

1973-05-08: [PROJET FOX] As paradigm project.

There is a tendency always to reject the previous paradigm because of its ignorance of the present paradigm, to reduce the past to a state of deliberate rejection of something which it really could have known had it tried—or, had it not been dominated by vested interests, whose personal pride or material status would have had to be abandoned or made tenuous by admitting the force of an alternative to the operative system.

In terms of the hereditary principle operating in pre-modern times, the argument usually goes that a ruling class exerted its power, by means of family control, over a mass of manual laborers, and that only the development of the marketplace as a source of wealth allowed the masses to become a vital part of the whole exploitative process (capitalist view) or that only the bunching of the masses in manual labor, in factories, gave them the social cohesion to be effective in overthrowing the exploiters (socialist view). Neither position is wrong, per se, but neither describes the reality of the pre-affluent, pre-industrial world. What was going on (for whatever reasons we need not ask now) was development of a massive nation-state complex that permitted a higher civilization in terms of standard of living, arts, and control over the forces of nature. The benefits were certainly limited to the small ruling class, but it was done in the name of the larger unit, the nation-state or the commonwealth, and in the long run those benefits have been grossly extended to the masses.

The question that counts is whether the ruling element that built that larger nation-state could have proceeded in any other way than by endowing certain families with the regular task of leadership, or, to put it another way, whether there was any alternative to the family unit as the guarantor of talent to rule. Among many reasons to say that the family was the only workable unit, this negative one is sufficient: no kind of bureaucratic civil service existed (as it does today) that could draw from a very large pool of educated people, all of them raised above the level of mere manual laborers by the condition of birth. That "large pool" comes from the conditions of affluence that appeared in the later 18th century following (varying times and places in the west), due chiefly to technological improvements that brought affluence and the substitution of machines for men as the source of power. When that happened, the hereditary transmission of rulership—political or economic—lost justification. In economic terms it lasts yet, but its *raison d'être* is surely past in terms of its necessary role in the stability of the nation-state.