use of “transition” is to refer to the initial *transformation* of feudal Europe into a capitalist world-economy. The second use of “transition” is to refer to the subsequent *incorporations* of outside non-capitalist systems into the ongoing

and necessarily expanding capitalist world-economy. The third use of transition is to refer to the extension of the *proletarianization* of labor and the *commercialization* of land within the capitalist world-economy to internal regions still utilizing other ways of paying labor or assuring control of land.

Let us start by looking at the "classical" use of transition, the "transformation" of feudal Europe into a capitalist world-economy. There has only been one historical moment when a redistributive world-system² (in this case based upon a feudal mode of production) was transformed into a capitalist world-economy. This was in Europe (defined as including Iberian America) between 1450 and 1640. There were no doubt other times throughout history when such a transformation seemed to be beginning, such as in the Mediterranean basin between 1150 and 1300. And there were parallel occurrences at other moments in other regions of the world. But for various reasons all the prior transformations were abortive.

A transformation of this kind cannot be located in a day, a month, a year, even a decade. It involved, as we say, a transition. When Weber sought to challenge the basic assumptions of Marx's materialist explanation of history, he chose as his battleground precisely the causes of this singular transition. The debate is familiar and I shall not review it. As for the third school, while the neo-classical economists had buried the whole issue, the realities of an evolving world have led some modern-day Smithians to reconsider the issue. And we now at last have a Smithian interpretation of the singular transformation of feudal Europe into a capitalist world-economy in the book by North and Thomas, *The Rise of the Western World*.

Marx had explained the transformation by arguing that the contradictions of the previous (feudal) mode of production found their resolution in the emergence of a new (capitalist) mode of production. Weber had explained the transformation by locating a unique conjuncture of historical circumstances in which capitalist values come to prevail. But how can a Smithian who believes that capitalism is natural reconcile this view with the recognition that the modern capitalist world-economy is a "new and unique phenomenon?"³ He can only do it by a variant on the Weberian theme. Although capitalism is "natural," man's nature had always been frustrated until a *unique* conjuncture permitted "the establishment of institutional arrangements and property rights that create[d] an incentive to channel economic effort into activities that [brought] the private rate of return close to the social rate of return?" (North and Thomas, 1) But what was the conjuncture that made this possible? The authors fall back, and with persistence, on a variable they acknowledge to be exogenous to the economy, population. "In sum a growing population created the basis for trade; the resulting expansion of the market economy caused the medieval economy to react, if slowly, precisely in the manner Adam Smith would have predicted" (26). Why the world benefits from such an efficacious population spurt once and only once in history is not, however, to my mind, adequately explained in turn.⁴

The three points of view on transformation seem rather clear and distinct. Why then has there been so much confusion about transition? It is because many of the disciples of Marx and Weber have transposed the theories of both men from an

explanation of a *singular* transformation into a stage theory wherein multiple, individual "societies," by which these disciples have in fact meant nation-states, each separately become transformed. Whereas both Marx and Weber saw that this transformation of feudal Europe into a capitalist world-economy was a unique happening (although some of the formulations of each might be said to be ambiguous in this regard), their views came to be utilized by many to justify a "developmentalist" rather than a "world-systems" perspective.⁵ The Weberian functionalists forgot that Weber had not compared Britain with China, but Europe with China.⁶ And the Marxian developmentalists forgot that the formula for Marx was "combined" as well as "uneven" development. (Although "stage theory" is more congenial to the Marxian and Sombartian views of capitalism, which see it as a historical phenomenon, there has even been a cautious Smithian variant of the stage theory in "monetarist" views of national development.⁷ North and Thomas, however, explicitly reject stage theory.)⁸

It is because of the confusion caused by stage theory that we must analyze the other two processes that seem to involve transitions, that is, "incorporation" on the one hand, and "proletarianization of labor" and "commercialization of land" on the other. In fact, these two processes do *not* involve the transformation of feudalism into capitalism but are aspects of the development of the capitalist world-economy which, over historical time, has expanded extensively (incorporation) and intensively (the progressive proletarianization of labor and commercialization of land.)

We use the term incorporation only to refer to the addition of new geographic areas to the capitalist world-economy at points of time posterior to the "initial" expansion of the sixteenth century which had been an integral part of the transformation of feudal Europe into a capitalist world-economy. We should remember that these subsequent expansions were not continuous but occurred in historical spurts. Furthermore, by about 1900, these expansions had more or less come to an end, as the capitalist world-economy could be said by that point to cover the entire globe.

Areas that were incorporated entered the capitalist world-economy as territorial units, sometimes sovereign, sometimes colonized. These incorporations were seen for the most part as historically dramatic, since they usually involved a derogation, at least partial, of previously existing sovereignties. In fact the dramatic changes noticed by historians were often preceded by a less dramatic incorporation which took the form of "informal empire." Some of the newly incorporated areas had previously been economically autonomous world-empires, like the Russian, the Ottoman, and the Chinese. Other areas had been separate proto-world-economies, like the Indian Ocean or the Western Sudan. And there were of course in addition isolated mini-systems in various parts of the world, especially in Africa and Oceania. The territorial units constituted in these incorporated areas were sometimes similar to and sometimes radically different from the previous political boundaries. In economic terms, such areas were normally incorporated as peripheral areas of the world-economy. But occasionally, because of the strength of a particular state-structure, they could enter as semi-peripheral areas (as did Russia) or could rapidly become such (as in the case of Japan).

Incorporation, as we are using the term, involved the outward expansion of the capitalist world-economy and thus inevitably it came to a historical end when the geographic limits of the globe were reached. Proletarianization of labor and commercialization of land refer however to processes *internal* to the capitalist world-economy and therefore have been less historically dramatic or discontinuous, and have still not exhausted their historical potential. It is in this connection that confusion in the use of the term "feudalism" has had the most deleterious impact on clarity of analysis concerning the functioning of the capitalist world-economy, and most particularly, in Marxian analyses. For the Smithians and the Weberians have tended to use the term "traditionalism" rather than "feudalism" to englobe all non-"modern," that is non-capitalist, arenas of activity.⁹ Marxian "developmentalists" have however frequently taken the term feudalism, fairly clear when referring to a particular historical "system" of medieval Europe, and used it in the same way as others have used "traditionalism." Feudalism has been applied either to almost all non-capitalist structures encountered by capitalist institutions when new areas were incorporated into the capitalist world-economy, or to entities, groups, or units resistant to the processes of the proletarianization of labor and the commercialization of land.¹⁰

This is an aberrant and anti-historical reification of Marxian categories. Far from being denied, however, it is curiously vaunted by some self-styled Marxists. For example, John Taylor in a denunciation of the theories of Paul Baran and André Gunder Frank speaks of "Marx's profoundly anti-historicist problematic in Capital" (18). Thus some "Marxists" return to the Proudhonian universals Marx took such energy to denounce in *The Poverty of Philosophy*:

Economic categories are only the theoretical expressions, the abstractions of the social relations of production. . . .

The same men who establish their social relations in conformity with their material productivity, produce also principles, ideas and categories, in conformity with their social relations.

Thus these ideas, these categories, are as little external as the relations they express. They are *historical and transitory products*.

There is a continual movement of growth in productive forces, of destruction in social relations, of formation in ideas; the only immutable thing is the abstraction of movement—*mors immortalis* (a, 109–10).

This clarification is essential to understanding why the progressive proletarianization of labor and commercialization of land should in no sense be confused with the historically unique "transition from feudalism to capitalism." If we utilize a "formal" definition of feudalism, we can believe that areas within a capitalist world-economy still exhibit a feudal "mode of production." However, the *formal* relations of land-controller to productive worker are not in fact what matters. The so-called reciprocal nexus we identify with feudalism, the exchange of protection for labor services, constitutes a feudal *mode of production* only when it is *determinative of other social relations*. But once such a "nexus" is contained *within* a capitalist world-economy, its autonomous reality disappears. It becomes rather one of the

many forms of bourgeois employment of proletarian labor to be found in a capitalist mode of production, a form that is maintained, expanded or diminished in relation to its profitability on the market.

It is bizarre to cite against this view Marx, the Marx who said in 1847:

Direct slavery is just as much a pivot of bourgeois industry as machinery, credits, etc. Without slavery you have no cotton; without cotton you have no modern industry. It is slavery that gave the colonies their value; it is the colonies that created world trade, and it is world trade that is the pre-condition of large-scale industry (a, 111).

And it is even more bizarre to claim that such a view ignores the relations of production in favor of so-called relations of exchange, also in the name of Marx who in fact said:

When [Proudhon] talks about division of labour he does not feel it necessary to mention the word *market*. Yet must not the division of labour in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when there were still no colonies, when America did not as yet exist for Europe and Eastern Asia only existed for her through the medium of Constantinople, have been fundamentally different from what it was in the seventeenth century when colonies were already developed? (a, 183).

A capitalist mode of production is not based on free labor and land. Rather, it is a mode of production that *combines* proletarian labor and commercialized land with other forms of wage-payment and land-ownership. The existence of non-proletarianized labor and non-commercialized land is quite essential for the optimization of opportunities for overall profit in a capitalist world-market for several reasons. One is that such a combination maintains land areas in reserve for expansion of primary production at low overhead costs, able to respond to significant shifts of demand in the world market. A second is that it preserves a reserve pool of labor even in moments of "prosperity." When additional labor is needed, it is remarkable how fast the "traditional" restraints disappear. Third, it reduces the global cost of labor by allowing the traditional sectors to bear the lifetime costs of childhood and old-age maintenance of large sectors of cash-crop or urban workers. This has always been especially true in the peripheral areas of the world-economy and, as Samir Amin says, "is not truly antiquated even today" (52) as an integral part of the system. To be sure, the continuing long-term secular expansion of the world-economy (even taking the continual crises of accumulation that appear as contractions) has involved the utilization of ever more land area ever more intensively. Over time, it has steadily become less profitable to use non-wage modes of remuneration. But they still continue to be used in part. As Marx said:

The point at issue is not the role that various economic relations have played in the succession of various social formations appearing in the course of history; even less is it their sequence "as concepts" (Proudhon) (a nebulous notion of the historical process), but their position within modern bourgeois society (b, 213).

Or we may put it in the somewhat more metaphorical terms of Fernand Braudel, and see the modern world as a house with three stories: material life, economy, and capitalism:

With economic life we will emerge from the routine, from the unconscious daily round. However, in economic life, the regularities are still with us; an old and progressive division of labour causes inevitable partings and meetings, on which active and conscious daily life feeds, with its tiny profits, its micro-capitalism, which is not unattractive, barely distinguishable from ordinary work. Higher still on the top floor we will place capitalism and its vast ramifications, with its games that already seem evil to the common run of mortals. What, we will be asked, has this sophistication to do with the humble lives at the bottom of the ladder? Everything perhaps, because it incorporates them in its game (445).¹¹

We cannot understand the issue of the progressive proletarianization of labor and the commercialization of land if we adopt a definition of capitalism that derives from the doctrines of Adam Smith. No free market ever has existed, or could have existed, within a capitalist world-economy. The hypothetical free market is an intellectual construct which serves the same intellectual function as frictionless movement, as a standard from which to measure the degree of deviation. Rather, capitalists seek to maximize profit on the world market, utilizing whenever it is profitable, and whenever they are able to create them, legal monopolies and/or other forms of constraint of trade.

Capitalism has been developed by the extension in space of its basic framework and within that by the progressive "mechanization" of productive activity. Increasingly, the producers of surplus have been remunerated in the form of wages (exclusively or in combination with commodities for which exact market computations of value are available.) Many have argued that the *typical* features of capitalism are the total availability of all labor and land as commodities, the orientation of all productive activity to the creation and appropriation of surplus value. But at no point up to now have these *typical* features in fact been *exclusive* features. They have to be sure become steadily more predominant, but it is the *combination* of free and "unfree" labor and land that in fact characterizes the capitalist world-economy.

As the capitalist world-economy approaches the asymptote of the total extension of the market principle, so it accentuates the social, economic, and above all political contradictions of the system. Capitalism thereby finally destroys its "protecting strata" (in Schumpeter's terms), renders perfectly clear the nature of its exploitative system, and in so doing, provides the social basis for the termination of the process, of the supercession of capitalism as a system. This is not an automatic process. It is brought about by the organized opposition of oppressed strata. The point, however, is that the processes of capitalism themselves undermine the political strength of the system.

I would end on this note from Schumpeter, whom I regard as the most sophisticated of the defenders of capitalism, the one who grappled hardest with the key arguments of Marx:

We have rediscovered what from different standpoints and, so I believe, on inadequate grounds has often been discovered before; there is inherent in the capitalist system a tendency toward self-destruction which, in its earlier stages, may well assert itself in the form of a tendency toward retardation of progress.

I shall not stay to repeat how objective and subjective, economic and extra-economic

factors, reinforcing each other in imposing accord, contribute to that result. Nor shall I stay to show what should be obvious and in subsequent chapters will become more obvious still, viz., that those factors make not only for the destruction of the capitalist but for the emergence of a socialist civilization. They all point in that direction. The capitalist process not only destroys its own institutional framework but it also creates the conditions for another. Destruction may not be the right word after all. Perhaps I should have spoken of transformation. The outcome of the process is not simply a void that could be filled by whatever might happen to turn up; things and souls are transformed in such a way as to become increasingly amenable to the socialist form of life. With every peg from under the capitalist structure vanishes an impossibility of the socialist plan. In both these respects Marx's vision was right. We can also agree with him in linking the particular social transformation that goes on under our eyes with an economic process as its prime mover. What our analysis, if correct, disproves is after all of secondary importance, however essential the role may be which it plays in the socialist credo. In the end there is not so much difference as one might think between saying that the decay of capitalism is due to its success and saying that it is due to its failure (162).

I believe, as did Schumpeter, that we are living in the early stages of the transition from capitalism to socialism, which is going on "under our eyes." One of the reasons we are interested in analyzing the "transition from feudalism to capitalism" is to understand how these relatively rare singular transformations work. With this in view, it is important to underline that it is not "national societies" or such-like constructs that undergo these transitions. It is world-systems. To be sure, I repeat, a transformation of this magnitude cannot be located in a day, a month, or a year. It is a transition. That means that the transformation is composed of a multitude of partial changes, major and minor, which include of course the coming to power in existing state-structures of socialist regimes who implement as best they can within the still existing capitalist world-economy socialist forms and socialist values. Such efforts are part of the process of transition. They do not necessarily exemplify the ultimate product of qualitative change. "Marx's vision was right," said Schumpeter. But Marx himself warned us not to take a vision as a detailed prophecy. The future will unfold as we make it unfold, within the constraints of the world as it is.

NOTES

1. "When the economists say that present-day relations—the relations of bourgeois production—are natural, they imply that these are the relations in which wealth is created and productive forces developed in conformity with the laws of nature. These relations therefore are themselves natural laws independent of the influence of time. They are eternal laws which must always govern society. Thus there has been history, but there is no longer any. There has been history, since there were the institutions of feudalism, and in these institutions of feudalism we find quite different relations of production from those of bourgeois society, which the economists try to pass off as natural and, as such, eternal" (Marx, b, 121).
2. A redistributive world-system is based on a mode of production wherein a surplus is exacted from agricultural producers, normally in the form of tribute, to sustain an imperial (or state) bureaucracy at a given level of consumption. Samir Amin in fact uses the name "tributary mode of production" for what I am calling "redistributive world-systems." He says: "[T]he so-called 'Asian,' 'African,' and feudal modes [are variants of the tributary mode] which we believe constitute a single family including a central completed variety (China and Egypt) and peripheral varieties notably the West European feudal type and the Japanese feudal type" (13–14).
3. "[C]asual empiricism suggests that most people prefer more goods to fewer goods and act accordingly. Economic growth requires only that some part of the population be acquisitive. . . . [I]f a

society does not grow it is because no incentives are provided for economic initiative" (North and Thomas, 1-2). Note the use of the passive voice: "are provided." Adam Smith's unseen hand is his usual busy self. The opening sentence of the book reads: "The affluence of Western man is a new and unique phenomenon."

4. See the discussion of this issue in Y. S. Brenner (29-43). The analysis is inconclusive but it suggests the issues to be pursued. The reliance on population growth as a prime mover is to be found also in Emile Durkheim (Bk. II, chap. 2). The key to the transformation from "mechanical solidarity" to "organic solidarity" was located in "population density" which led to "moral density" which led in turn to the creation of "noncontractual bases of contract."

5. I have reviewed the similarities of these two versions of "developmentalism," as well as their difference from "world-systems theory" in "The Present State of the Debate of World Inequality." A good example of what I mean by a Marxist version of "developmentalism" is Bill Warren.

6. One of the most perceptive Weberian analysts, Guenther Roth, specifically complains of this: "Weber's studies on the world religions endeavored to explain the rise of Western rationalism. But what was a specific historical question for him has since become a general issue of development and 'modernization.' The analytical focus has shifted from a unique course of events to the conditions under which cultural borrowing, combined with indigenous mobilization, can lead to similar results. This shift has often involved a reinterpretation, sometimes subtle and sometimes blatant, of Weber's purposes" (111).

7. See for example P. T. Bauer's formulation: "Neither formal growth models nor stages-of-growth theories help to *explain* or predict the long-term development of entire societies. But this does not preclude the possibility of specific generalizations about some of the major aspects or determinants of material progress. Indeed, some specific generalizations about these matters, rather than the framing of complete systems, are in the tradition of the literature, even though they may not be expressed in terms of conventional or formal analysis. Examples include the relationship between the extent of the market specialization and productivity, and the importance for development on the habits of 'order, economy, and attention, to which mercantile business naturally forms a merchant.'" (the internal quote is from Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, Book III, chap. 4) (Bauer, b, 296-7).

In a review Bauer and Charles Wilson did of Walt W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth*, in *Economica*, May 1962, they say: "The market, specialization and productivity, and the importance for development into a model with explanations or predictive powers, may nevertheless be illuminating if it succeeds in focusing attention on revealing differences, and especially on real turning points in the course of history" (as reprinted in Bauer, a, 489).

How Bauer himself conducts affirmatively the comparison of development in Britain and Western Europe with Third World countries may be found in P. T. Bauer (a, 44-84).

8. "That the Middle Ages were an unchanging economic plateau was once the prevailing opinion of historians. Along with its theoretical underpinning, the stage theory of history, this view has now been assigned to the intellectual rubbish heap."

9. For a devastating attack on the misleading quality of the concept of "traditionalism," see Abdallah Laroui (45-54).

10. This has been intelligently denounced by Perry Anderson (397-412).

11. I have taken the liberty of changing the translation slightly.

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