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From Neoevolutionism to World-Systems Analysis

The Romanian Theory of "Forms without Substance" in Light of Modern Debates on Social Change

leske + budrich

Contents

tion school were neither evolutionary nor functionalist large-scale *theories of social change*, but theories of development of limited spatial and temporal scope. They were born out of an attempt to solve the issue of development of particular regions of the world with respect to other particular regions at a specific moment in history – although researchers often extrapolated both across time periods and geographical locations. Their main implications were ideological and therefore a corresponding theoretical backlash had to emerge out of the failure of this ideology or in response to a favorable political context. Consequently, a full-scale evolutionary model like Sahlins' and Service's was academically of too broad a scope and politically too equanimous to constitute more than a sweeping overview of the many limitations inherent to the modernization approach. An alternative model had to await its turn.

3. The World-Systems Perspective

Emerging somewhat later than, and in reaction to, the modernization school was an intellectual position with respect to social change whose main characteristic was the departure from explanations of backwardness that relied solely on the study of self-contained societies and the attempt to elaborate a perspective based on global economic relations within a world-wide trade system. In time, at least two strands would crystallize and diverge according to the different degrees of success in prescribing policies of change on a global rather than a national level, but in the 1960s and early 1970s, modernization theorists faced a unified attack.

3.1 Dependency Theory: Reconsidering External Factors of Change

Clearly the most prominent response ever elicited by modernization theories, and the one marking the beginning of a decade-lasting ideological battle, was

represented by dependency theory[16]. Arising in Latin America in the early 1960s in reaction to the failure of the United Nations' economic program[17] to promote development, and the modernization school's inability to explain the ensuing economic stagnation in the region, it started by taking a neo-Marxist position in explaining social change in developing countries[18]. As such, it claimed that modernization theories represented nothing more than a cold war "ideology disguised as science" (Dos Santos 1971: 236) and was used in order to justify the intervention of the United States in Third World affairs.

Understood by many as a continuation of and/or counterpart of earlier theories of "imperialism" (Giddens 1989, Portes 1976) as proposed by Lenin and J.A. Hobson, dependency theory addressed the issue of imperialism from a standpoint usually ignored by orthodox Marxism: that of the subordinate nations or of "the periphery" (Prebisch 1950). Thus, dependency theorists characterized modern capitalism as a center-periphery, (i.e. asymmetrical) relationship between the developed, industrialized West and the underdeveloped, agricultural Third World. Understanding this relationship was, in their view, not an issue of mapping the transition from "traditional" to "modern" – a distinction which the dependency school rejected. Rather, the modern world's center-periphery structure mirrored an underlying international division of labor, established as early as 1492 with the advent of colonialism, and still maintained today through mechanisms of economic domination. The economies of the colonized countries were reorganized according to the needs of the colonial society, and ended up producing one or two items that served the latter's interests. Hence, in sharp contrast with modernization theory, the dependency school did not view underdevelopment as a "stage" previous to development, but rather as a "discrete historical process through which economies that have already achieved a high level of development have not necessarily passed" (Furtado 1964:129). It can then be said that, just as center (or core) and periphery are relational notions, existing only simultaneously, so development and underdevelopment are only different aspects of the same

16 Dealing with dependency theory under the heading "World-System Perspective" may seem inappropriate for a number of reasons, of which the author of these lines is fully aware. However, given the focus of this thesis on evolutionary theories, and my intention of arguing that world-systems analysis is such a one, I will restrict myself to underlining the importance of those elements of dependency theory that went into the making of world-system analysis. Any attempt at doing justice to dependency theory beyond this limited scope has to be abandoned for reasons of space.

17 Implemented by the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) – or the so-called Prebisch-Cepal School, after its leading figure, Raúl Prebisch.

18 Not all dependency writers were neo-Marxists, however. There were non-Marxist versions of dependency theory, as well as important differences among the Marxists themselves (cf. Love 1996: 200).

phenomenon, not different stages in a continuum. Moreover, underdevelopment is not the natural condition the modernization school liked to presuppose, but an artifact created by the long history of colonial domination in Third World countries (So 1990: 97) – the "development of underdevelopment", as Andre Gunder Frank put it (Frank 1966), in what would later become a much celebrated phrase. Accordingly, studying self-contained societies, as modernization theories did, could not lead to a valid explanation of social change, because all exogenous factors of change – such as the momentous experience of colonialism – were left out of the analysis. Also, since the development of the U.S. and Western Europe had been based on the underdevelopment of the Third World, foreign policies from these countries to Latin America could only result in the latter's falling further and further behind.

Dependency theorists saw the only concrete solution to the termination of dependency situations in Third World countries in severing the ties with the core and choosing a socialist path of autonomous development, on the model of China and Cuba, which had accomplished a socialist revolution without first experiencing a bourgeois one. This was in keeping with their view that the Latin American national bourgeoisie was incapable of liberating the forces of production because it had emerged as a creation and a tool of imperialism. Thus its complicity with the bourgeoisie in the core actually contributed to the upholding of underdevelopment rather than in any way containing it.

Thanks to Andre Gunder Frank and the American journal *Monthly Review*, these views spread fairly quickly to the United States, where discontent with modernization theory generally and American imperialism more particularly was growing as a result of racial unrest and the U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. By the time dependency theory became widely known in the U.S., many of the younger American sociologists no longer viewed capitalism as a source of progress, but as the main agent of poverty in most of the world (cf. Chirot 1981).

Critical voices started making themselves heard almost at the same time. While the dependency approach was seen as a welcome departure from "uniform" evolutionary and developmentalist perspectives, and as helpful in understanding the historical origins of underdevelopment, critics felt it did too little in terms of providing an understanding of alternatives to this situation (Portes 1976: 79). Other policy implications, as well as methodological and conceptual issues were also addressed (So 1990: 131ff., Sanderson 1995: 216f., Love 1996: 198f.).

After facing criticism of rigidity and pessimism with respect to the possi-

bilities of development in dependent contexts, of overgeneralization about underdeveloped societies, of regarding dependency as a general cause of poverty in the periphery and as the necessary (and sufficient) condition for development in the core, some dependency theorists brought forth historically more specific accounts of dependency situations which also allowed for a wider range of responses and solutions. To that end, internal factors of change were taken into consideration, instead of the dominance factor being the only determinant, as in previous theories. Critics have labeled the original theory "classical", "strong" or "hard" and the subsequent version "new", "weak" or "soft" dependency theory (So 1990, Sanderson 1995). The former, associated chiefly with Andre Gunder Frank (1966, 1967, 1969), who advocated the theory in the (Anglophone) core countries, and with Samir Amin (1976), who championed it in Francophone areas and especially Africa, considered dependency an insurmountable obstacle to economic development and held that peripheral countries could *never* benefit from the influence of core capitalism. The latter version, worked out mainly by Fernando Henrique Cardoso (Cardoso 1973, Cardoso/Faletto 1979), combined the notions of dependency and development, thus yielding "associated-dependent development", which is conceived as occurring function of the rise of multinational corporations. Since some amount of development is possible with the help of the industrial capital invested by these corporations in the peripheral country, this could constitute a viable alternative for the states that do not want to take the chance of a socialist revolution.

There obviously is a considerable amount of similarity between the dependency theorists' stand on the economic development of "peripheral countries" and that of neoevolutionism on the possibilities of industrialization for backward societies. Apart from considering that "stages" can be skipped[19] or at least ignored, both theoretical models viewed the modernization stance as fallacious, ideological and unrealistic. Also, they both focused on the dominance factor in their search for an alternative explanation of change in unindustrialized societies and mistrusted the bourgeoisie of those countries on the grounds that its loyalties lay with foreign powers, the interests of which it represented.

Although these similarities extend far beyond what might be common ground for dissenting theories, still the two approaches widely differ in scope.

19 Phrasing the issue in terms of "skipping stages" is not to ignore the fact that the dependency school practically rejects the concept of a sequence of stages, at least in its "tradition vs. modernity" variant, and neoevolutionists consider "stages" an appropriate term only for general evolution. However, since the classical view of social evolution as well as modernization theory conceived of "fixed" stages, i.e., ones that could not be skipped, a poignant way of summarizing opposing positions is to say that, for their proponents, they could.

For the same reason that neoevolutionism could not be symmetrically opposed to modernization theory, it cannot parallel dependency theory, in that the latter is no evolutionary model designed to explain social change in general. Its research focus is restricted to the peripheral countries that emerged out of the decolonization processes following independence movements and World War II. Through exclusive focus on the periphery, dependency theory thus stops short of analyzing some of the consequences equally arising from dependency situations, like their impact on the core states, their importance for socialist ones, or the more general implications they have for capitalism. All these issues were to be addressed in a later, more generous model, of which it will be argued that it *is* evolutionary.

3.2 World-Systems Analysis

Dissidence proved a fruitful locus of enunciation for theories of social change. Not only was the dependency school increasingly considered the "victor" in the debate with modernization theorists, but commitment to its world-view spawned concern for the issues it was too limited to solve itself.
Immanuel Wallerstein's modern world system, the "best-known historical model of world capitalism developing the implications of dependency" (Love 1996: 200), has been said to have originated out of "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" (Goldfrank 1988: 216).

Wallerstein defined his own condition of dissidence mainly along methodological lines, themselves of course subject to, and arising from, ideological constraints: "In the period since 1945, there have been a growing number of scholars who became unhappy with Establishment social science (including of course history) on the grounds that its methodological imperatives (whether they were nomothetists or idiographers) had pushed them de facto into the study of the infinitely small in time and space, and that thereby the problems, the realities of large-scale, long-term social change had become eliminated from the purview of scholarship" (Wallerstein 2000 [1994]: 151).

He listed dependency theory and world-systems analysis in the same line with civilizational analysis, world history, historical sociology and international political economy: "Let me call this the family of dissidents, in the sense that they all were dissenting from the views that had dominated, still largely dominate, the universities"(*idem*).

Wallerstein's own methodological position was therefore a rejection of the unnecessary opposition of the nomothetic and the idiographic[20]. He insisted, instead, that "to be historically specific is not to fail to be analytically universal. On the contrary, the only road to nomothetic propositions is through the historically concrete" (Wallerstein 2000 [1974]: 76). Al-though he does not state it in evolutionary terms, he addressed the same issue which prompted Sahlins and Service to distinguish between general and specific evolution: the belief that the split between universalizers and particularizers rested on a false dichotomy. "The first step we must make if we wish to understand our world is radically to reject any and all distinction between history and social science, and to recognize that we are part of a single discipline of study: the study of human societies as they have historically evolved" (Wallerstein 2000 [1976]: 108). Contrary to Leslie White, then, and in accordance with the neoevolutionism of White's students, Wallerstein ruled that one does not have to choose between evolutionary and historical accounts – that there *is* a middle ground.

3.2.1 Most Common, Most Ambiguous, Most Deceptive: the Word "Society"[21]

Joining both neoevolutionism and the dependency school in their rejection of modernization theory, Wallerstein considered the developmentalist view of social change as nothing more than a culmination of the only argument un-

20 "World-systems analysis offers the heuristic value of the *via media* between trans-historical generalizations and particularistic narrations. It argues that, as our format tends toward either extreme, it tends toward an exposition of minimal interest and minimal utility […] This implies that the task is singular. There is neither historian nor social scientist, but only a historical social scientist who analyses the general laws of particular systems and the particular sequences through which these systems have gone" (Wallerstein 2000 [1987]: 136).

21 Wallerstein began a talk he gave at the German Sociological Congress in 1984 by observing that the congress's title, "Sociology and Social Development", included "two of the most common, most ambiguous, and most deceptive words in the sociological lexicon – society (*Gesellschaft*) and development (*Entwicklung*)" (Wallerstein 2000 [1986]: 112).

derlying both universalistic and particularistic claims to truth – the assumption that the individual society should be the basic unit of analysis: "Everyone seemed to agree that the world was composed of multiple 'societies'. They disagreed about whether it was the case that all societies pursued *similar* paths down the road of history (albeit at differing rates) or that each society went its own historic way. They disagreed whether society in question took the form of a 'state' or a 'nation' or a 'people', but in any case it was some politico-cultural unit" (Wallerstein 1979a: 153).

But this is an ahistorical view, Wallerstein argued, since "the concept of society […] reifies and therefore crystallises social phenomena whose real significance lies not in their solidity but precisely in their fluidity and malleability" (Wallerstein 2000 [1986]: 119). Rather than a tangible reality to be postulated, "society" is primarily a rhetorical construct. This implies, however, that all theories of social change having individual societies as their basic unit of analysis end up making "comparative measurements of noncomparable and nonautonomous entities" (Wallerstein 2000 [1976]: 107).

Wallerstein's 1976 denunciatory polemic with the modernizationist Alex Inkeless at the meetings of the American Sociological Association is particularly reminiscent of Elman Service's 1960 stance on the same issue[22]. Again, a somewhat long passage needs to be cited for reasons both of relevance to the issue and of comparison between the two authors:

"Until 1945 it still seemed reasonable to assume that Europe was the center of the world. Even anti-imperialist movements outside of Europe and against Europe often tended to assume it. But the world moved inexorably on. And everyone's geographical horizons expanded. To cope with this changing world, Western scholars invented development, invented the Third World, invented modernization […] We do not live in a modernizing world but in a capitalist world. What makes this world tick is not the need for achievement but the need for profit. The problem for oppressed strata is not how to communicate within this world but how to overthrow it. *Neither Great Britain nor the United States nor the Soviet Union is a model for anyone's future. They are state-structures of the present, partial (not total) institutions operating within a singular world-system, which however is and always has been an evolving one*" (Wallerstein 1976: 131) [23].

What both Service and Wallerstein addressed was the ahistorical character of approaches like those of the modernization school. Talking of the models for the future of the Third World, and thus equating modernization with "Westernization", meant disregarding the fact that "there is no society on the face of the earth that has not been drastically altered, directly and indirectly, by the

22 see section 2.4.
23 Emphasis added

influence of Euro-American industrial capitalism" (Service 1971: 53) – which equalled projecting "current sovereign states [.] hypothetically backward in time" (Wallerstein 2000 [1987]: 138) [24].

However, if we do not live in a modernizing, but rather in a capitalist world, then, according to Wallerstein, it is not the current sovereign states we should be concerned about. "Capitalism was from the beginning an affair of the world-economy and not of the nation-states. It is a misreading of the situation to claim that it is only in the twentieth century that capitalism has become 'worldwide', although this claim is frequently made in various writings, particularly by Marxists" (Wallerstein 2000 [1974]: 87).

Obviously, then, the unit of analysis should not be such a value-laden, ahistorical rhetorical construct. World-systems analysis instead suggested replacing the term "society" with "historical system", which is both devoid of any connotations that would link it to states or any politico-cultural units, as well as indicative of the unity of historical social science, by being both systemic and historical. "We take the defining characteristic of a social system to be the existence within it of a division of labor, such that the various sectors or areas are dependent upon economic exchange with others for the smooth and continuous provisioning of the needs of the area. Such economic exchange can clearly exist without a common political structure and even more obviously without sharing the same culture" (Wallerstein 2000 [1974]: 74f.).

Entities comprising a complete division of labor and a single cultural framework, which Wallerstein labeled "mini-systems", have only been characteristic of very simple agricultural or hunting and gathering societies, and they no longer exist. It follows that "the only kind of social system is a world-system, which we define quite simply as a unit with a single division of labor and multiple cultural systems" (Wallerstein 2000 [1974]: 75).

If the cultural groupings within one division of labor are politically unified, then we are dealing with a *world-empire* – a vast political structure encompassing a wide variety of cultural patterns. This particular system's "basic logic" is "the extraction of tribute from otherwise locally self-administered direct producers (mostly rural) that is passed upward to the centre and redistributed to a thin but crucial network of officials" (Wallerstein 2000 [1987]: 139). World-empires such as the great civilizations of pre-modern times –

24 The logic of such an ahistorical account of social change has been summarized by Wallerstein as follows: "We live in states. There is a society underlying each state. […] since change is normal, it is states that normally change or develop. They change their mode of production; they urbanize; they have social problems; they prosper or decline. They have the boundaries, inside of which factors are 'internal' and outside of which they are 'external'. They are 'logically' independent entities such that, for statistical purposes, they can be 'compared'" (Wallerstein 2000 [1987]: 137f.).

China, Egypt, Byzantium, or Rome – usually emerged out of the disintegration or conquest of so-called world-economies. By contrast, the nineteenth-century empires such as Great Britain or France were no world-empires by Wallerstein's classification, but nation-states with colonial appendages, themselves operating within the framework of a world-economy (cf. Wallerstein 2000 [1974]: 75).

Consequently, a *world-economy* is a system whose cultural groupings are not politically unified. The lack of a political structure handling the redistribution of surplus means that the accumulated surplus can only be redistributed unequally through the market, mainly in favor of those able to achieve a temporary monopoly. Hence, a world-economy's mode of produc-tion is capitalist.

Multiple historical systems of all three varieties (mini-systems, world-empires, and world-economies) coexisted at any one time between 8000 BC and 1500 AD. The "strong" form of that era was the world-empire, which enjoyed the advantage of one single political unit capable to control antisystemic tendencies. "Whenever one expanded it destroyed and/or absorbed both mini-systems and world-economies and whenever one contracted it opened up space for the re-creation of mini-systems and world-economies. Most of what we call 'history' of this period is the history of such world-empires" (Wallerstein 2000 [1987]: 140). World-economies were the "weak" form, seldom lasting more than a century, and thus having little opportunity to become an ongoing, capital expanding system (cf. Wallerstein 1979a: 160).

However, around 1500, the "modern world-system" was born out of the consolidation of a world economy, allowing for the first time the full development and economic predominance of market trade. "This was the system called capitalism. Capitalism and a world-economy (that is, a single division of labor but multiple polities and cultures) are obverse sides of the same coin. One does not cause the other. We are merely defining the same indivisible phenomenon by different characteristics" (Wallerstein 2000 [1974]: 75f.).

The emerging world-economy expanded by its inner logic – unequal distribution of profit in favour of monopolists in the market networks – and in time came to cover the entire globe, eliminating all other minisystems and world-empires in the process. "Hence by the late nineteenth century, for the first time ever, there existed only one historical system on the globe. We are still in that situation today" (Wallerstein 2000 [1987]: 140).

3.2.2 "If a Stage Can Be Skipped, It Isn't a Stage"

Theories of social change, Immanuel Wallerstein has argued, have to deal with "long historical time", or with the "long term" (*"la longue durée"*), a concept he had borrowed from Fernand Braudel and the French *Annales* school[25]. But being able to observe structural changes means artificially dividing this long term into segments or "stages", in order to account for continuity and transformation from one to the other. Because this division occurs *a posteriori*, it becomes what Wallerstein called an instance of "predicting the past" (cf. Wallerstein 2000 [1974]: 73) – i.e., reifying parts of the totality into ideal types subsequently labeled "stages", and then comparing the reified structures.

However, it is not that, as with the term "society", we should discard the concept of stages altogether, but that we must beware of drawing conclusions from the realities it implies. While "all our concepts are constructs" created in an attempt to organize knowledge, a construct is not an objective fact, unmediated by collective representations and social decisions: "A construct is an interpretative argument, to which may be counterposed alternative, even opposite, interpretative arguments. Its justification is in its defensibility and its heuristic value. Its utility lies in its implications" (Wallerstein 2000 [1984]: 209).

Yet, while "society" is misleading and has the political implications obvious in developmentalist ideologies of the modernization kind, the concept of stages is heuristically indispensable for an understanding of social transformations. Still, an ahistorical treatment of it leads to implications that have been, more than once, taken as the basis for value judgments, as in the "traditional"-"modern" distinction. The resulting consequences are symptomatic: "Nothing illustrates the distortions of ahistorical models of social change better than the dilemmas to which the concept of stages gives rise" (Wallerstein 2000 [1974]: 73).

It is misleading, Wallerstein argued, to reify different economic structures into universal stages of development – but it is "the fundamental error of ahistorical social science (including ahistorical versions of Marxism)" (idem). It leads to false concepts such as "dual economy" or "state dominated by feudal elements" and creates, moreover, a "non-problem: can stages be skipped? This question is only meaningful if we have stages that 'co-exist

25 Fernand Braudel had conceptualized idiographic and nomothetic time as *historie événementielle* and *the longue durée*, respectively. While being critical of both, he proposed two intermediate notions, *histoire conjuncturelle* and *histoire structurelle*. The latter would correspond to Wallerstein's concept (Grosfoguel 1997, Wallerstein 1991).

within a single empirical framework. If within a capitalist world-economy, we define one state as feudal, a second as capitalist, and a third as socialist, then and only then can we pose the question: can a country 'skip' from the feudal stage to the socialist stage of national development without 'passing through capitalism'?" (Wallerstein 2000 [1974]: 74).

Asking this question is only possible from a perspective that takes individual societies, that is, nation-states, as the unit of analysis. From a world-systems perspective, however, the proper unit of analysis being the world-system, the "problem of stage-skipping is nonsense. If a stage can be skipped, it isn't a stage […] If we are to talk of stages, then – and we should talk of stages – it must be stages of social systems, that is, of totalities […] and in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries there has been only one world-system in existence, the capitalist world-economy" (idem).

3.2.3 … But Then What About Feudalism?

Although sticking to the nation-state as a unit of analysis, Marshall Sahlins had also identified the unilineal arrangement of stages as a long-standing misconception, the solution to which he thought to have found in the differentiation between specific and general evolution, capable of accounting for both divergence and progress. In a manner similar to Wallerstein's, he maintained that "it is obvious nonsense to consider feudalism, Middle Ages, and natural economy as the *general stage* of evolution antecedent to high (modern) civilization" (Sahlins 1960: 31). For Sahlins, as shown earlier, feudalism is only a form "of this order of civilization", that historically gave rise to a new level of achievement. "The stage of general evolution achieved prior to the modern nation is best represented by such classical civilizations as the Roman, or by such oriental states as China, Sumer, and the Inca Empire" (Sahlins 1960: 32).

By arguing that feudalism could be considered a stage only in a periodization applying to Western culture (cf. Sahlins 1960: 31), and by relegating the "classical civilizations" to a different "order", Sahlins came very close to distinguishing between "world-empires" on the one hand, and a feudal mode of production that would eventually lead to a capitalist world-economy, on the other.

It is what Sahlins ironically termed the "generous granting of Middle Ages" (cf. Sahlins 1960: 31) to every modern civilization from the Near East to China and Africa - i.e., the "lineal, orthogenetic" view of social evolution

(Service 1971: 52) – that has caused the debate on the possibilities for less-developed countries about to industrialize to "skip" the feudalist "stage"[26]. It is particularly in such a context that, obviously, feudalism cannot fit neatly in a sequence of stages for a world-systems analyst, either: "On the 'feudal-ism' debate, we take as a starting-point Frank's concept of 'the development of underdevelopment', that is, the view that the economic structures of contemporary underdeveloped countries is not the form which a 'traditional' society takes upon contact with 'developed' societies, not an earlier stage in the 'transition' to industrialization. It is, rather, the result of being involved in this world-economy as a peripheral, raw material producing area, […] the necessary product of four centuries of capitalism itself" (Wallerstein 2000 [1974]: 79).

According to Wallerstein, the fallacy inherent to the unilinear view of evolution, and which, surprisingly, underlay both Smithian and Marxist conceptions of social transformations, was to consider the defining feature of capitalism to be the predominance of wage labor in a given society. Both Adam Smith and Karl Marx had viewed capitalism as essentially competitive and involving free producers, free labor, and free commodities; so both liberals and Marxists tended to judge a state as less capitalist, the more its work situation departed from this model.

But wage labor, Wallerstein argued, does not represent the statistical norm in the modern world, so we cannot classify states on a degree-of-capitalism scale by the amount of it they display. On the contrary, the defining feature of capitalism as a *system* – analyzed not in terms of nation-states, but in terms of a world-economy of which states are functional parts – is a mixture of wage and non-wage labor, of areas of commodified and non-commodified goods, and areas of alienable and non-alienable forms of property and capital. "When a deduced 'norm' turns out not to be the statistical norm, that is, when the situation abounds with exceptions (anomalies, residues), then we ought to wonder whether the definition of the norm serves any useful function. World-system analysis argues that the capitalist world-economy is a particular historical system. Therefore if we want to ascertain the norms, that is, the mode of functioning of this concrete system, the optimal way is to look at the historical evolution of the system […] The anomalies now become not exceptions to be explained away but patterns to be analysed" (Wallerstein 2000 [1987]: 143).

On account of his relativization of the importance of free labor, free own-

26 it is this view that has been labeled "feudalmania" by world-systems critics of developmentalist ideologies (Grosfoguel 1997: 478)

ership, and commodification[27], Wallerstein's notion of capitalism has been felt by many as "in some respects very 'un-Marxist'" (see Sanderson 1995: 140). Facing criticism both from the right and from the left side – too Marxist for some, not Marxist enough for others (cf. Goldfrank 1988), Wallerstein's ambition has actually been to revise Marxism by reinterpreting it "without the blinders imposed by taking the nation-state as the basic unit of analysis" (Goldfrank 1988: 221).

Explaining the transition from feudalism to capitalism, as well as the uneven development of capitalism in different countries has been, in Wallerstein's view, one of the major problems Marxism could not solve, and which a world-systems approach could clarify. By equating industrialism with capitalism, Marxists failed to recognize that what essentially characterizes capitalism is that it is "production for profit in a market" (Wallerstein 2000 [1974]: 84), but not necessarily *industrial* production. Wallerstein therefore refused to see the Industrial Revolution as a significant event in the development of capitalism, because the main characteristics of this mode of production had been present in Europe for more than two centuries at the time when England experienced its Industrial Revolution:

> "What was happening in Europe from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries is that over a large geographical area going from Poland in the northeast westwards and southwards throughout Europe and including large parts of the Western Hemisphere as well, there grew up a world-economy with a single division of labor within which there was a world market, for which men produced largely agricultural products for sale and profit. I would think the simplest thing to do would be to call this 'agricultural capitalism'" (Wallerstein 2000 [1974]: 85).

Not only does this focus on production render Marx's own distinction between merchant (involving only exchange of commodities) and industrial capital (focussing on production) unnecessary, but it also resolves the issue of seeing the predominance of wage labor as essential to capitalism: "[…] in the era of agricultural capitalism, wage-labor is only one of the modes in which labor is recruited and recompensed in the labor market. Slavery, coerced cash-crop production (my name for the so-called second feudalism), sharecropping, and tenancy are all alternative modes" (idem).

Consequently, the "second serfdom", slavery, and all other forms of non-wage labor "are not to be regarded as anomalies in a capitalist system" (idem), because they all involve a relationship between employer and laborer in which labor-power can be bought and sold. This is quite unlike the situa-

27 which culminate in the arguments that forms of forced labor can and have occurred within a capitalist world-economy, and that socialism itself is a form of capitalism (see below).

tion between serf and lord during the Middle Ages, where neither the economy was oriented toward a world-market, nor was labor-power a commodity.

The crux of the matter is that, from this particular perspective, we cannot speak of the economic structure of present-day Third World countries as being dominated by "feudal elements", because there was no feudalism after the sixteenth century (although there was a "second serfdom", as Engels had noted). Hence, there is no "stage" to be "skipped" in an alleged transition to capitalism; or, in Wallerstein's words: "There are today no socialist systems in the world-economy any more than there are feudal systems because there is only *one* world-system. It is a world-economy and it is by definition capitalist in form" (2000 [1974a]: 102).

These ideas are in many respects very much like Andre Gunder Frank's, whom Wallerstein acknowledged as the starting point of his views on feudalism. Frank had also rejected the idea that there exist different capitalist systems, the boundaries of which correspond to specific nation-states, and had instead advanced the notion of a single capitalist world system with international, national, and local levels (Frank 1969: 99f.). Also, in his view, the capitalist system's main feature was the appropriation/expropriation of surplus value by means of a vast array of production processes, of which wage labor was just one (Frank 1967: 256ff.). Frank's approach can thus be said to be a historical-structural one, taking the whole of the capitalist world-system (extending back 500 years[28], as for Wallerstein) as a unit of analysis.

Yet Frank's *solution* to the dependency situation was not consistent with the rest of his analysis (cf. Grosfoguel 1997: 517). Like most of the other dependency theorists, he thought autonomous development at the national level *was* possible, provided it was preceded by a revolutionary struggle following the Cuban example. This, at the same time, meant "exit from the system" (Love 1996: 194), because it conceived of breaking with the world-system at the nation-state level. Consequently, it mirrored "one of the major weaknesses of the *dependentista* approach, namely, their solution for eliminating dependency was still caught in the categories of developmentalist ideology" (Grosfoguel 1997: 532) – much like those of the modernization theorists they sought to criticize[29].

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28 I am referring only to Frank's views as a dependency theorist. In his more recent work, that will not be addressed here, he has embraced a world-system perspective of much larger scale, contending that the current world-system originated in Mesopotamia and is thus over 5,000 years old (Frank 1990).

29 While it has been argued that "soft" dependency theory is much like world-systems analysis (see Sanderson 1995), I see the main difference between the two approaches as lying in their evolutionary scope. Although Wallerstein himself has argued that the main difference between ECLA's and dependency theorists's studies is the latter's introduction of "the long view" into the core-periphery conception, thus converting peripherality from a condition at

In contrast, world-systems analysis holds that the transformation of the system can only occur at the global level. Wallerstein contends that "obtaining power within a sovereign state that is constrained by an interstate system based on a functioning division of labor has not meant […] the ability to opt out of the capitalist world-economy. It has meant instead the limited reallocation of world surplus, in short, the power to bring about reforms, without necessarily undermining the system as such" (1991: 166). A real transition to socialism would therefore mean a transformation of the whole system into a "socialist world-government" (Wallerstein 2000 [1974]: 102), but *individual* transitions to socialism or to any other new form of organization are not possible. An overview of the interpretation world-systems analysis provides of the evolution of capitalism during the past five hundred years is illustrative of this particular conception of systemic change.

3.2.4 The Historical Evolution of the System

A description of the present-day world as a capitalist one containing different forms of labor must of necessity contradict the point of view of traditional social science – yet, for Wallerstein, this seeming anomaly could be easily explained in terms of *patterns* of the modern world-system as a single market.

While the capitalist world-economy is, as the name indicates, a global one, the only *political* entities possessing the power to affect the market are the nation-states. Whenever local capitalist classes pursuing their economic interests within this single world market found that it no longer maximized their profit, they tried to influence it by the use of non-market devices – that is, by asking the state to impose new restrictions on the global market. At the beginning of the capitalist world-economy, the interests of several different local groups converged in northwest Europe and diverged sharply in other parts of the continent. This led to strong state machineries in the former region, and very weak in the latter, and thus resulted in the operation of "unequal exchange" – enforced by strong core states on weak peripheral ones (cf. Wallerstein 2000 [1974]: 86).

The notion of "unequal exchange" (Emmanuel 1972) had been a defining element in the Marxist version of dependency theory (cf. Love 1999: 200), in

a particular *time* to a *permanent* feature of the capitalist world-economy (Hopkins/Wallerstein 1982: 46), dependency theory remains confined to a particular *location* - namely, the periphery. It is my contention that it is precisely world-systems analysis' applicability to various temporal as well as various spatial/structural situations that, in contrast to any type of dependency theory, confers the former evolutionary scope.

which it had been taken to mean that the amount of labor needed in the periphery to pay for goods exchanged with the core greatly extended the amount of core labor involved in producing those goods. World-systems analysis, in turn, viewed unequal exchange as a set of mechanisms that continually reproduced the basic core-periphery division of labor itself (see Hopkins/Wallerstein 1982: 48), but there is disagreement as to the nature of this set of mechanisms. In addition to the core-periphery hierarchy proposed by the dependency school, Wallerstein introduced the notion of *the semiperiphery*, to which are assigned both an economic and a political role, of which the political one of mediating between the exploiters and the exploited is more important: "[…] a world economy as an economy would function every bit as well without a semi-periphery. But it would be far less *politically* stable, for it would mean a polarized world-system. The existence of the third category means precisely that the upper stratum is not faced with the *unified* opposition of all the others because the *middle* stratum is both exploited and exploiter" (Wallerstein 2000 [1974]: 91).

There are two modifications of Marxist theory in this approach. First, the class division between capitalists and workers did not occur all over the world, but instead there emerged an international division of labor involving appropriation of surplus-value of the whole world-economy by core areas. Second, this was not only true of industrial capitalism, but for agricultural capitalism as well.

"Accidents" in the history, geography, and ecology of the particular countries are the ones initially deciding the part these countries will play in the structural hierarchy described above. Once given, though, the differences between the three positions in the hierarchy are subsequently accentuated and institutionalized by the workings of the world-market.

In the sixteenth century, at the time of the emergence of the European world-economy, it was Northwest Europe who enjoyed all these privileges of chance. As a consequence, it became *the core* of the system, the location of mass-market industries and international and local commerce in the hands of an indigenous bourgeoisie, and specialized in agricultural production of higher skill levels on medium-sized, yeoman-owned land. Tenancy and wage-labor turned out to be the adequate modes of labor control for these types of economic activity. Politically, the standing armies of mercenaries and corrupt administrations were the essential elements in the development of a patrimonial state bureaucracy working primarily for an absolute monarch. This resulted in relatively strong state systems, later to become a function of the weakness of state-machineries in the peripheral areas (cf. Wallerstein 1979b, 2000 [1974a]).

Eastern Europe (with the exception of Russia) and Spanish America became the system's *periphery*, the locus of monocultural (grains, bullion, wood, cotton, sugar) economies producing on large estates under slavery and coerced cash-crop labor. In contrast to the core countries, the interests of the capitalist landowners in the periphery diverged sharply from those of the local commercial bourgeoisie, which they sought to eliminate and subsequently replace by a politically uninvolved class of outside merchants. The absence of the strong state was thus a critical feature of the periphery, making it all the more vulnerable for outside intervention.

It was in this context that Eastern Europe's famous "second serfdom" emerged. Given that each mode of labor control is best suited for particular types of production, and that modes of labor control greatly affect the strength of the state apparatus and the possibilities for an indigenous bourgeoisie to thrive (cf. Wallerstein 1974b: 87), they necessarily constitute a new form of social organization: "The world-economy has one form or the other. Once it is capitalist, relationships that bear certain formal resemblances to feudal relationships are necessarily redefined in terms of the governing principles of a capitalist system. This was true both of the *encomienda* in Hispanic America and of the so-called 'second feudalism' in Eastern Europe" (Wallerstein 1974b: 92)[30].

The Christian Mediterranean area emerged as the new world-system's *semiperiphery*, specializing in high-cost, quality industrial production and international banking. It engaged in little export and used sharecropping as a mode of labor control in agricultural production. Politically, the semi-periphery was in the middle, with some states, such as Spain and the northern Italian city-states experiencing the decline of state authority, and some others (such as southern France) resisting the expansion of central authority (cf. Wallerstein 1979b: 39).

In accordance with his own contention that the only way of understanding the presumed anomalies in the system was to look at its historical evolution, Wallerstein advanced a four-stage model of evolution of the capitalist world-economy:

Stage one, lasting from 1450 to 1640 and thus spanning the "long sixteenth century" (like "the long term", also a concept borrowed from Fernand Braudel), witnessed the "crisis of feudalism"[31] that had become apparent in

30 Emphasis in the original

31 Wallerstein has provided two different sets of factors to account for the "crisis of feudalism" (1974, 1992), so a detailed discussion of his argument will not be undertaken here. However, as Sanderson (1995: 158, 180n5) has pointed out, the significant thing about Wallerstein's analysis is the fact that, throughout his work, he sees capitalism as a solution to the "feudal crisis" and as a unique European phenomenon.

the declining real income of the ruling groups. In an attempt to salvage its privileges, the aristocracy resorted to the market as an alternative mode of surplus appropriation and thus converted itself into a class of capitalist producers or the so-called urban bourgeoisie[32]. This process involved the transformation of long-distance trade from a trade in "luxuries" to one in "essentials", thus yielding long commodity chains whose linkage enabled the accumulation of significant amounts of surplus value and its relative concentration in the hands of a few (cf. Wallerstein 2000 [1986]: 121). This amounted to a geographic expansion of the existing division of labor, in its turn secured by the construction of an interstate system, i.e., so-called sovereign states were created and defined in accordance with the boundaries of the expanding capitalist world-economy. Each of these existing or potential states then entered a "race to bureaucratize, to raise a standing army, to homogenize its culture, to diversify its economic activities" (Wallerstein 2000 [1974]: 93). By 1640, the positions of core, periphery and semiperiphery in the capitalist world-economy had been occupied as described above, in accordance with the success in this "race" and with the particular geohistorical conditions deciding for a state's initial eligibility for one of these structural positions. The existing world-empires (the Russian and the Ottoman one) as well as the Indian Ocean proto-world economy, the only other world-systems in existence after the failure of the Habsburgs to establish a world empire, were unable to pose a threat to the newly formed capitalist world-economy.

Stage two meant a system-wide recession from 1650 to 1730, during which mercantilism was used in order to decide which one core state would maintain its privileged status in the face of decline in the available relative surplus. The main competitors were the empires *internal* to the world-economy (not world-empires), in this case England, France, and the Netherlands. After the Netherlands were weakened by attacks from both England and France and finally lost out, France also failed to catch up with England's rapid industrialization. British hegemony became a fact after the defeat of Napoleon's continental blockade. Sweden and the northern colonies of America became semiperipheral states as a result of their specialization in both production (copper and iron for Sweden, shipbuilding for the northern colonies) and trade (the northern colonies). Brandenburg-Prussia's rise from peripheral to semiperipheral status, in turn, was due rather to the strengthen-

32 This view is intended to challenge the traditional interpretation of a bourgeois revolution *against* the aristocracy, which Wallerstein considers an historical myth underlying both Marxism and liberalism: "The genesis of capitalism was not in the triumph of a new group, the urban burghers, over the new feudal nobility. Rather it should be seen as the reconversion of seignior into capitalist producer, an essential continuity of the ruling families" (Wallerstein 1979a: 161).

ing of its state machinery.

With the core countries' growing demand for sugar and tobacco, expanding markets were created for their export. As a result, the "extended Caribbean" (most of the Caribbean islands) as well as the southern mainland colonies of British North America were integrated into the capitalist world-economy as its new periphery, producing under slavery as the economically optimal solution for the bourgeois producers of the region (cf. Wallerstein 1980: 175). This meant the extension of slavery from a form of labor control previously confined to Brazil to a fundamental institution of the capitalist world-economy, not to be abolished until the nineteenth century.

Renewed expansion of the world-system would occur again in the *third stage*, beginning in 1750 as a stage of *industrial* rather than *agricultural* capitalism – function of Britain's hegemonic role in the world-economy. Improvements in military firepower and shipping facilities were made possible by means of industrial and technological advance, thus furthering the process of geographical expansion and the resulting elimination or absorption of other world-systems. At the same time, increased industrial production meant a growing demand for raw materials which could no longer be satisfied by the system's existing boundaries. In the course of this third stage, then, the overwhelming majority of regions still outside these boundaries was incorporated into the modern world-system.

The most important world-system still outside the capitalist world-economy, the Russian world-empire, was incorporated as a semi-periphery with a relatively strong state machinery, a standing army, and an important degree of industrialization. The other remaining world-empire, the Ottoman one, became, together with China, the East Indies, and India, the world-system's periphery. Similarly, West Africa was gradually incorporated during the nineteenth century as part of the periphery, leading to the end of slavery world-wide for reasons of an exclusively economic nature: once Africa became an integral part of the same world-economy's division of labor, it was far more economical for the world-economy as a whole to use Africans as wage workers in Africa, than as slaves in remote areas of the world-system.

It was during this stage as well that the Latin American colonies acquired their independence, which, however, did nothing to change their peripheral status (cf. Wallerstein 1974a: 95). It nevertheless proved highly damaging to Spain and Portugal's roles in the world-economy, and advantageous to Britain as the emerging hegemon.

The advent of industrial capitalism and the annexation of wide peripheral areas primarily or exclusively engaged in agricultural production shifted the focus of both core and semiperipheral countries toward industrial exports.

While Britain as the system's core concentrated on supplying manufactured goods to both semiperipheral and peripheral areas, and gradually discarded agricultural production, the semiperipheral countries used mercantilism as a main means of attaining core status. The ones more successful at "industrializing" (the United States, Germany, France) ended up as Britain's competitors in sales to peripheral areas, which led to the nineteenth-century "scramble for Africa" among European powers, during which the rest of the African continent was incorporated into the world-system as colonial domains (i.e., of course, peripheries).

Stage four, beginning with the Russian Revolution of 1917 and continuing to this day, was mainly one of "consolidation" of the industrial capitalist world-economy (Wallerstein 2000 [1974]: 97). The Russian revolution, although consequential for the whole world-system, was no more than an attempt to stem a decline from semiperipheral to peripheral status that had begun at the turn of the twentieth century. The declining trends were reversed by means of the classic technique of mercantilism – semi-withdrawal from the world economy. As a result, at the end of World War II, Russia was able to regain its position as a strong semiperipheral state – the Soviet Union – on its way to core status.

The outcome of the Second World War had also presented the world with a new hegemon finally replacing Britain: the United States. This, on the one hand, meant that Germany had once and for all been ousted from the competition and that the U.S. could enjoy unchallenged political and financial power. On the other hand, it also implied having to face a dire lack of trade partners (all other former powers being fiscally insolvent and recovering after severe war damage to their economies) as well as the danger of losing the former ones to the now expanding Communist bloc. Thus cut off from trade with the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China, the United States tried to secure influence in Western Europe, Latin America and the remaining colonies in Southern Asia, the Middle East and Africa.

Financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank and U.S. aid programmes like the Marshall Plan were essential in ensuring the integration of the desired zones into the orbit of the West and their leading away from their alignment with the USSR. More particularly, the reconstruction of Japan and Western Germany as the "regional workshops" of Asia and Europe and their reintegration with their peripheral zones were "the prerequisites for multilateral economic integration and intra-capitalist cooperation under US leadership" (Reifer /Sudler 1996: 16).

The decline in U.S. hegemony already setting in around 1970 was precisely the result of its *successful* rebuilding of trade networks. Germany, Ja-

pan, and France gained core status fairly quickly, and became leading economic powers alongside the United States. The freedom of action of capitalist enterprises also increased as a result of the decline in U.S. state hegemony, favoring the rise of transnational corporations – today's major world economic actor (Sanderson 1995: 195).

Some Asian countries such as South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong, as well as most of the Latin American ones have been able to advance from peripheral to semiperipheral positions. African states still make up a large part of today's periphery, experiencing further weakening of both political and economic power.

The emergence of socialist states, on the other hand, was, from a world-systems perspective, the equivalent of the mercantilist strategy of semi-withdrawal that had enabled Russia to make the transition from semiperiphery to core power *within* the capitalist world-economy. Socialism, then, was to be seen as "a political structure for semiperipheral nations adapted to stage four of the capitalist world-system" (Wallerstein 2000 [1974]: 100). It was, indeed, one that allowed the socialist countries to allocate a larger share of the surplus of the world economy, but by this very consequence it contributed to a depolarizing of the world-economy, "recreating the triad of strata that has been a fundamental element in the survival of the world-system" (Wallerstein 2000 [1974]: 101), and as such one that once again served a consolidating function.

3.2.5 *Two* Directions?

In a survey of Western theories of social development, Ilie Bădescu has argued that the revamping of the evolutionary paradigm by means of such theoretical twists as structural backwardness, the "second serfdom" concept, and the disloyal bourgeoisie, which the classical evolutionary theorists failed to address, had led to two directions in social theory: "neoevolutionism and the core/periphery theory" (Bădescu et al.1996: 25).

There are two qualifications to be made to this statement that eventually merge into the same basic argument. First, speaking of "the core/periphery theory" means lumping together dependency theory and world-systems analysis, two approaches that have indeed often enough been viewed as being so closely related as to be virtually the same (Chirot/Hall 1982, Sanderson 1995). There is, however, one important respect in which they are not related:

although a theory of social change, dependency theory is not one of social evolution. Second, the theoretical twists Bădescu mentioned do represent the common ground of approaches often considered unconnected; but as such they are not the only features shared by theories that otherwise *diverge*, because, as will be shown shortly, neoevolutionism and world-systems analysis *converge* along a more significant line than the differences that separate them – they are both evolutionary.

Stephen Sanderson (1990, 1991, 1995, 1997) has argued in elaborate detail that the world-systems approach is a kind of evolutionism. He himself has also developed what he calls a broad "theoretical strategy" (1995: 2) for the study of long-term social evolution that borrows extensively from world-systems analysis. Christopher Chase-Dunn and Thomas D. Hall (1997) have worked out a theory of world system transformations intended for the comparative study of the way the various world-systems developed over the past 12,000 years. As already mentioned[33], Andre Gunder Frank also applied Wallerstein's theoretical model to the last 5000 years of social evolution (Frank 1990, Frank/Gills 1992), which he viewed as making up one single world-system.

On the other hand, world-systems analysts themselves have established partial connections between either Marshall Sahlins's or Elman Service's 1960 contributions to evolutionism, and world-systems analysis. Thus, Chase-Dunn (1988, Chase-Dunn/Hall 1997) discussed the relatedness of Service's law of the evolutionary potential to the concept of semiperiphery, Granovetter (1979) dwelt on the connection between Sahlins' and Service's model and Wallerstein's as criticisms of the modernization stance. Gerhard Lenski (1976) addressed both lines of argument pursued here, in that he stressed the extent to which Sahlins' distinction between general and specific evolution could lead to a more nuanced understanding of the "newer" evolutionism, to which he sees Wallerstein's theory as belonging. In more than one way, the argument is practically already there, but it has not been stated as such yet. It runs as follows:

If we accept the year 1960 and more particularly the work of Marshall Sahlins, Elman R. Service, Thomas Harding and David Kaplan in cultural anthropology as marking the formal setup of neoevolutionary principles in Western social science, then Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems analysis is a kind of neoevolutionism.

33 see section 3.2.3

3.2.5.1. Writing Marx Differently: Wallerstein's Evolutionary Framework

Stephen Sanderson has pointed out that many world-systems analysts see their own work as nonevolutionary, if not downright antievolutionary, especially because of the (false) assumption that evolutionary theories are of necessity endogenous (see Sanderson 1991) – a position strikingly incompatible with world-systems analysis' initially exclusive focus on exogenous factors of change. This, however, fails to do justice to a significant number of evolutionary theories, and it most certainly does not apply to Sahlins' and Service's approach to cultural evolution. The latter, as demonstrated in detail in the analysis of *Evolution and Culture,* actually constitutes the first consistently exogenist analysis of social evolution in Western social science (while previous approaches, including White's, had noted the importance of exogenous factors, none had awarded them the significance they acquired in the work of Sahlins and Service).

More than anything, Wallerstein's rejection of modernization theory, and his approval of some of Robert Nisbet's criticisms of it (see Wallerstein 2000 [1974]: 72) should not be taken as proof of Wallerstein's anti-evolutionism, as they probably have (see Sanderson 1990: 220n4, 1991: 170), especially if one bears in mind that, while Nisbet is a dedicated particularist, Wallerstein has been at pains to advance the possibility of a middle ground between nomothetic and idiographic social science. His agreement with Nisbet, then, is restricted to a rejection of the ahistorical abstract models of social change, which he lumps together under the label "developmentalism" (that, apart from modernization theory, includes, in Wallerstein's view, ahistorical versions of Marxism). Nevertheless, it is not in antievolutionism that he sees an alternative, since, as already shown, he regards historical specificity as "the road to nomothetic propositions" (Wallerstein 2000 [1974]: 76), and thus to evolutionary accounts. He has explicitly differentiated between developmentalism and his own approach in precisely these terms: "What thus distinguishes the developmentalist and the world-system perspective is not liberalism versus Marxism nor evolutionism versus something else (since both are essentially evolutionary)" (Wallerstein 1979c: 54). The differences, in his view, lie much more in the "mode of thought" (mechanical versus dialectical, respectively) and in the "prognosis for action" (while developmentalists think hegemonic states are models to be followed, world-systems analysis holds there are no such models).

At the same time that he was very critical of the concept of "development" (see Wallerstein 2000 [1986]), Wallerstein frequently employed the term "evolution" to refer to changes in the modern world-system. Thus, he

talked of "the evolution of this historical system" (1989: 268), "the historical evolution" of the capitalist world-economy (1975: 321), 1974a: 92), and, last but not least, of the "evolving stages" (1974a: 102) and the fruitfulness of discussing "distinct stages in its evolution as a system" (1974a: 93)[34].

While the concept of stages is a fundamental one for a theory of social evolution, and Wallerstein described the modern world-systems' stages in detail (see above), it is not the only crucial feature. According to Erik Olin Wright, whose definition of evolutionary theories has been considered the most appropriate both in view of the many existing types of evolutionary theories and for the purposes of this thesis – the one indispensable criterion of evolutionist accounts should be the identification of a general directional trend in history. It is precisely this general directional trend, or what Sanderson calls "the evolutionary logic" (Sanderson 1991: 168), that makes Wallerstein a type of evolutionist: "The history Wallerstein is interested in is that of capitalism since the sixteenth century, and for him capitalism most assuredly has an overall directionality to it. It is of course a directionality of the world-system as a single unit rather than individual societies or nation-states. These latter evolve only as parts of the whole" (Sanderson 1991: 171).

Wallerstein's definition of the "evolutionary logic" of the capitalist world-economy, besides being commonsensical, sounds almost too simple to be worthy of the name: "What defines capitalism most fundamentally is the drive for the endless accumulation of capital" (Wallerstein 2000 [1983]: 260). The reason why the whole system, rather than separate states should be seen as driven by this particular logic, is that "the capitalist world-economy has a 'natural history' in a way that no state structure does. It came into existence under specific historical circumstances; it manifests specific long-term secular trends; it will most likely one day have a demise" (Hopkins/Wallerstein 1982: 55). According to Wallerstein, it is the secular trends which may be said to be the system's "development"[35]. He distinguished three of them for the capitalist world-economy: *outer geographic and inner economical expansion*, *increasing commodification of the factors of production* (including the growing commercialization of land as well as the growing proletarianization of labor)

34 all quotations from Wallerstein 2000

35 Wallerstein held that capitalism operates in cyclical rhythms, which account both for the locational shifts within the structure of the world-economy, and provide the basic dynamic necessary for the emergence of secular trends. More particularly, he considered the concept of long-term cycles ("Kondratieff waves") as a fundamental parameter of the functioning of the world-economy. Stephen Sanderson has noted that this strong emphasis on economic cycles does not make Wallerstein's framework any less evolutionary. When the cycles are conceived of as basic to the overall directional trends of the capitalist world-economy, they are not incompatible with an evolutionary perspective. However, "it must be recognized that Wallerstein's evolutionism is [.] of a complex sort" (Sanderson 1991: 172).

and the *world-wide continuum of mechanization of productive processes* (including those of agriculture). Later (Wallerstein 1984) he added the *increasing contractualization of economic relationships* as a fourth directional trend.

It is, however, precisely the secular trends that exacerbate the contradictions inherent to any system, thereby bringing about its demise. Since the capitalist world-economy is a *historical* system, it has a life cycle, meaning that at some point it must cease to function as a consequence of the aggregated results of these (eventually paralizing) contradictions (cf. Wallerstein 2000 [1989, 1994]). Among the many structural sources Wallerstein identified for the current crisis of capitalism are what he called *the economic squeeze* (the capitalist world-economy now covers the entire globe, so there are no more areas to be proletarianized and subsequently used as sources of cheap labor), *the political squeeze* (the interests of any given entrepreneur as a competitor tend to run counter to their interests as a member of class), and *the ideological squeeze* (the costs of sustaining the vastly expanding middle strata have exploded world-wide, but they cannot be cut back without jeopardizing the significant political support the present system has received from these strata). Ecological and demographic strains are additional factors contributing to the eventual transformation of the system into a wholly different one.

”Capitalism has represented historically moral regression and for the vast majority of the world’s population material regression, even while it has ensured for the upper strata of the world (now enlarged from 1 percent to maybe 20 percent of the world’s population) a material standard of living and style of life that far surpasses the possibilities of even the ‘Oriental potentates’ of yore.

In fact […], the world today is faced not with inevitable progress but with a real historical choice. The bourgeoisie of the world, reluctantly bourgeoisiefied, is struggling to survive. Just as the aristocracy of feudal Europe survived their great structural crisis by transforming themselves into bourgeois reigning over a new mode of production, so the bourgeoisie of today are already in the process of trying to survive their structural crisis by transforming themselves into ”x” reigning over a new mode of production.

This is neither impossible nor inevitable. The alternative possibility is the creation in the next 100 years of a socialist world order, one based on a system of production for use, one that will involve the withering away of the states because of the withering away of the interstate system, one which will result in a reasonably egalitarian distribution of resources, time, space, and social roles. Such a system will not be utopia, nor beyond history. And it is quite impossible today to predict its institutional forms. But this alternative would indeed be progress” (Wallerstein 1991a: 167).

Thus, in the end, Wallerstein's analysis turns out to be much less "un-Marxist"[36] than its detractors had tried to present it, and just as evolutionary as Marxism itself. Wallerstein's essential message is that – apart from capitalism representing progress – the major theses of Marxism are still valid today, and, once they are applied to the capitalist world-economy, rather than to nation-states, there have been no events in world history for which Marxism is unable to account: "As long as Marx's ideas are taken to be theses about processes that occur primarily within state boundaries and that involve primarily urban wage-earning industrial workers working for private industrial bourgeois, then these ideas will be easily demonstrated to be false, misleading, and irrelevant – and to lead us down wrong political paths. Once they are taken to be ideas about a historical world-system, whose development itself involves 'underdevelopment', indeed is based on it, they are not only valid, but they are revolutionary as well" (Wallerstein 1991a: 161).

3.2.5.2 Beyond Wallerstein. The Evolutionary Potential of Semiperipheries

In his discussion of the modern world-systems's stages of evolution, Wallerstein had characterized socialism as a political strategy for semiperipheral countries used in order to adapt to stage four of evolution. According to him, it had been much more likely for such a path to be chosen by Russia, China, and Cuba – countries with a plausible chance at altering their position within the world-system thanks to already available core-like elements such as a minimum of skilled personnel and manufacturing, than by Thailand, Liberia, or Paraguay – that is, by a peripheral country (see Wallerstein 2000 [1974]: 100).

In a recent synthesis and evaluation of world-systems research, Chase-Dunn and Hall (1997) generalized from this particular position, contending that the structural role of the semiperiphery has always been an advantageous location for the establishment of new centers of power, and as such, it has "evolutionary significance": "*Semiperipheral areas are likely to generate new institutional forms that transform system structures and modes of accumulation.* These changes often lead to the upward mobility of these same peripheral actors in the core/periphery hierarchy"[37] (Chase-Dunn/Hall 1997: 79). In this context, mention of the fact that Protestantism, too, was a religion of the

36 Stephen Sanderson has noted that Wallerstein's vision of the end of capitalism is in many ways reminiscent of Marx's "evolutionary eschatology" (Sanderson 1991: 171).

37 Emphasis in the original

semiperiphery (the Netherlands), "an ideology that democratized access to the deity and challenged the authority of the old core [Spain]" (Chase-Dunn/Hall 1997: 94), sounds both plausible and intriguing, since it corroborates Weber's thesis of the role played by the Protestant Ethic in the rise of capitalism, albeit by means of a wholly different causal explanation.

However, Chase-Dunn and Hall considered the *challenges* to capitalism – the emergence of socialism – to be the most problematic instances of semiperiphery-based change. Thus, the cases of China and the Soviet Union supported the authors' argument that the very contradictory forces to which development is subject in the semiperiphery, where both core and periphery elements are combined, lead to the emergence of fundamentally new organizational forms.

In support of their contention, they cited "several related approaches", among which Trotsky's "law of uneven and combined development" and Elman Service's "law of the evolutionary potential"[38], and indicated that: "all these approaches are compatible […] with the notion that a semi-peripheral location is a fruitful locus of transformational changes" (Chase-Dunn/Hall 1997: 82). Since they were themselves working with a world-systems framework, and considered "the notion of semiperipheral development […] part of our theoretical explanation of the historical evolution of world-systems" (1997: 98), obviously theirs is a standpoint from which neo-evolutionism and world-systems analysis have more features in common than they have differences.

Regrettably, in their evaluation of the approaches they considered related to world-systems, the authors viewed the neglect of hierarchical structures as a limitation common to *all* theories evaluated: "One problem with all of these approaches is that they are formulated in terms of levels or stages of development, and therefore they largely[39] ignore the hierarchical and structural aspects of relations between societies within a system" (1997: 82). In the case

38 The other two approaches Chase-Dunn and Hall discussed were Alexander Gerschenkron's "advantages of backwardness" and Caroll Quigley's "institutionalization of an instrument of expansion". I will not go into details regarding them, since, as Chase-Dunn and Hall noted, Gerschenkron did not consider mechanisms of stabilization of core regions, thus missing an important link relating it to world-systems analysis. As for Quigley, he included both stabilization of the core and potentiality of less-developed regions, but his theory is later than Wallerstein's and as such uninteresting for the purposes of the present discussion on *continuities* of evolutionary approaches.

39 As early as 1988, Chase-Dunn had published an article on the issue of semiperipheral development, which started with the same discussion of previous related theories. After presenting them, Chase-Dunn's verdict was that they, however, "completely" ignored intersocietal hierarchies (Chase-Dunn 1988: 35). Although his modification to "largely" in the 1997 book might have nothing to do with Service's approach in particular, it constitutes a less uncompromising stance, and should perhaps be considered against this background.

of Elman Service's "law of the evolutionary potential", however, this means overlooking the extent to which his contribution is an integral part of the whole represented by Sahlins's, Harding's and Kaplan's "contributions to their – one could say "collective" – 1960 neoevolutionary theory. Service's law was intended as an extension and completion of Kaplan's law of cultural dominance, which gave hierarchical relationships between different societies pride of place, specifically discussing dominance in colonial societies, and the mechanisms that thereby generate underdevelopment.

Moreover, it is very likely not the stages-of-development problem that would lead one to ignore hierarchical structures, as Chase-Dunn and Hall suggest – since Wallerstein conceives of stages himself, and core/periphery hierarchies are nevertheless central to his conception – but rather the focus on different units of analysis. While it is true that Service's law has been intended to operate on a nation-state level, which he does not view as embedded in some type of hierarchy at all times, his insights on the implications of dominance in this context are all the more meritorious.

Stephen Sanderson's discussion of the interlinking between Service's theory and world-systems analysis, in turn, does more justice to the former's generous scope: "[Service] suggests that a critical ingredient of any evolutionary theory, and one that has been missing in many, is a focus on the complex interrelations between and among societies. This notion actually becomes the basis for his discussion of the evolutionary significance of the present world economic and political *hierarchy of societies* […] These assertions […] converge remarkably with contemporary dependency and world-system theories of Third World underdevelopment"[40] (Sanderson 1990: 135). While this comment was directed at Service's 1971 book on *Cultural Evolutionism*, Sanderson observed that "Service's recognition of the importance of intersocietal relations […] dovetails somewhat with another important dimension of his evolutionism. This is his attempt to formulate a provocative evolutionary principle that he has called the Law of the Evolutionary Potential […] Service's Law is provocative and tantalizing and little has seemingly been done with it by evolutionary theorists. It would seem to converge in important ways with some aspects of Immanuel Wallerstein's world-system theory" (Sanderson 1990: 138).

Notwithstanding their limited appreciation of the extent to which Service took into account hierarchical structures, Chase-Dunn and Hall formulated a concept very much like Service's Principle of the Local Discontinuity of Progress, directly derived from the Law of the Evolutionary Potential, which stated that: "Spatially uneven development means that those regions that have

40 Emphasis added

developed a new level of social complexity and political hierarchy typically are *not* the locations where further increases in complexity and hierarchy occur"[41] (1997: 5).

The similarities do not stop here, yet the important thing to realize is that, whether reinvented or rediscovered, whether openly stated or half forgotten, the novel ideas brought forth by neoevolutionism are today functioning elements of world-systems analysis. Happily, world-systems analysts such as Sanderson, Chase-Dunn and Hall, and (few) others have recognized this continuity, but it is not this recognition which by itself makes world-systems analysis a type of evolutionism. Rather, it is the framework's own focus on development of the world-system, its postulating of secular trends (as well as cyclical rhythms) as *directional* patterns of development, and its explanation of crises as inherent to any system whose life cycle eventually comes to an end.

41 Emphasis in the original