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## PARADIGM REGAINED? THE RULES OF WALLERSTEIN'S WORLD-SYSTEM METHOD\*

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The last third of the twentieth century was ushered in by a set of events—wars, rebellions, finally economic crisis—that dealt a crushing blow to the previously dominant paradigm in U.S. social science, the structural-functionalist modernizationism elaborated by Talcott Parsons and his students. Within sociology, the site of much social science innovation in the post-war period, a notable splintering occurred. Already underway in the early nineteen-sixties, this splintering was accelerated by the tumultuous events later in that decade. One of the splinters which has grown and developed most rapidly and fruitfully over the past decade has been the world-systems perspective, a formidable synthesis of continental historicism, “Third World” radicalism, and Marxism. The principal exponent of this perspective has been Immanuel Wallerstein (b. 1930), whose work has built upon and in turn has stimulated advances in both historical sociology and the study of contemporary “development.”

Most important and innovative about Wallerstein's effort are the reconceptualization of social change in terms of totalities as units of analysis, the attempt to historicize the social sciences and overcome the split between the universalizing generalizers (theory) and “idiographic” particularizers (his-

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tory), and the dialectical insistence that motion is the essence, especially slow motion. Wallerstein's postulating a capitalist world-economy as the basic unit of analysis for modern social change joins several strands of modern social science in an attack on what he has called "developmentalism," the notion that each national society ("social formation" in Marxist jargon) passes through a similar set of stages, from tradition to modernity (via, e.g., Parsonian differentiation or W. W. Rostow's take-off) or from feudalism to capitalism to socialism (as in Stalinist orthodoxy). This attack strikes also at Anglo-American liberal triumphalism, with its Whiggish celebration of bourgeois constitutional right as the highest achievement of humankind. The equivalent Marxist "whiggery" might be said to lie in making the "English" industrial revolution, rather than the Glorious Revolution, the most dramatic turning point in modern history. As against developmentalism's conceptual tyranny of nation states changing in parallel lines, with urban industry the key change, Wallerstein posits a necessarily differentiating world-economy with necessarily different productive structures located in different zones and differentially strong states competing with and attempting to dominate one another. The sixteenth, not the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries, is the pivotal one, and agricultural capitalism as critical as industrial.

Although Wallerstein began his career as an Africanist, becoming highly regarded in that field (he was President of the African Studies Association in 1971), his current reputation rests on work since 1974, when he published the first volume of his *The Modern World-System (MWS I)* as well as his influential article, "The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System: Concepts for Comparative Analysis." (The latter first appeared in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*; it has been reprinted along with many other pieces written since 1972 in a collection entitled *The Capitalist World-Economy*, hereafter referred to as *CWE*).

Whereas the book explicates the origins and basic structure of what was not yet a global capitalist world-system, the article attacks head-on the debates about the persistence of feudalism, for example in twentieth century Latin America (Frank vs. Laclau) and about the existence of socialism (Mao vs. Liu). This work of Wallerstein's middle years slowed notably after the publication in 1979 and 1984 of volumes II (through 1750) and III (into the 1840s) of *The Modern World-System*, although one or two more volumes

are projected. Over the last fifteen years, however, Wallerstein has increasingly turned his attention to issues of epistemology, method, and what he calls "utopistics," using the platform of his presidency of the International Sociological Association (1994-98) to call for reorganization and reorientation of the social sciences.

Especially since the formulation of the world-system project in the early 1970s, Wallerstein has either associated himself with or spawned a large number of scholarly efforts at his own and other institutions around the world. Colleagues, acquaintances and students have actively contributed to the elaboration, refinement, and revision of the world-system perspective to such an extent that there now exist different shadings if not entirely different versions of world-systems analysis.

Even so, Wallerstein's work has stimulated historically minded social scientists as no other in recent memory. Attacked both from the right ("too Marxist") and from the left ("not Marxist enough"), it has met with two basic kinds of reception. On the one hand it has been more or less critically embraced by those who have been looking for a new basic paradigm capable of orienting investigations into large-scale, long-term change processes, including the ones unfolding around us in the contemporary world. On the other hand, elements of the world-systems perspective have been taken over by practitioners of more conventional sorts of social scientific analysis. The current focus on "globalization" and the more general trend toward attending to "transnational" variables are both exemplified and furthered by Wallerstein, but he has been notable precisely for making the national state itself a variable and for avoiding usages such as "globalization" or "inter-," "multi-," and "trans-" national. He was well ahead of the curve, and his emphasis on the inequalitarian aspects of world development distinguishes him and his co-workers from the globalization enthusiasts. Not surprisingly, scholars and intellectuals of the periphery have warmed to the world-systems perspective more readily than those of the core.

This introduction includes first a biographical sketch; second, an account of the elements which Wallerstein synthesized into the world-systems perspective; third, a brief review of his general orienting concepts; fourth, an account of his modern world-system; fifth an overview of methodological roles; and finally, a review of some criticisms of his corpus.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Although he retired this year from his 23-year tenure as Distinguished Professor of Sociology at Binghamton University (a State University of New York campus), Wallerstein's life has basically revolved around three places: New York City, Paris, and sub-Saharan Africa, particularly West Africa. To understand the impact of these places on his intellectual and political formation is to appreciate some of the qualities that distinguish his approach from more narrowly Anglo-American or Eurocentric scholars. These qualities include an astounding spatio-temporal range of concerns, an impatience with scholastic disputations that sometimes becomes sheer haste, a seemingly inexhaustible fund of intellectual and practical energy, and a combative yet often playful style. Perhaps more unusual is his curious combination of political identification with history's victims and intellectual empathy with the wielders of power, a combination that seems the hallmark of New York Jews coming of age in the 1940s and 1950s.

It is difficult to imagine Wallerstein's having come to consciousness outside of New York City, where he was born in 1930 and received all his education. He attended Columbia University both as an undergraduate (B.A. 1951) and graduate student (Ph.D. 1957). The experience of New York City in those years of its blossoming into world primacy was one of cosmopolitanism (the United Nations), visible class and state power (the Rockefeller family, Robert Moses), ethnic social mobility (Fiorello LaGuardia, Herbert Lehman, Jackie Robinson), and cultural and political radicalism (Greenwich Village, the Left). New York was where the action was in business and finance (Wall Street), in fashion and advertising (Fifth and Madison Avenues), in publishing and high culture. Like the London of Marx's maturity, the New York of Wallerstein's youth (he finally left Columbia in 1971) was both a haven for refugee intellectuals and the prime vantage point for seeing the world as a whole. Wallerstein's work is very much that of the inveterate New Yorker looking for the big picture, the politically savvy New Yorker looking through the ethnic garb of class struggles, the Jewish New Yorker deflating the pretentious claims to legitimacy of an Anglophile New England elite.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Two features of New York City perhaps help account for what some critics have found unbalanced in Wallerstein's work: the predominance of commerce and finance over

Columbia University in that era partook rather heavily of this New York ethos. Its cosmopolitanism and rebelliousness stand in sharp contrast to the genteel established liberalism of Harvard and Yale, where, ironically enough, Wallerstein is now installed as a Research Scholar. He had the good fortune and/or good judgment to study at Columbia in its heyday, in an atmosphere of heady intellectual activity (Lionel Trilling, Jacques Barzun, Meyer Schapiro, Richard Hofstadter, Herbert Marcuse, Franz Neumann, Karl Polanyi) and embattled resistance to the McCarthyite witchhunts of the time. His primary mentor as an undergraduate was C. Wright Mills, then at work on *White Collar*.

Mills's later reputation as a polemicist has perhaps obscured his notable scholarly contributions, as he had the bad luck to have single-handedly taken on the established pluralist consensus at its zenith. But Wallerstein remembered him for teaching social science, that is, arguing from evidence, and there is more than an echo of Mills's two-front sociological attack on Grand Theory and Abstracted Empiricism in Wallerstein's campaign against maintaining the split in the social sciences between the nomothetic theoretical disciplines (economics, sociology) and the idiographic descriptive ones (history, anthropology). Other legacies from Mills include his historical sensitivity, his ambition to understand macro-structures, and his rejection of both liberalism and to a lesser degree Marxism. Wallerstein's debt on this score is discernible in his article on Mills in the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*.

Wallerstein entered Columbia with an interest in newly independent India; Gandhi's non-violent resistance to British rule had excited great sympathy among democrats in the U.S. But through the accident of personal involvements with foreign students both in New York and in international student political circles, he switched his primary interest to Africa. Paris was a way station, where he first studied African colonialism under Georges Balandier. It was Balandier who taught that the proper unit of analysis for colonial social change was not the tribe but the colony. It was also in Paris, albeit later in his career, that Wallerstein came to know first hand the work

large-scale industrial production, and the prominence of economic as contrasted with military and administrative state activity.

of the *Annales* group of historians and social scientists who were to become a primary source for his interpretation of the capitalist transformation.

But one must not forget that Paris was also the major center for political/intellectual radicalism among Africans, Asians, and Latin Americans, and the center as well for ongoing challenges to Anglo-American liberalism and empiricism. Since 1958, Wallerstein has published numerous articles and reviews in French journals, and he taught one semester a year in Paris for much of the past fifteen years.

Beneath the surface of his work runs a preference for France over England, for Rousseau over Mill, for vigorous politics over tepid compromising. In his attachment to Paris one can perhaps discern the origins of his impulse to reduce England to a perspective in which its advantage relative to France is limited to the two centuries between 1750 and 1950, and explained not by some genius for pragmatic muddling nor yet by a surplus of Protestant ethic but rather by structurally determined success in politico-economic competition, including a large dose of Dutch capital.<sup>2</sup> Most important, Wallerstein's Parisian experience gave him access to a rich and proud scholarly tradition which could reinforce his New Yorker's disdain for conventional U.S. social science, a tradition which was furthermore free from the rigidities of pre-New Left Marxism. In 1979 the University of Paris awarded him an honorary doctorate.

Africa, particularly West Africa, provided the third formative experience in Wallerstein's political and intellectual development. Alone among scholars leading US macrosociologists of his generation, he spent important years doing field work and interviewing in the Third World. Again the timing was right: he went to the Gold Coast (now Ghana) and the Ivory Coast (still, appropriately for that model of neo-colonialism, the Ivory Coast) to undertake his dissertation research as the independence movements there were moving toward success. The dissertation itself was built around a quite conventional piece of survey analysis as taught by Paul Lazarsfeld, and focused on the social factors accounting for differential par-

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<sup>2</sup> The clearest statement of this Francophile revanchism may be found in Wallerstein's review of Gabriel Almond (1970), *Political Development*, which appeared in *Contemporary Sociology* (Wallerstein 1972).

ticipation in the voluntary associations comprising the independence movement. Published in 1964, as *The Road to Independence: Ghana and the Ivory Coast*, it was unremarkable in theory or method but notable for the high degree of personal involvement in the research.

Indeed, as the synthetic and deft *Africa: The Politics of Independence* (1961) suggests, the dissertation was more an exercise than a labor of love, except for that personal involvement. Published earlier and characteristically sweeping in its judgments, *Africa: The Politics of Independence* is undergirded by a structure of creative self-destruction, the rise and demise of colonial regimes. In that book, in the highly regarded course on colonialism he taught at Columbia for many years, and in his useful reader *Social Change: The Colonial Situation* (1966), Wallerstein presented an ineluctable process of colonial implantation leading to the establishment of new political boundaries and taxes, to the demand for new kinds of labor (mining, administration, infrastructure, cash crops), to a racially based class structure, to urban associations. to contact with democratic ideologies, to movements raising at least the threat of violence, and ultimately to decolonization. This framework of creative self-destruction, or rise and demise, of course underlies his grand project on capitalism.

Wallerstein's self-criticism of his early work on Africa stressed his neglect of the role of world-systemic factors in the achievement of African (and Asian) independence, a process he came to see as almost precisely analogous to the decolonization of Spanish America after the defeat of Napoleon and the achievement of British hegemony in the early nineteenth century. The newly hegemonic U.S. wanted nothing to interfere with the freedom of trade in the post-war world, and was in addition pressured by competition with the U.S.S.R. to champion democratic progress. But he also noted the vastly over-optimistic picture he drew of the immediate future of independent Africa, both there and in his *Africa: The Politics of Unity* (1967), which might be read as a correct general prediction of Third World "syndicalism" (e.g. OPEC) with an incorrect specific hope for African unity against imperialism.

In any case, Wallerstein's African experience greatly sharpened his political sensibilities, reinforcing the New Yorker's awareness of the importance of race and ethnicity. It also showed him that the accumulation of misery predicted by Marx's general law was not to be found in the so-called advanced

countries, as some Marxists are still attempting to demonstrate. Perhaps most important, Africa (and Paris) brought him into contact with the literature of *negritude*, almost pristine in its polar opposition to white Euro-America's self-conceptions, and into contact with the writings and finally the person of Frantz Fanon, subject of his other article in the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*. Wallerstein first met Fanon in 1960 in Accra, defended and extolled his work at some length (see especially the careful textual analysis of Fanon's understanding of "class" in *CWE*, pp. 250-268), and was instrumental in securing the US publication of *The Wretched of the Earth*. Fanon is best known for his explication of the creative and destructive aspects of revolutionary violence. But it was his analysis of "the pitfalls of national consciousness"—a savage critique of the post-colonial urban elite—that helped to propel Wallerstein in the direction of a world-systems perspective.

For it was clear to many students of the Third World in the mid-1960s that processes of change there require an understanding of world politico-economic forces, and parallel to the efforts of the so-called "dependency" theorists, most of them Latin Americans, Wallerstein began groping toward his mature formulation (*MWS I*, pp. 5-7). In collaboration with his long-standing friend and colleague, the late Terence Hopkins (to whom he dedicated Vol. I in 1974 as well as his most recent book—*The Essential Wallerstein* [2000]), in seminars and lectures at Columbia, and with the research assistance of Michael Hechter, he began to investigate the development of early modern Europe. At first, seeking an appropriate method for "The Comparative Study of National Societies," (Hopkins and Wallerstein 1967) Hopkins and Wallerstein moved toward a conception of the modern world-economy as the necessarily inclusive totality from which the analysis of change in any individual country should proceed. In contrast to the *dependentistas* they stressed the dialectical effects of core and periphery on one another as well as the impossibility and futility of "de-linking" as a development strategy.

From 1967 to 1974 may seem like a long gestation period, but one must realize that dramatic events were occurring in which Wallerstein became deeply involved. The 1968 student revolt at Columbia was a crucial turning point in Wallerstein's career. While it delayed the research and writing of *The Modern World-System*, it pushed him further to the left politically, resulting indirectly in his leaving Columbia after an association of almost twenty-

five years, and impelling him further towards a kind of sublimated revenge against the academic establishment. Three issues converged in the 1968 protests: anti-war sentiment, defense of the predominantly black neighborhood against university encroachment, and student political rights. Wallerstein became very active in the basically pro-student group among the faculty. He was one of a very few white professors trusted by the black students in the undergraduate college, and took a leading role in drafting the left faculty's proposed reforms. He ended up writing a book and editing a two-volume reader on the crisis in the universities. (Wallerstein 1969; Wallerstein and Starr 1971) But his faction lost in the undergraduate college, and his position in the graduate sociology department, which had contributed numerous activists to the struggle, was weakened. Hence in 1971 he accepted a position at McGill University (Hopkins left for SUNY Binghamton in 1971) whence he moved on to Binghamton in 1976. In quite another context (why Spain rather than Portugal took the lead in exploring the Americas) he wrote (*MWS I*, p. 169) "Imagination is usually nothing but the search for middle run profits by those to whom short run channels are blocked," an apposite description of his personal diaspora.

By 1976, of course, the first volume of *The Modern World-System* had appeared to great critical acclaim and considerable controversy. Wallerstein had become well-known beyond the horizons of African studies. His appointment at Binghamton was as Distinguished Professor and Chair, and included, due in part to Hopkins's institutional maneuvers, several unusual opportunities: a number of faculty positions to fill, a number of "adjunct professorships" for short term visiting foreign professors, support for a research center honoring Braudel and for a new journal, *Review*. Hardly the VIeme Section of the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, *mais pas mal quand meme*.

A second major institutional activity was the formation of a new section of the American Sociological Association (called "Political Economy of the World System"), partially including social scientists from other disciplines. PEWS has sponsored annual conferences since 1977, with the proceedings published in an annual volume, yet the organizational power of disciplinary boundaries has rendered PEWS primarily a venue for sociologists. Rather it has been at the Fernand Braudel Center and in the pages of *Review* that the participation of historians, anthropologists, geographers, and political scientists in the world-systems project has been most notable over the past twenty-five years.

In addition, Wallerstein and two Parisian colleagues edited a monograph series with Cambridge University Press; this series included the 1979 collection (*The Capitalist World-Economy*) of Wallerstein's own most important articles over the previous seven years, as well as subsequent similar collections in 1984 (*The Politics of the World-Economy*) and 1991 (*Geopolitics and Geoculture*). These collections demonstrate the astounding range of Wallerstein's interests and concerns, with papers ranging from general analyses of the world-system in the sixteenth and twentieth centuries, to theoretical papers on class and ethnicity and civilization and culture, to several accounts of socialism in general and the USSR in particular, to analyses of hegemony and crisis, to essays on US slavery and the US South. Yet another group of similarly wide-ranging papers appeared in 1995, *After Liberalism*, published by The New Press.

At the Fernand Braudel Center, Wallerstein launched collective research projects on many topics, eg, households in the long process of the proletarianization of labor, on Southern Africa, the incorporation of the Ottoman Empire into the capitalist world. Yet at the same time he continued to do both scholarly and political work on Africa and to move ahead with the subsequent volumes of *The Modern World-System II*, subtitled "Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy, 1600-1750," was published in 1980, and Volume III, bringing the story into the 1840s, appeared in 1989.

It should also be mentioned that while Binghamton established itself as the major center of world-system studies, former students and sometime associates of Wallerstein became ensconced at other US universities where world-system studies have progressed, such as Johns Hopkins, Stanford, Arizona, California (Davis, Irvine, Santa Cruz), Cornell, Emory, and Kansas State.

His influence grew rapidly around the U.S., in other disciplines besides sociology. Like the ASA, both the American Historical Association (1978) and the American Political Science Association (1979) devoted panels to his work at their annual meetings. With *The Modern World-System I* available in nine foreign languages, Wallerstein's intellectual "search for middle run profits" attained considerable success in the world market of ideas.

The empirical/historical project of *The Modern World-System* slowed in the 1980s and 1990s—will there be a Volume IV? a Volume V?, as Waller-

stein turned more and more of his energies to critiques of the organization of the social sciences, to prediction and to prophecy. He called for "unthinking" nineteenth century social science and chaired a foundation-sponsored commission to propose a vision appropriate to the twenty-first century. He used his presidency of the International Sociological Association (1994-98) to promote this vision. But unless and until concrete social scientific work thus inspired persuades significant numbers of researchers to alter their own practices, Wallerstein's epistemological and methodological urgings are unlikely to have anything resembling the impact of world-system analysis itself.

#### INTELLECTUAL SOURCES

Although original insights appear throughout Wallerstein's mature work, its most impressive characteristic is a bold synthetic imagination that accounts both for the leap to a new basic unit of analysis and for the sense of what to do when you get there. The world-systems perspective was ingeniously constructed by marrying to a sensibility informed by "Third World" radicalism three major traditions in Western social science, all of them enunciated in opposition to the dominant strain of Anglo-American liberalism and positivism. These traditions are German historical economy, the Annales school in French historiography, and Marxism.<sup>3</sup> We can briefly spell out the contributions of each tradition to the world-systems synthesis.

From the German tradition comes first of all the imprint of Max Weber, not the Weber of the Protestant Ethic nor of legitimate authority, but the Weber of urban imperialism vis-a-vis the countryside and of status groups reconceived in a materialist vein. Particularly useful has been the conception of the "ethno-nation" as a status group within the world economy. In core states this takes the form of nationalism: "Nationalism is the acceptance of the members of a state as members of a status-group, as citizens, with all the requirements of collective solidarity that implies" (*MWS I* p. 145). Ethno-national status-groups structurally divide the workers of the world into mutually exclusive segments as well as joining some of those workers

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Wallerstein's own account in the editorial introduction to *Review*. (Wallerstein 1977:3-7).

to capital through citizenship. Wallerstein published class analyses of status-group conflicts in Africa (CWE, pp. 165-183, 193-201) and the USSR (CWE, pp. 184-192), as well as positing "race" as the only international status-group category in the contemporary world (CWE, p. 180).

But Weber is not all. In addition to relying on Karl Bucher and Gustav Schmoller for accounts of particular transformations of production processes, Wallerstein drew from the Austrian Joseph Schumpeter and from the Hungarian Karl Polanyi. Before the Kondratieff revival in which Wallerstein and the Fernand Braudel Center played a large role, it was Schumpeter who most forcefully insisted on the importance of business cycles of varying lengths, of the regular, rhythmic, but discontinuous character of capitalist growth. It was also Schumpeter, "the most sophisticated of the defenders of capitalism" (CWE, p. 149) who insisted that capitalism was sowing the seeds of its own destruction. The political commentator turned economic anthropologist, Karl Polanyi, made a more fundamental contribution to world-systems analysis. For it was Polanyi who worked out the notion of three basic modes of economic organization, or types of social economy, which he termed reciprocal, redistributive, and market modes. These have become rather without modification Wallerstein's three types of totality: mini-systems, world-empires, and world-economies. Here the collaboration of Hopkins was crucial, for Hopkins had worked in a research group under Polanyi at Columbia in the nineteen-fifties.

The second major source of Wallerstein's approach to social science has been the *Annales* school in French historiography. Founded by Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, institutionalized by Febvre and Braudel in post-war Paris, the *Annales: Economies, Societes, Civilizations* has been the single most important historical journal in the contemporary world. Several "world-system" contributions of the *Annales* school stand out. Most famous is Braudel's insistence on the long term (*la longue duree*), which Wallerstein understands as an attack against both the episodic and the eternal, both event-centered political history and the universalizing generalizations of abstract social science (Review I, 3/4, p. 222). While there is a tendency among Annalists to focus on the enduring quality of social and economic structures, Wallerstein seems rather to have caught on to their *slowly-changing* basic features (*Ibid.*, pp. 52, 239); like Rome, capitalism was neither built in a day, nor is it falling fast.

An additional contribution of the *Annalistes* has been to focus on geo-ecological regions as units of analysis, either for local histories (e.g., Emmanuel LeRoy Ladurie on Languedoc) or "world" histories (e.g., Braudel's Mediterranean in the age of Philip II). Here again Wallerstein has followed a lead, and by combining Braudel with Polanyi, has proposed a conception of a systemic totality comprised of distinct geo-economic regions in which (to jump ahead and add Lenin) national states, the typical units of analysis in macrosociology, are instead variably autonomous actors in competition with one another. However, as Braudel himself admitted (Review I, 3/4, p. 256), the Annalists rather neglected the state in their revolt against conventional political narrative: states too have long-term, slowly changing structures, and Wallerstein has gone only part of the way toward overcoming this inherited bias.

Yet another contribution of the Annalists has been their attention to rural history. They insisted, in Wallerstein's words, that "behind the urban minority lay the rural majority" (Review I, 3/4, p. 6). An unconscious urban bias has been one of the persistent defects of both liberalism and Marxism and it is no accident that the influential works of Wallerstein and Barrington Moore, Jr. have concentrated on the countryside, emphases stressed in their subtitles ("Capitalist Agriculture and the origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century"; "Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World"). For Moore the countryside mattered because its class configuration decided eventual political outcomes. Wallerstein adds to class structure more of the *Annales* vein: the countryside matters as geographic constraint, resource base, and provider of surplus.

Finally, vis-a-vis the *Annales* contribution to Wallerstein, beyond the focus on the sixteenth century, one must notice his overwhelming reliance for empirical materials on Braudel, on Pierre (and to a lesser extent Huguette) Chaunu, and other French Annalists; on the Polish master Marion Malowist and other Europeans (the Italian Ruggiero Romano, the Czech Z. S. Pach, the Spaniard J.-G. da Silva, the Portuguese V. M. Godinho, the Pole S. Hoszowski, the Belgians J. A. van Houtte and C. Verlinden). Although Volume I of *The Modern World-System* makes reference to some seventy-three journals published in seventeen countries, *Annales: E.S.C.* shares with the British *Economic History Review* the most frequent citations, thirty-six, from nineteen of the first twenty-five years. And in terms of individual cita-

tions, Braudel receives by far the most (45), followed by Malowist (19) and Chaunu (19), with Bloch (15) and the Marxist economic historian Maurice Dobb (15) next.

In summing up the *Annales* imprint on Wallerstein, it seems fair to say that it is greatest at a very general methodological level (the long term, the regions, the geo-economic base) and also in terms of direct evidence for the initial two volumes of *The Modern World-System*. Wallerstein shares the Annaliste belief in the bedrock reality of carefully assembled economic historical data (economic history is the one contemporary sub-discipline Wallerstein exempts from the “modernizationist” fallacy [CWE, p. 21]), but he has gone elsewhere, to the Austro-Germans and to Marxism, for most of his theoretical conceptions. At the same time, to name his research center for Braudel, to imitate *Annales* in the titling of *Review* (“A Journal...for the Study of Economies, Historical Systems, and Civilizations”), to receive the warm benediction of Braudel himself (*Review* I, 3/4, pp. 243-253), these are more than the clever practices of one for whom liberalism is dead and Marxism at once sullied and imprudent. They symbolize and acknowledge a great debt.

Along with this great debt, however, the heritage of Marxism is at least as great. First, the fundamental reality for Wallerstein is social conflict among materially based human groups (CWE, pp. 175, 230; *MWS* I, p. 347). Second, shared with both the Annalists and with Marxism is the concern with the relevant totality. Third is the sense of the transitory nature of social forms and theories about them. Fourth is the centrality of the *accumulation* process, along with the competitive and class struggles it engenders. Here the stress is on the novelty of capitalism as a social organization, structurally based in the ever-renewed search for profit, and originating in the sixteenth century “primitive accumulation” through the expansion of Europe (colonies, precious metals, slave trade) and the reorganization of agricultural production (enclosure, capitalist ground rent). The long quotation on rent from Volume III of *Capital* (*MWS* I, p. 247), containing one of Marx’s most pregnant adumbrations of the world-systems perspective, is a triumphant moment in the analysis.

Fifth, and perhaps most important, is the dialectical sense of motion through conflict and contradiction, slower motion to be sure than most Marxists wish to perceive, but still the impulse to identify emerging social

groups that carry forward the world-wide struggle for socialism. In the 1960-1980 period, most Western Marxists twisted themselves into scholastic knots weaving ever more arcane theories of the state and of ideology, trying to explain away the failure of the Euro-American urban industrial workers to make the expected revolution. Wallerstein, meanwhile, was explaining it with a world-wide revision of Lenin’s “aristocracy of labor,” based on the direct observation of and participation in the ongoing struggles of non-white and often non-urban workers in the U.S. and in the Third World. This is quite clear, for example, in his review of the usages of class terms by Fanon and his critics (CWE, pp. 250-268).

Nor is this all. Also from Lenin, Wallerstein appropriates the centrality of both inter-imperialist rivalry—he will give it the somewhat antiseptic term “core competition”—and anti-imperialist revolution to the twentieth century. From Mao Ze-Dong Wallerstein seizes upon the notion that class struggle continues after “socialist” revolutions, and moves toward an interpretation of Soviet “revisionism” as a consequence of the U.S.S.R.’s approaching core status in the still capitalist world-economy. At the same time, he insists upon a nuanced view of twentieth-century socialist revolutions as both consolidating world capitalism and providing momentum for its undoing.

In addition, Wallerstein of course draws heavily on the neo-Marxist tendency known as dependency theory. Adumbrated in the nineteen-fifties by Paul Baran, dependency theory was advanced in the following decade by a number of prominent left social scientists, among them Samir Amin, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Theotonio dos Santos, Arghiri Emmanuel, Andre Gunder Frank, Anibal Quijano, and Dudley Seers. The critical entering wedge against “developmentalism” (the idea that each national society could develop in basically the same way), dependency theory focused on the centrality of core-periphery relations for understanding the periphery. From Amin came “peripheral capitalism,” from Cardoso “associated dependent development” to explain Brazilian exceptionalism, from Emmanuel “unequal exchange,” from Frank “satellitization” (Wallerstein’s “layers within layers”), from Seers the “open” economy. It remained for Wallerstein (and Hopkins) to make the core-periphery relation critical for understanding the core. In any case, it is from these sources and from Fanon as well that Wallerstein derives his sense of global class struggle—with its frequently nationalist guise.

One must adduce as well the impact of Marxist historiography. If not so important to Wallerstein as that of the *Annales* school, it has nonetheless played for him a large and significant role. The English historical journal *Past & Present* has served as the forum for the most sophisticated Marxist historical writing in the English language, and it ranks third among journal references in Volume I with seventeen citations. Christopher Hill, Rodney Hilton, the transplanted Viennese Eric Hobsbawm, Victor Kiernan, and of course R. H. Tawney were most important to Wallerstein, but one can point as well to continental Marxist historians whose work he drew on, most notably Boris Porchnev and Pierre Vilar.

It is, finally, not too much to argue that Wallerstein's ambition has been to revise Marxism itself by reinterpreting the modern world without the blinders imposed by taking the nation-state as the basic unit of analysis. According to him (*CWE*, p. 213), the great problem for Marxists has been "to explain the complicated detail" of transitions and uneven development, "to which there have been three responses: to ignore them, as do the 'vulgar Marxists...' to be overwhelmed by them, as are the 'ex-Marxists'...; to take them as both the key intellectual *and* the key political problem of Marxists." Here Wallerstein identifies Gramsci, Lenin, and Mao as three of the more obvious in the latter category. But it is perfectly clear from the remark's context, a critique of Eugene Genovese's use of the Old South as the unit of analysis for discussing slavery, that Wallerstein sees himself in this light, attempting to solve the riddles of transitions and uneven development. Hence the focus on the debates about feudal "survivals" and about "so-called socialism" in his "Rise and Future Demise" article, and hence the grand design of *The Modern World-System*.

#### BASIC ORIENTING CONCEPTS

In a brief but savage attack on "modernization" theory (*CWE*, pp. 132-137), Wallerstein outlined a research agenda with five major subjects: the functioning of the capitalist world-economy as a system, the how and why of its origins, its relations with non-capitalist structures in the centuries before it became a fully global system, the comparative study of the historical alternative modes of production, and the ongoing transition to socialism. He claims further that three tasks are necessary to carry out this agenda: "redoing our historical narratives, accumulating new world-systemic quanti-

tative data (almost from scratch), and above all reviewing and refining our conceptual baggage" (p. 136). He himself has concentrated on the third; to a large degree, reconceptualization in tandem with reinterpretation is his method.

As elaborated in a number of articles since 1974, the basic orienting concepts can be grouped thus: totalities, axial division of labor, international-state system, cyclical rhythms, secular trends, and antinomies or contradictions. These by no means exhaust the conceptual apparatus but include what has been most extensively worked out. All but the first apply primarily to the work on modern social change, as reconsideration of the problems presented by the analysis of pre-capitalist modes has been carried out by other scholars, most notably Christopher Chase-Dunn and Thomas Hall (1997).

According to Wallerstein there have existed three and only three types of totality, or modes of production, with a fourth possibility in the future. A totality is the basic unit of analysis for studying change, because it is the arena within which the basic determinants of change are located. Although political, cultural, and even luxury trade relations with other totalities can make a significant difference to the slowly transformative internal processes, the analytic boundary for Wallerstein is established by the regular provisioning of fundamental goods and services (necessities as opposed to luxuries) including, importantly, protection. The three historical modes are, following Polanyi, mini-systems, world-empires, and world-economies. Mini-systems are tribal economies integrated through reciprocity, sometimes called the *lineage* mode. The classic subject matter of anthropology, mini-systems have now been swallowed up by capitalist expansion. In the archaeology of our own way of life we find survivals of this mode in the exchanges of gifts, favors, and labor among family members and friends. Mini-systems, then, involve a single division of labor, a single polity, and a single culture.

World-empires and world-economies are both world-systems. They are distinguished from mini-systems in that they involve multiple cultures, and from one another in the essential fact that the former has a single political center while the latter has multiple centers of differing strength. World-empires include two or more culturally distinct groups linked together by the forcible appropriation of surplus (tribute, hence the alternative designation "tributary mode") and its redistribution to a stratum of rulers if not

more widely for political purposes. A wide range of historical social formations is thus included under this rubric, from the simple linkage of two tribal groups by the exchange of tribute for "protection", all the way to the far-flung, long-lasting high civilizations of China or Rome. The basic pattern of change in world-empires is one of cyclical expansion and contraction, both spatially and temporally: expansion until the bureaucratic costs of appropriating tribute outweighed the amount of surplus so appropriated.

World-economies, by contrast, are integrated through the market rather than by a single political center. In this type of social system, two or more distinct economic and cultural regions are interdependent with respect to necessities such as food, fuel and protection, and two or more polities compete for domination without a single center's emerging quasi-permanently. Before the modern period, world-economies tended to become world-empires: the classical trajectory from the multiple polities of Greece to the single imperium of Rome is the best-known case. According to Wallerstein, the distinctive key to the dynamism of the modern world is on-going interstate competition within the framework of a single division of labor. This structure alone puts a premium on technical and organizational innovations that give groups the opportunity to advance their interests, prevents the total freezing of the factors of production by a single, system-wide political elite, and denies to the exploited majority a focus for its political opposition. This structure stands in sharp contrast to that of world-empires, with their well-known technical sluggishness, "target-tribute" surplus appropriation, and vulnerability to rebellion or conquest.

The great importance Wallerstein attaches to this distinction is demonstrated two ways in *The Modern World-System I*. First is his extended comparison of fifteenth century Europe and China (pp. 52-63) in which great albeit not exclusive weight is given to the Chinese imperial prebendal bureaucracy in accounting for the failure of the relatively more advanced Chinese to make a capitalist breakthrough. Second is in the emphasis given to the failure of Charles V to reestablish the Holy Roman Empire in spite of the resources provided by American treasure (pp. 165-196). One cautionary note on terminology: by world-empire Wallerstein does not mean such entities as the modern Spanish or British "empires," which in his terms are simply strong states with colonial appendages within the larger framework of the capitalist world-economy. Perhaps because European expansion is

noted for the creation of such empires, several critics missed the technical point at issue.

Finally there remains a fourth type of totality, at this time only a possibility, but one which Wallerstein believes and hopes is in the cards. This he has called a socialist world-government. Presumably this form of organization would differ from a world-empire in that the production, appropriation and redistribution of world surplus would be collectively and democratically decided upon not by a bureaucratic stratum but by the world producers in accordance with an ethic of use value and social equality. Although such an alternative mode is barely on the horizon, Wallerstein finds the world currently in a transition to socialism. He has recently adumbrated its likely features in print, in *Utopistics*, (1998), but he found no more than prefigurings in certain unspecified practices of previously existing *soi-disant* socialist states.<sup>4</sup> He roundly denounced the Soviet claim to have established a socialist world system separate from and alternative to the still existent, singular capitalist one, and the USSR's demise did not come as a great surprise to world-system scholars.

Although some of the remaining orienting concepts have meaning when applied to more than one kind of totality, they have been worked out to apply primarily to world-economies, particularly to the capitalist world-economy or modern world-system. By "division of labor" Wallerstein and his collaborators mean the forces and relations of production of the world economy as a whole. They distinguish five aspects of the division of labor: core and periphery; commodity chains; semi-periphery; unequal exchange; and capital accumulation.

The central relation of the world-systems perspective is that of core and periphery, geographically and culturally distinct regions specializing in capital-intensive (core) and labor-intensive (periphery) production. In Wallerstein's view neither can exist without the other: it is a relational concept describing a relational reality. The notion of "commodity chains" has been put forth to describe the production of goods as they move from raw to cooked, slave-cultivated cotton becoming Manchester textiles, peasant-

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Lucio Colletti (1972:226): "None of these countries is really socialist, nor could they be. Socialism is not a national process but a world process."

grown Colombian coffee becoming Detroit labor-power, and so on. Thus twentieth century “backwardness” is seen not as the result of a late start in the race to develop but as the continued deepening of a long-standing structural relation. As the capitalist world-economy expanded over the past four centuries, new areas, formerly external, have been incorporated into the system, almost all as peripheries. At the same time, new productive activities have developed and the location of different core and peripheral production processes has shifted. The crucial element is not the product itself (although for many purposes the famous “raw materials exchanged for manufactures” is a convenient shorthand), but rather the capital intensity and skill level of the production processes themselves (U.S. wheat and Indian wheat are not the same). Hence textile manufacture is largely a “core” process in 1600 involving a relatively high capital/labor ratio and some of the most skilled workers of that era. By 1900 it is becoming a semi-peripheral process and by 2000 is well on its way to being a peripheral one, whereas computer software production has become emblematic of core economic life.

If the idea of core-periphery relations derives in large part from the dependency theorists, the notion of “semi-periphery” is original with Wallerstein. At once economic and political, it is a conception around which there is much fuzziness and disagreement, like that of “middle class.” On the political side, semi-peripheral states are said to stabilize the world-system through sub-imperial practices, deflecting and absorbing some of the peripheral opposition to the core. On the economic side, there are two overlapping and not incompatible aspects of semi-peripheral zones. As implied above they are on the one hand recognized as *intermediate* between core and periphery in terms of the capital intensity, and skill and wage levels of their production processes, as with sharecropping in sixteenth century Italy or textile mills in early twentieth century Japan. On the other hand, they are characterized by “combined” development, the coexistence of some core-like and some peripheral production, with their trade flowing simultaneously in two directions as they export little-processed materials to the core and simple manufactures to the periphery. Movement into and out of semi-peripheral status is possible for a region or state, both from above and from below. But upward movement is difficult, and it is further argued that the upward movement of some is largely (though not wholly: the system does expand) at the expense of the downward movement of others. Thus one is

led to anticipate such phenomena as the recent rise of some semi-peripheral states or regions (Taiwan, S. Korea) along with the stagnation or decline of others (Iraq, Colombia).

By “unequal exchange” Wallerstein refers to the processes or mechanisms (eg, transfer pricing) that reproduce the core-periphery division of labor. While there is much continuing debate over the precise nature of the mechanisms, they do result in the systematic transfer of surplus from the subsistence and semi-proletarian sectors located in the periphery to the high-technology, more fully proletarianized core. In this way one finds continuing and increasingly higher levels of living in the core, where high wages, worker political organization, and surplus capital combine to produce pressure for ever greater technical advance. This in turn tends to increase the differentiation between core and periphery.

By capital accumulation, finally, Wallerstein refers to the basic process expounded by Marx, with two important differences from the mainstream of received Marxist opinion. First, the accumulation process is seen as a *world* process, not a series of parallel national processes. Second, it is necessarily involved with the appropriation and transformation of peripheral surplus: geographic expansion and on-going primitive accumulation are not incidental to, but necessary and integral to the very constitution of capitalism. Here Wallerstein and Hopkins’s argument is formally and substantively isomorphic with the socialist-feminist position on housework. This is the source of Wallerstein’s controversial assertion that not wage-labor alone, but the combination of waged and non-waged labor is the essence of capitalism. “When labor is everywhere free, we shall have socialism” (*MWS I* p. 127).

So much for the division of labor, the basically economic side. But what of the political? A second fundamental family of concepts revolves around the structure of the international state system. A basic parameter of the capitalist world-economy, the competitive system of states provides an escape from stagnation by providing for capital the freedom to escape political restrictions threatened or imposed by other social forces. Wallerstein and his collaborators have singled out three aspects of the state system as crucial: imperialism, hegemony, and class struggle.

Imperialism refers to the domination of weak peripheral regions (whether they are states, colonies, or neither) by strong core states. Semi-

peripheral states are typically in between. Since state strength is a function of productive base, military organization, diplomatic alliances, and geopolitical situation, an occasional newly incorporated territory may have a sufficiently strong state to enter the world-system in a semi-peripheral position; such was the case with both Russia in the eighteenth century and Japan in the nineteenth. States are used by class forces to distort the world market in their favor and may also initiate such distortion by the use of force or diplomacy. They enforce and reinforce mechanisms of unequal exchange. As for the internal structure of states, core-states are far stronger than peripheral ones, as the ruling classes of the latter typically want to preserve open economies and to enjoy local power. But to say strong states is not to say necessarily strong or highly centralized executives (monarchs, presidents). The very strongest states are those which need the least administrative and military machinery to do the jobs of internal coordination and external depredation. Also, there appears to be some regularity in the alternation of informal empire and formal colonization as modes of imperialism.

Hegemony refers to the thus-far thrice recurrent situation of one core state temporarily outstripping the rest.<sup>5</sup> A hegemonic power is characterized by simultaneous supremacy in production, commerce, and finance which in turn support a most powerful military apparatus. The Dutch enjoyed such supremacy in the middle of the seventeenth century, as Wallerstein details in the second chapter of volume II; the British achieved the same in the nineteenth century and the U.S. in the twentieth. Interestingly, the hegemonic power is characterized by a rickety and rather decentralized state apparatus in contrast to rival core states, having to overcome the least internal resistance to an aggressively expansionist foreign economic policy.

Hegemonic powers take responsibility for maintaining a stable balance of power in world politics and for enforcing free trade, which is to its advantage so long as its economic advantage lasts. Each hegemonic power thus far has contained as well the world financial center of its time, a pattern which goes back to late medieval Venice, and, passing through Genoa and

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<sup>5</sup> Arguments about the regularity of hegemonic situations can be found in the issue of *Review* (11, 4, Spring 1979) devoted to cycles, particularly in the article by Nicole Bousquet (1979:501-517). See also Wallerstein (1983).

Antwerp, takes its characteristic modern form in Amsterdam, then London, and (penultimately?) New York—which ironically started its modern career as Nieuw Amsterdam. The rise of a hegemonic power to its accepted place is typically preceded and accompanied by world wars (1618-1648, 1756-1763 and 1792-1815, 1914-1918 and 1939-1945). And precisely because the hegemonic state is never strong enough to absorb the entire world-system but merely to police it, the phenomenon of hegemony is a necessarily temporary one, due to three processes. First, class struggles raise the wage level, lessening the competitive advantage, so that the hegemonic power can no longer undersell its rivals in the world market. Second, technical advantages are diffused through imitation, theft, or capital export. Third, world-wide technical advance makes possible the effectiveness of larger political units.

The final crucial aspect of the state system is the prominence of class struggle as the stuff of politics within and across state boundaries. Here the unconventional implications of the world-systems perspective are three. First, much attention is directed to the existence of class alliances across state boundaries, as bourgeois in several locations collude to protect surplus appropriation even as they compete over relative shares. Second, states themselves are conceived as mediating actors within the grand drama of a world-economy-wide class struggle. Third, Wallerstein and Hopkins are impatient with descriptive occupational/class terminology (e.g., slave owner, professional, peasant) that reifies social types at the expense of understanding the consequences of their activities for the operation of world capitalism.

In contrast to several friendly if severe critics, Wallerstein insisted on a high degree of interconnectedness between the division of labor and the international state system. Hence the phrase “political economy of the world-system.” Following Otto Hintze, both Theda Skocpol and Aristede Zolberg suggest giving co-determinative weight to world politics and world economy. (Skocpol 1977; Zolberg 1979) This renewal of the Marx-Weber debate at the level of the world-system can be fruitful up to a point; most useful was Zolberg’s noting the contribution of European military and diplomatic interaction with the Ottoman Empire as a causal link in the origins of the capitalist world-economy, a connection Wallerstein missed. Our view is that “co-determination” overly separates the military/political from the economic/social, and enshrines as a theoretical principle what needs to

be explored in specific empirical instances. Here the disputants are in closer accord, in part perhaps because Wallerstein was able to draw in his second volume on Perry Anderson's (1974) account of state formation in Eastern Europe, in part because the further towards the present one comes from the origins of the modern world, the more intercalated economic and political processes become.

This modern political economy is further characterized by regular cyclical rhythms which are asserted to be a third parameter of the system, constitutive of it rather than merely incidental to it. Wallerstein has been relatively uninterested in short-term business cycles, but struck by the regularities of the long waves emphasized by Kondratieff and Schumpeter (from forty to fifty years in length) and of the even longer swings (about 300 years) analyzed by Simiand, Labrousse, and most recently Rondo Cameron, who calls them "logistics." An entire issue of *Review* (II, 4) was devoted to discussions of these long waves of expansion and stagnation, for which time series on population, production, and price movements provide the primary evidence. But these data have not yet been treated as world-system data, and thus far are at best gross summaries of diverse movements in different accounting units (mostly states). Cyclical regularities systematically affect the differentiated zones of the world-economy. In periods of contraction and/or stagnation, for example, most peripheral and older semi-peripheral zones are hardest hit, while core and new semi-peripheral zones do relatively better.

The cyclical rhythms of the modern world-system provide the basis for Wallerstein's periodization of modern history, and hence for the temporal boundaries of his originally projected four (now five?) volumes. The period of growth and expansion called "the long sixteenth century" by Braudel (1450–1620/40) is covered in the first volume; the corresponding period of contraction and stagnation (1600–1730/50) in the second. Economic cycles give part way to political in the dating of the third and fourth stages. Stage three (1750–1917) is marked by the growing predominance of industrial over agricultural capital, the globalization of the capitalist world-economy, and the rise and demise of British hegemony. And stage four (1917–?) witnessed the consolidation of the global world-system, paradoxically through the growth of revolutionary socialist challenges to that system which resulted in the existence of so-called socialist semi-peripheries whose ruling groups had a stake in the continued existence of the system (CWE, pp. 30-34, 108-116).

Why are long cycles basic to the operation of capitalism? Because of the structured separation of economics from politics, the anarchy of the market. Periods of expansion come to an end when production outstrips the world distribution of income and hence effective demand. In fact, the periodic crises are worsened by the initial response of individual producing units to declining profits. That response, typically, is to expand overall production in order to maintain an absolute profit level, and necessarily results in an increased problem of oversupply. The ensuing severe crises are marked by increased concentration and centralization of capital, by geographic expansion, by technical change, and by struggles leading to sufficient income redistribution on a world scale to permit a renewal of capitalist expansion. For example, the crisis of the late nineteenth century saw the rise of corporations, cartels, and trusts; the "scramble for Africa" and frontier expansion in the Americas, Australia, and Asiatic Russia; the invention of the internal combustion engine and of electrical power; and the achievements of social democracy: higher wages for core industrial workers and the benefits of the welfare state.

The resolution of periodic crises, then, furthers the movement of the fourth parameter of the modern world-system, its secular trends. These trends are conceived as *both* the self-reproducing *and* the self-transforming aspects of the entire structure, with asymptotic limits that hypothetically presage its demise. That is, capitalism is understood as a system in the process of slowly transforming itself in the direction of limits beyond which it cannot pass: the secular trends—expansion, commodification, mechanization (accumulation) and bureaucratization—are processes constitutive of this moving system just as are the cyclical rhythms, the interstate competition, and the dividing and redividing of labor.

Geographic expansion is the first and most obvious of modern capitalism's secular trends. Essential to the transition from feudalism by making available to capitalists the labor and commodities of an arena stretching from parts of the Americas to parts of Africa and Eastern Europe, expansion has been a regular if discontinuous feature of modern history. With a few semi-peripheral exceptions, territories controlled both by mini-systems and by world-empires have been incorporated as peripheries with specialized productive roles. By the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the capitalist world-economy covered the entire globe extensively. But there has also

been a process of “inner” expansion into regions previously included within colonial or national political boundaries but theretofore existing as “subsistence redoubts,” supplying primarily able-bodied migratory workers to other zones. The expansion process is particularly important in times of contraction, with the press of need for cheaper raw materials, for new markets, and for expanded resources in the intensified interstate competition of such periods. The globe itself sets a finite limit to the expansion process; it is not accidental that in the present moment we hear much about seabed mining, aquaculture, even space colonies.

The second secular trend is “commodification,” the conversion of everything from use value to exchange value. Markets for land and labor are the critical ones: the sub-processes are termed “commercialization” and “proletarianization.” The commercialization of land has already reached a near-limit, as little usable space remains in the hands of tribal or communal groups, not to mention such frozen forms as *mainmorte* or entail. As for proletarianization, it has clearly not yet reached its possible limits. Most households in the core still depend to a fair degree on unwaged obligatory “housework” even if the bulk of their income is derived from wages. And in the periphery, low wage levels depend precisely on the fact that the costs of reproducing the work force are borne by subsistence producers. In a stunning inversion of conventional wisdom, Wallerstein notes that “the slowly developing, slowly eroding, marginal, largely subsistence sector of the world-economy, within which live [a large part] of the world’s rural populations...do not pose a problem to the capitalist world-economy. These areas are and have been from the beginning one of its major solutions” (CWE, p. 123, emphasis added). But if the limits of proletarianization have yet to be reached, surely the world is closer to it now than at any past time. “The world is probably halfway, more or less, in the process of freeing the factors of production” (CWE, p. 162).

The third secular trend is mechanization of production, increasing industrialization, the growing ratio of constant to variable capital. Here Wallerstein questions the centrality of the “English” industrial revolution of the eighteenth century, momentous though that change was. Rather the logic of his own arguments had pushed him in the direction of revaluing upwards the importance of the Dutch innovations in shipbuilding and food processing (some of it aboard ships; were they the first factories?) in the sev-

enteenth century (MWS II, Ch. 2). For the rest, he follows Marx in suggesting that continuing increases in the ratio of constant to variable capital can decrease profitability. He has not suggested what the limit might be in this regard.

A final secular trend is Weber’s bureaucratization, “the strengthening of all organizational structures...vis-a-vis both individuals and groups (CWE, p. 63). Wallerstein asserts that this trend has both stabilized the system by increasing the material capacity of ruling groups to repress opposition and weakened it by decreasing the ability of rulers to control the bureaucracies themselves, which can translate into weakness in enforcing “politico-economic will.” Again, just what limits this trend is up against remain to be specified.

A final set of orienting concepts includes the three primary contradictions in the modern world-system, what Wallerstein has sometimes called “antinomies.” The first is that between economy and polity, creating dilemmas of action for politically organized class groups. Since the world-economy is characterized by multiple polities, economic decisions are primarily oriented to an arena distinct from the bounded territorial control points where state power resides. This contradiction results in renewed pressure to bureaucratize individual nation-states, and, we might add, in the growing pressure to unify the world politically. Socialism in one country is in this view impossible.

The second contradiction is between supply and demand. Since multiple polities make the regulation of supply impossible, anarchy prevails. Demand on the other hand results from the temporary resolution of class struggles within the various states. Capitalists seek both to extract and to realize surplus-value, an impossible balancing act. Never perfectly harmonized, the cyclical rhythms of modern capitalism speed up over time and in addition become more synchronized throughout the entire world market. Regularly, crises push forward the secular trends which constitute capitalism’s approach to its limits.

Third is the contradiction between capital and labor. Here Wallerstein has argued that there are three kinds of workers in the world system, those who work for subsistence, those who work for wages, and those who are “part lifetime” proletarians, the most common type in the world as a whole. He has further asserted that the process of proletarianization reduces the

well-being of most of the world's workers—Marx's accumulation of misery, and that the so-called "new working class" of professionals, technicians, and bureaucrats has been the main exception to and beneficiary of this process. But free labor, especially when

urbanized, brings with it heightened labor organization and political struggle. And so the world bourgeoisie is hamstrung both by having to share increasing amounts of surplus with the intermediate strata—the increasing costs of cooption—(CWE, pp. 163, 35) and by having to face intensified struggle from below (CWE, pp. 63-64). As the concluding paragraph of *The Modern World-System I* puts it (p. 357):

The mark of the modern world is the imagination of its profiteers and the counter-assertiveness of the oppressed. Exploitation and the refusal to accept exploitation as either inevitable or just constitute the continuing antinomy of the modern era, joined together in a dialectic which has far from reached its climax in the twentieth century.

#### THE MODERN WORLD-SYSTEM: AN ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

Although he has been both prolific and wide-ranging in his intellectual labors, Wallerstein will doubtless be primarily judged for his *Modern World-System*. It is in some ways unfair and unfortunate to appraise that work on the basis of only the first three volumes. But they provide at once the most comprehensive application of his evolving theoretical scheme, and the richest vein from which we can extract his methodological principles.

The major purpose and accomplishment of Volume I is to demonstrate the cogency of the world-systems perspective through a reinterpretation of the transition from feudalism to capitalism. It is thus more concerned with establishing the primacy of the whole as a viable and necessary unit of analysis than it is with the detailed reconstruction of how and why each part came to play the role it provisionally held by the end of the long sixteenth century—though to be sure there is plenty of the latter. Wallerstein thus focuses on the new kind of totality represented by this European world-economy (the bulk of ch. 1), on its division of labor (ch. 2) and structure of strong and weak states (ch. 3), and then on the concrete historical trajectories of (A) the failed Hapsburg Empire, most of which becomes the semi-periphery (ch. 4), (B) the ascending core states of England and France (ch. 5)—only in *MWS II* does he do right by the Dutch, and (C) the East European and Spanish American peripheries which he contrasts with the as

yet unincorporated "external arenas" of Russia and the Indian Ocean respectively (ch. 6).

Along with the short concluding chapter seven, the second and third chapters are the most heavily theoretical, and the rest rather more empirical. But reconceptualization, analytic principles, and explanatory interpretations are scattered throughout the work in a way that makes it more confusing and difficult than it needs to be (especially since they are not always articulated), much more so for example than *MWS II* noted, in spite of its often engaging and lively style, the book tells you more than you want to know about some things and less about others. In places it cries out for editing, such as chapter five which switches back and forth from England (pp. 227-262) to France (pp. 262-279) to England (pp. 274-283) and again to France (pp. 283-296). In others it cries out for rewriting, most notably the section on the sixteenth century price revolution, inflation, and wage lag (pp. 70-84). In too many places the text reads like an over-hasty assemblage of quite brilliant reading notes. Just the same, what Wallerstein said about fifteenth century European state-building deserves to be said about his first volume (*MWS I*, p. 30): "Still it would be false to emphasize the difficulties. It is the magnitude of the achievement that is impressive."

In spite of the sometimes overwhelming bulk of information and interpretation, the structure of the basic argument is clear. Capitalism is a world-economy comprised of core, peripheral, and semi-peripheral productive regions integrated by market mechanisms which are in turn distorted by the stronger of the competing states, none of which is strong enough to control the entire economy. It came into being through the more or less conscious efforts of the feudal ruling classes to maintain politico-economic sway in the face of a triple conjunctural crunch: reaching the limits of feudal appropriation (an extremely decentralized tributary mode plus the nascent world-economies of the Hawse and the Mediterranean) as indicated by the fourteenth century peasant revolts; a severe cyclical decline in population and production; and a climatological shift to colder temperatures; the first of these is the crucial one (*MWS I*, p. 37). That response involved three developments which fed upon each other. Spatial expansion was fundamental, from about three to about seven million square kilometers, for it greatly increased the land/labor ratio of the Europe-based economy, making possible the accumulation of capital that would finance the rationalization of

agriculture in the core (*MWS I*, pp. 38, 68-69). Second was the emergence of various methods of labor control for different production processes in the different zones, ranging from wages and petty commodity production in the core to serfdom and slavery in the periphery, point insufficiently stressed in *MWS I*—an institutionalized system of diplomacy and law. How the whole came into being where and when it did, and how each zone and each state came to occupy its particular niche by about 1620 is then the detailed subject matter.

An example of the uneasy juxtaposition of explanatory levels is the long section on the new division of labor (pp. 86-127). Two kinds of causal explanation are going on at once. In a general sense, Wallerstein is attempting to demonstrate the validity of his general model of a capitalist world-economy. To do this he repeatedly asserts the causal importance of a particular region's emerging role in the increasingly specialized world market for the particular configuration that ensues in each region. For example, supplying low-cost bulk goods like grain and sugar is conducive to the organization of large estates with highly coercive labor systems. At the same time, he is setting forth the specific or local causes of these outcomes, and to do this he draws upon an unintegrated assortment of factors. For the "second serfdom" of the East European periphery these factors are the low ratio of labor to land near a frontier to which unbound peasants might escape, relatively weak towns, and the havoc (migrations, destruction, state-weakening) wrought by Turkish and Mongol-Tartar invasions. Other factors adduced in accounting for particular outcomes include indigenous resistance in newly conquered areas, supervision costs, legal structures, soil conditions (pasture or arable, fresh or exhausted), the impact of rich townsmen on agricultural production, and state policy. What is missing is precisely a measured and orderly synthesis of these two kinds of explanation. Wallerstein has sometimes been accused of neglecting the second kind of variables; they are absent from the model, but not from the empirical analyses.

Another criticism of *MWS I* arose from his treatment of state strength in the sixteenth century, which he correlates with core economic activities. The problems derive from his use of the word "strength," by which he means internal administrative and external military efficacy, and its confusion with "absolutism," which refers to the ability of monarchs to get their way: core

states are stronger than their monarchs are absolute. Wallerstein treats this family of problems more satisfactorily in *MWS II* when he analyzes the Dutch, English, and French states at greater length, and also those of the rising seventeenth century semi-peripheral powers, Sweden and Prussia.

The second volume as a whole features the same architecture but needs far less theoretical scaffolding. Subtitled "Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy, 1600-1750," it completes the 300-year economic long cycle begun in Volume I by analyzing the trajectory of the whole and its parts in a period of stagnation. The work begins with evidence of the unitary character of the world-economy: roughly coordinated price movements, systematically different movements in the volume of production and trade and in population (the core grows slowly, the semi-periphery stagnates, the periphery declines). A further argument is adduced for the sixteenth century's having been the crucial era of transition: whereas the contraction following feudal expansion (c. 1100-1300) led to crisis and a transformative transition, the seventeenth-century contraction led rather to a consolidation of the structural patterns that emerged in the sixteenth. The overall order of presentation changes, reflecting the greater stability of that epoch, to core—the Dutch (Ch. 2), the English and French (Ch. 3); periphery—Eastern Europe, Ibero-America, the new zone of the extended Caribbean from Brazil to Chesapeake Bay (Ch. 4); semi-periphery—first the declining older zones of the Christian Mediterranean, then the newly rising ones, first Sweden, then Prussia, and also the New England-Middle Atlantic colonies (Ch. 5). The volume concludes with a long analysis of Anglo-French rivalry, the major "world" conflict by the end of the period.

Among its contributions, a number of interesting and/or controversial ones stand out. First, the account of Dutch hegemony rescues this country, later to be outdistanced by its larger rivals, from an obscurity which in comparative macrosociology has been virtually complete, an obscurity, furthermore, which Wallerstein's own first volume tends to perpetuate. Simultaneously, thanks in large measure to the researches of C. H. Wilson, he is able to challenge the stereotype of the Dutch as mere "merchant" capitalists, portraying the remarkable advances in production—dairying, industrial crops, land reclamation, textiles, shipbuilding, food processing, peat mining—underlying the Dutch rise to commercial and financial primacy.

Of interest as well are his treatment of the sinews of the ostensibly rickety Dutch state.

Second, the treatment of England and France in both the third and sixth chapters returns to the delicate comparative task of stressing similarities while attempting to specify consequential differences. Most notable are his arguments that (A) Northern France was much more similar to England than is commonly understood; (B) a large proportion of French industry was not of the “artificial royal” variety made famous by the pro-British historian of mercantilism, Eli Hecksher; (C) ecological exhaustion of forests pushed England both toward the use of coal as fuel and toward the colonization of North America for shipbuilding and naval stores—a kind of seventeenth century energy crisis; and (D) the English edge going into the middle of the eighteenth century was due more than to anything else to superior state finances, which in turn were decisively boosted by large amounts of Dutch investments, just as growing English military superiority relative to France was aided by the Anglo-Dutch alliance.

Third, one of the middle-level theoretical expectations (also an empirical generalization) of the world-systems view is that only a limited number of countries can advance at a given moment, and fewer in times of stagnation than in times of expansion. What Wallerstein does in his discussion of the seventeenth century semi-periphery is to illustrate this proposition by reference to the failure of mercantilism to increase the relative standing of Spain and Portugal; the continued decline of Flanders, the Rhineland, and North Italy; and the upward trajectories of Sweden, Prussia, and the New England/Mid-Atlantic colonies of North America. Here again the historical specificities are accommodated within a supple theoretical framework. For Sweden, the key industries are iron and copper (he compares it to OPEC) and the key alliance with France, which partially subsidized Sweden’s conquests. But Sweden lacked the size and productive base to rise beyond a certain point, and its expansion-based development was stopped after about 1680. For Prussia, the keys were first, the medium (not large) size of states, so that the Junkers were relatively weaker vis-a-vis the state than peripheral landowners elsewhere; second, the luck of inheritance, as the Elector of Brandenburg acquired Cleves in the Northern Rhineland, Prussia, and Pomerania, all strategically important lands, which the great powers allowed Brandenburg to keep as a check on Sweden; third, alliance first with Sweden

against Poland and then with England and Holland against Sweden. Then, as with his explanation of the beginnings of the Swedish rise in the sixteenth century in Volume I, so with Brandenburg-Prussia: basically unpromising agricultural production induced the medium-sized Junkers to *join* with the monarch through state employment rather than to oppose him. Following this build-up of bureaucracy and army came Prussia’s role as English ally in the war against yet another semi-peripheral aspirant, Austria, the outcome of which was its annexation of the rich industrial zone of Silesia. Finally, the discussion of England’s northern colonies in the Americas stresses the role of the shipbuilding industry, which became so important for English shipping that it was allowed to prosper even as the colonial officials were attempting to restrict other industrial production. Shipbuilding, according to Wallerstein, laid the foundations in technology, skilled labor, and capital that would enable those colonies to escape peripheralization and share in the profits of renewed world economic expansion after 1750.

Volume III of *The Modern World-System* picks up where II leaves off. Sub-titled “The Second Era of Great Expansion of the Capitalist World-Economy, 1730-1840s,” it too is notable in several ways that in sociology, at least, have been almost entirely neglected. Of its four chapters, the first two, on the core, critique received wisdom about the industrial and French revolutions: the former occurred over centuries and not only in England; the latter enabled the ideological superstructure of capitalism to catch up to its material base, and, as a social movement, represented a failed anti-capitalist movement rather than a successful bourgeois one. The comparison between Britain and France and the analysis of their rivalry yields ironic revisions of the standard accounts of why the British came to dominate the world in the nineteenth century.

The final two chapters treat parts of the periphery and semi-periphery, first an extended comparative analysis of the incorporation and peripheralization of India, the Ottoman lands, Russia, and West Africa, and the second an account of the “settler decolonization of the Americas.” Particularly remarkable is Wallerstein’s tracing of the parallel processes of transforming production and reorganizing class structure in the four newly incorporated zones, on the one hand, and the socio-economic contrast between Russia and the others because of its strong state, on the other.

## THE RULES OF THE WORLD-SYSTEMS METHOD

In a most general sense, we have already presented Wallerstein's most basic methodological rules, which may be summarized briefly. Pursue the questions of long-term, large-scale social transformation that preoccupied the nineteenth century founders of modern social science. Address the major theoretical and political controversies of the contemporary world. Look at historical processes as constitutive of society (not something that is "background" to it), and look at that history through "the eyes of the down-trodden" with the hope that one's intellectual work can help advance their political interests (*MWS I*, pp. 4, 10). To study change, locate the relevant totality within which change is primarily determined. To study modern social change, locate the phenomena under analysis spatio-temporally, in terms of the orienting concepts discussed above—productive structure cum role in the world market, state structure cum geopolitics, cyclical conjuncture,<sup>6</sup> cumulative secular trends, ongoing contradictions. Use comparative analysis to establish the validity of the general concepts (e.g., Europe as world-economy vs. China as world-empire, England as core vs. Poland as periphery), to specify consequential differences among basically similar parts of the world-economy (Brandenburg-Prussia vs. Austria as ascending semi-peripheries in the early eighteenth century, England vs. France as core rivals for hegemony), and to portray less consequential but still interesting differences among similar parts (the timing of the shift to slavery in sugar vs. tobacco cultivation). Watch for "layers within layers," not merely regionally, but also in terms of ethnic segmentation of the labor force (*MWS I*, pp. 86-87, 118-119, 122, 139). And, of course, read voraciously and ceaselessly in history, not neglecting works published any time in the last century.

But two further aspects of Wallerstein's method deserve attention: the invocation of middle-level analytical principles, and the eclectic use of explanatory factors as building blocks. Unfortunately, these are the least systematically worked out aspects of his approach, and the distance between

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<sup>6</sup> An interesting instance of Wallerstein's method in this regard is his distinction between "seizing the chance" and "promotion by invitation" as contrasting modes of peripheral advance, the former more likely in periods of contraction, the latter in periods of expansion (*CWE*, pp. 76-81).

the latter and the orienting concepts has caused ample criticism, even the accusation "of creating an impenetrable abyss between historical findings and social science theorizing."<sup>7</sup> Rather it seems to us that the perceived gap is due to the unintegrated character of Wallerstein's theory. Thus he can tell us that "the cause" (*I*, p.191) of Spain's decline was its failure to erect the right kind of state for its time (pp. 179-181), a general orienting concept, and then go on to adduce nine or ten political, economic, class, and demographic explanations of the same phenomenon (pp. 191-196).

Before discussing these lower-level explanatory factors, however, it is worth looking at the middle-level analytical principles invoked at various points in the work. These principles often show subtle dialectical thought. But even if plausible, their invocation sometimes seems too "magical," that is, serving the analyst just when he is in trouble. The most important such principles might be called "negativities," "Goldilocks" (or "proportionalities"), "cumulation" (following Myrdal), and "temporal paradox" (including Veblen's advantages of backwardness).

Alertness to negativities is one of Wallerstein's great strengths. Positive facts are fine for positivist analysis, and of course we all use them. But so are negative ones. Thus we find part of the explanation for the rise of Prussia in its prior poverty, as it was first left alone and later sponsored by more powerful states fighting over the truly rich prizes of Spain and Italy (*MWS II* Ch. 5). Or, the small size of Holland makes it safe for Spain to continue using it as a bullion outlet (*MWS I*, p. 213). Or, to take a contemporary example, the poverty and rarity of a state like Tanzania are prime factors in its being allowed by stronger powers to try "self-reliance" as a mode of advance (*CWE*, p. 82).

The "Goldilocks"—not too cold, not too hot, but just right—principle is even more important. Repeatedly Wallerstein argues against the linear correlations beloved of positivist social science. For example, to the general correlation of state strength with core production, he adds the nuances that hegemonic core states need less active state machineries than their rivals, and that advancing semi-peripheral states take a more active economic role

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<sup>7</sup> Skocpol (1977). Another reviewer (Markoff 1977:2-8) called Vol. I "almost...two different books."

than any (*MWS II* Ch. 2; *CWE*, pp. 95-118). For sixteenth-century success, city-states were too small, empires too large. For successful national capitalist advance, a medium average wage level is best: too low, and the domestic market is insufficient; too high, and export competitiveness is forsaken. The fate of Venice illustrates both (*MWS I*, p. 219), with its lack of control over a raw materials producing hinterland and its high wages (*MWS I*, p. 262). Or again (perhaps too magically?), to return to Stuart England, the "state machinery was just strong enough to fend off baneful outside influences, but still weak enough not to give too great an edge to 'traditionalist' elements or to the new parasites of the state bureaucracy" who would have absorbed otherwise investible surplus (*MWS I*, p. 257). And the English Civil War, with its commercializing momentum, occurred at just the right moment, too late for rural discontent to make a difference, too soon for a conservative gentry/Court coalition to brake the thrust. These are all plausible and tantalizing arguments, some more convincing than others. The question is, how does one know when to invoke Goldilocks, or, is there more to this method than alertness?

The principle of "cumulation," to which Wallerstein adds the notion of "tipping mechanisms," is by contrast straightforward, although again there are no codified rules of application. It refers at once to the self-reinforcing aspect of the market (in another guise, R.K.Merton's "Matthew effect") and to the mutually beneficial interplay of economic and political power (*MWS I*, pp. 98, 309, 356). In addition to accounting for the increasing gap between core and periphery, Wallerstein uses it in its more narrowly economic sense to describe the spiraling rise to hegemony of the Dutch, as productive advantage led to commercial advantage which reinforced the former while leading as well to financial advantage (*MWS II* Ch. 2). "Tipping mechanism" is a metaphorical fig leaf for the process through which a spiral-starting turning point is reached. For example, once the early modern Western monarchies gained an edge over their nobilities, they were able to increase centralization through increasing taxation which paid for increasing enforcement which gave confidence to those who might finance state deficits.

By "temporal paradox" we mean to suggest several notions including that of the advantages of backwardness, which might be thought of as one of the regular conditions under which new core zones emerge (on sixteenth

century textiles, for instance, see *MWS I*, pp. 125, 279). Of course, in the non-infinite-sum game of world capitalism, not everyone's backwardness is an advantage. The point is that today's disadvantage, say, the vastness of the Russian Empire in the 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries, may become tomorrow's advantage. A second kind of temporal paradox is the pattern of initial receptivity leading to stifling, "whereas initial resistance often leads on to a breakthrough" (*MWS I*, p. 59). Wallerstein invokes this principle to cover the paradoxes that contractual Chinese prebendalism smothered capitalism, while mystical European feudalism gave rise to it; and that Spain, rather than the more experienced Portugal, took the lead in exploring the Western hemisphere. Beyond alertness, it is perhaps impossible to specify when "temporal paradox" as opposed to "cumulation" will occur.

A final sort of temporal paradox is to contrast short-run, middle-run, and long-run consequences. Thus we find Wallerstein echoing the common assertions about the outcome of the struggles culminating in the Fronde, with the French aristocracy losing in the short run, winning in the medium run, and losing big in the long run. Or, more controversially, we find him suggesting that while the short-run consequences of Russia's defeat in the Livonian War (1583) may have been damaging, the long-run effect was to keep Russia out of the European world-economy, thus protecting its strong state and indigenous bourgeoisie from peripheralization (*MWS I*, p. 319).

To summarize, these analytical principles have an oddly detached character when viewed as part of the overall theoretical edifice. They greatly enrich the particular explanatory accounts even if the rules for reproducing such accounts do not yet exist, and perhaps never will, not even in the long run. But they do provide an array of tools for those who undertake to decipher the historical trajectories of complex configurations.

If Wallerstein's analytical principles are detached from his general orienting concepts, his grab-bag of explanatory factors is that and disordered as well. Above we alluded to the schizoid reckoning of Spain's decline, with first *the* cause and then nine or ten explanatory factors. Or, one can point to the disjuncture between a bald *general* statement such as "the different roles [in the world division of labor] led to different class structures which led to different politics" (*MWS I*, p. 157) and the *specific* variables which make up his account, say, of Swedish exceptionalism: poor soil and worsening climate, strong class position of the peasantry, iron and later copper as lead-

ing exports instead of grain, sponsorship by stronger powers (*MWS I*, pp. 312-313; II, Ch. 5). To reduce somewhat the confusion of the great range of explanatory factors, we can group them as follows: geographic, demographic, and ecological; technological and economic; class-relational; legal, organizational, political, and military; ideological and psychological.

Geography and ecology loom large. Obvious in the case of constraining production possibilities in various zones, they play a role in explaining much else, accounting in part for the Northwest European edge in a world-economy with important Atlantic and Baltic zones, in part for the differences in Asian and American conquest, in part (because of forest depletion) for the English edge over France in colonization and technology (use of coal). Population size and movements, recognized to be importantly determined by social structure (*CWE*, p. 143; *MWS I*, p. 196), also enter into explanatory equations, from their role in the demise of feudalism, in the Goldilocks formulation of optimal size for productive and military strength on the one hand and for administrative control on the other, in the timing of the English push toward colonization (*MWS I*, p. 281). Wallerstein is very much a materialist—here Marxism and the *Annalists* converge to a degree; if he is more attentive to politics than the latter typically are, he is also better grounded in the rather less mutable forces of nature, including climate and disease, than has been the recent fashion in Marxism.

Technology and economy, class relations, and politics so suffuse *The Modern World-System* as to require little elaboration. What is worth noting here are a few of the not infrequent instances in which particular explanations run in the opposite direction from the tendency to economistic reductionism in his general assertions. Thus it is class struggle that propels capital flight and the organization of new forms of textile production in the sixteenth century and in part accounts for the very push to expand the area under the control of the Europe-wide ruling class (*MWS I*, pp. 220, 48). So also the political strength of the French nobility reduces French economic flexibility (*MWS I*, pp. 181-182). And thus it is that political factors determined class and economic outcomes: the strong Spanish state in the fifteenth century helps account for economic growth in the sixteenth (*MWS I*, p. 166); military geography and the organizational strength of Protestant sects help explain the results of the Netherlands revolt, as do the complicated power balance and array of interests of Spain, France, and England

(*MWS I*, pp. 206-208, 210); legal forms in part explain differential peasant success in resisting sharecropping (*MWS I*, p. 105). And even military relations with external arenas make an economic difference: the Ottoman cut-off of Bosnian and Serbian silver pushed the West European search for alternate sources of bullion (*MWS I*, p. 40), and a similar denial of grain from the Southeast Mediterranean hurt the North Italian city-states at a critical time (*MWS I*, p. 217).

As befits a militant materialist, ideological and psychological factors are given short shrift as explanations of long-term change. However much people believe in and “mean” their ideologies, which Wallerstein clearly thinks they do, those ideologies are to be interpreted as the expression of politico-economic interests (*MWS I*, p. 283). He does give limited causal weight to one ideological element, asserting that feudal “mysticism” gave early modern monarchs a centralizing lever lacked by Chinese emperors (*MWS I*, p. 63). As for psychology, it enters in a carefully hedged way into his explanation of the importance of bullion to economic life as an “essential” good as well as a “preciosity” in the fifteenth century (*MWS I*, p. 46): “...more fundamental than self-interest [of minting entrepreneurs] was the collective psychology of fear, based on the structural reality of a weakly articulated economic system.” Bullion was an essential “hedge” at a time when Europeans lacked the “collective confidence” necessary for sustained capitalist activity.

These examples should suffice to illustrate the disjuncture between Wallerstein’s general orienting concepts, and his analytical principles, (his rules for constructing detailed explanations). To be sure, this disjuncture is by no means total, nor does it necessarily invalidate his efforts at any of these levels. The ideas themselves are not so much incompatible as inconsistently articulated. Thus what the disjuncture calls for is an effort to revise the more general theoretical ideas in the direction of incorporating the useful interpretive notions invoked in particular accounts, a rationalizing codification of the rules of world-systems method.

#### THE WORLD-SYSTEM AND ITS DISCONTENTS

As might be expected from work so vast, so rich, so controversial, and sometimes so confusing, there is cause in *The Modern World-System* for (almost) everyone to complain about. It was both welcomed and attacked

from many disciplinary and ideological quarters. At least four interrelated areas of controversy warrant discussion: space, time, Marxism, and “economism.” As perhaps befits one given to “Goldilocks” formulations, Wallerstein has critics on both sides of his position in each of these areas.

Two issues have arisen regarding Wallerstein’s handling of space, one theoretical, the other substantive. In the latter vein, challenges have been raised to his excluding at least certain Ottoman lands and also parts of Africa from the sixteenth-century world-economy, the former because of heavy commercial and political intercourse, the latter because of slave trading.<sup>8</sup> Wallerstein himself admits to difficult boundary problems, especially where adverbial quantification is the best one can arrive at. He seems to use two criteria to draw the necessarily fuzzy lines: the distinction between “essentials” and “luxuries,” and the transformation of production relations. Most of the Ottoman commerce (and the Asian trade) was in luxuries, most of the slave trade in captives. These activities were clearly important to the economic life of the areas in which they occurred, and especially the latter had far-reaching long-run consequences. They may be argued to have been accelerators, or perhaps even necessary catalysts of the formation of a capitalist world-economy in the sixteenth century. Perhaps Wallerstein underestimates the importance of “external arena” markets, if only as a step toward the transition to peripheral incorporation. But it is clear from his analyses of West Africa<sup>9</sup> that for him full incorporation means the production of commodities guided by the incentives of the world market and more often than not by the all-too-palpable whip of a capitalist. What remains at issue is the extent and kind of effects external arenas and the capitalist world-economy had on each other before incorporation, exactly one of the items on Wallerstein’s unfinished research agenda (*CWE*, p. 136).

If the substantive spatial critics say, “too small,” the theoretical ones cry, “too large.” For the theoretical issue revolves around the claim that the world-economy is *the* proper unit of analysis for the study of modern social change. The standard unit of analysis in liberal social science has been the

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<sup>8</sup> On the Ottomans, see particularly Frederic C. Lane (1976); on Africa, the review by Walter Carroll, *MERIP Reports* #52, pp. 24-26.

<sup>9</sup> See especially Wallerstein (1976:30-57), and *MWS III*, ch. 3.

national state, sometimes the region (as in economic geography), sometimes a smaller political unit (as in urban sociology or most anthropology), sometimes the international arena (as in international relations). Marxist social science has typically taken over these units of analysis with a different name for national state (“social formation”) and in some usages for regional economy (“mode of production”). Some suggest that “classes” are units of analysis, just as some liberals have focused their studies on groups or organizations, but this is to miss the rootedness of human life in physical space: a subject for analysis is not the same thing as a unit of analysis, within which groups, organizations, even individuals orient their action if not always with fully rational consciousness. Both liberals and conventional Marxists operate on the assumption that spatial boundaries have expanded over the last millennium or so in linear fashion, say, manorial in the tenth century, town-centered in the thirteenth, regional in the fifteenth, national in the nineteenth, international in the twentieth, global in the twenty-first. The more or less parallel developments of at least the more advanced nation states (social formations) follow more or less similar paths, and the primary determinants of those developments are said to be “internal,” with “external” factors like trade and war perhaps having some causal importance, but only secondary importance.

Trapped in this “internal”/“external” usage, they have tended to see Wallerstein as claiming that external factors are primary, internal secondary. But is this so? Not in our understanding. Rather, that particular question has been made into a variable by redrawing the analytical boundaries so that one is looking at a world-economy with more or less permeable state boundaries. The “world market” is not the same as international trade but synonymous with all non-local, non-subsistence production, whether or not it crosses state boundaries in the course of its transformation from resource extraction to final consumption. The promotion, within a national territory, of highly capitalized production, by some combination of entrepreneurs and bureaucrats (“development” in conventional parlance), becomes contingent upon garnering a certain share of the world market through a variable combination of “national” and “international” markets; mercantilism, “Listism,” and “socialism in one country” become historically successive mechanisms for attempting such promotion. Furthermore, it is not that “external” factors are more important than “internal” in analyzing country X or Y; it

is that the two are necessarily and dialectically connected because *both* are internal to the world-economy of commodity chains, class struggles, and state structures. And in places, Wallerstein suggests that the emphasis in the world-system as a whole alternates between the salience of its inter- and intra-national aspects.

On the temporal side, Wallerstein is once again in the middle, between those who argue that his dating of the transition to the modern world-system is “too late,” and those who argue that it is “too soon.”<sup>10</sup> Those who say “too late” focus on the medieval innovations in commercial practices, or the early importance of long distance trade in gold and textiles, or the inter-polity political system of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. (Or, like Frank, they posit a 5000-year world system that knew no major break in the sixteenth century.) In our view, these are phenomena of the previous epoch that in part contribute to and in part survive the feudal crisis. Those who say “too soon” tend toward the predominant liberal and Marxist view that the eighteenth century “English” industrial revolution cum massive urbanization is the proper point of departure for modern capitalism, with the three centuries between 1450 and 1750 variously described as the age of discovery, or absolutism, or of merchant or commercial capital,

or petty commodity production, or simply as “transitional.” These critics stress the wage-relation and factory discipline as the molecules from which “true” capitalism is built. Do they not miss, on the one hand, the extent of disciplined wage labor in core agriculture (hence the sub-title of Volume I) and in transportation and mining before 1750, and, on the other hand, the capitalist character of peripheral production? Some skeptics on this account will perhaps be persuaded by the arguments and evidence of the first chapter of Volume II, regarding the differences between the feudal crisis and the seventeenth-century contraction. The remainder of Volume II may persuade others, and surely not everyone—not only critics on this issue—agrees with the way Wallerstein treats the change to factory textile production in Volume III. Were the fundamental structures of capitalism in place by 1640, after “the long period of creation?” (*MWS I*, p. 124). Especially

<sup>10</sup> In the “too late” camp are Domenico Sella (1977), and in a sense Zolberg (1979). The “too soon” camp includes Robert Brenner (1977); Edward J. Nell (1977); and Robert A. Dodgshon (1977). Remarkably, Dodgshon cites Polanyi against Wallerstein.

since this issue is tied up with the next one, it is unlikely to be settled to everyone’s satisfaction.

Again, with regard to Marxism, Wallerstein is in the middle, too Marxist for some, not Marxist enough for others.<sup>11</sup> Those who claim “too Marxist” point to the principled disregard for cultural explanations of political and economic change, to the neglect of comparative advantage and mutual profitability in international trade, to the concept of exploitation, to the construction of “a framework founded on class analysis alone” (Zolberg 1979: 46). Those who claim “not Marxist enough” assert that Wallerstein relies too heavily on demography and commerce for explanation, not heavily enough on relations of production. In this view, there is neither enough class determination in Wallerstein’s explanatory scheme nor is sufficient emphasis given to class struggle from below. Once more we have a controversy which is unlikely to go away, given the political and ideological commitments of the participants and their audience. And of course, there is the further complication that there are Marxists on several sides of most of these questions, including those who understand Marx as a teleological functionalist.

Finally there is the question of economism, on which some find Wallerstein too economistic, others not economistic enough.<sup>12</sup> One critique emerged around the Weberian or Hintzean claim that modern capitalism is one thing, the modern international state system another, and that “co-determination,” to use Hintze’s phrase, is appropriate. But if from this perspective Wallerstein’s formulations are insufficiently political, from others they seem too political: Sella, hedging, sees a “somewhat one-dimensional approach” (p. 32) in the explanatory reliance on state power to reinforce and perpetuate the world-system; Schneider finds him insufficiently appreciative both of the role of luxury trade in determining pre-capitalist structures and of the role of abundant pastures and long-staple wool in gaining an edge for England

<sup>11</sup> Wallerstein is “too Marxist” for Morris Janowitz (1977); for Sella (1977); for Zolberg (1979); for Markoff (1977) and for Kenneth Boulding (1978). He is “not Marxist enough” for Brenner (1977), Nell (1977), or Ernesto Laclau (1977:43-50).

<sup>12</sup> Wallerstein’s formulations are “too economistic” for Skocpol (1977), Brenner (1977), Zolberg (1979), and Peter Gourevitch (1978). They are “not economistic enough” for Sella (1977), or Jane Schneider (1977).

in textile manufacture. It seems fair to say that Wallerstein's position here represents a synthesis of the economism of the 2nd and 3rd International with the antithetical "politicism" of its Gramscian and Maoist critics.

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To summarize, Wallerstein's method of reconceptualization and reinterpretation has regenerated many long-standing controversies in social science. To some extent, this is due to the confusing disjuncture between general concepts and explanatory building blocks. To some extent, it is due to the difficulty of giving new technical meanings to familiar words, such as "world" (as applying to anything less than the globe), "empire" (as applied in the usage "world-empire" to redistributive totalities), and "capitalism" ("capitalist" accumulation plus "primitive" accumulation within a system of unequally strong, competitive states). But if some of the contributions to these controversies are old songs sung by new voices, most seem to be sophisticated and useful in advancing both theoretical and substantive work on questions of large-scale, long-term change. The work of Wallerstein and his collaborators, while still unfinished, has provided a major push to historical social analysis, including historical analysis of the present. While some have rejected it outright, most have either borrowed from it variables to enrich their own accounts of national, regional, or local social changes, or accepted its claim to paradigmatic status as the basic framework for the study of modern social change and hence the modern world itself. Our world does truly seem to be neither rushing toward doom or Utopia, nor staying the same as always. Rather we seem fated to change slowly, and, barring nuclear catastrophe, both to theorize and to practice the transformation of enduring structures.

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