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## REVIEW ARTICLES

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### *Second Thoughts on Fernand Braudel's Civilization and Capitalism\**

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The book by Fernand Braudel (1902-1985) on the history of capitalism is so famous that one might expect numerous reviews in different languages. Indeed, one can find many two- or three-page reviews in the Book Review Index, but they are mostly for the general public, more commercial than academic. Thirteen such reviews are abstracted on the back covers of the English version of Braudel's book. For professional review, from *Historical Abstracts* CD-ROM (1992) I found only eight relevant references in professional journals.<sup>1</sup> Such an important book deserves more than twenty reviews (given so many historical journals), and each review should emphasize different aspects so that this important book can be better evaluated.

In Section 2 of this essay I present the structure and contents of the entire book so that non-Braudel readers can grasp a simplified picture before entering my arguments. In Section 3, I comment on (1) Braudel's oversimplified theoretical framework, (2) his open notion of capitalism, (3) his excessive length and discursive style. In Section 4, I offer a detailed evaluation of each section of each chapter of each volume, as summarized in Table 1. I conclude this review in Section 5 by arguing that Braudel's history of capitalism is «more heat than light»: he promised much more than he actually offered. In Appendix 1, I summarize the key points of eight other reviews; in Appendix 2, I list ten examples to show why I think 1,000 pages could be sufficient to reach Braudel's goal.

\* Braudel, F., *Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme, 15e-18e siècle*, Paris (1979): Armand Colin. Translated from the French by S. Reynolds: *Civilization & Capitalism: 15-18th Century*, volume I: *The Structure of Everyday Life: the Limits of the Possible* (pp. 623); volume II: *The Wheel of Commerce* (pp. 670); volume III: *The Perspective of the World* (pp. 699). New York: Harper & Row Publishers (1981, 1982, 1984).

<sup>1</sup> They are summarized and compared in Appendix 1. Several recent articles are related to Braudel's book, two examples are Dockes (1990) who traces Braudel's trading space concept in a history of economic thought perspective and Jorland (1987) who focuses on Braudel's discussion of the Industrial Revolution.

## 2 STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS

### 2.1 Structure

This work of 1,992 pages can be seen as a 100m x 50m fresco. One who reads this book cannot help but be impressed by its tremendous scale. Recollecting on its scope, readers can immediately feel the difficulties that the author must have encountered. Few scholars would dare to undertake this enterprise.

The first volume of this trilogy was proposed by Braudel's mentor Lucien Febvre (1878-1956) in 1952 for the collection *Destins du Monde* (World Destinies) that Febvre had just founded. After twenty-five years of reading, writing and revisions, Braudel finally published this trilogy in 1979. He offered a hierarchical view of economic activities as three levels; each volume occupies one level. The first level contains the elementary basic activities such as shop transactions, food markets and artisan production etc. which can be termed daily life or the material life level. These common economic activities are less formally organized and were performed in a circumscribed area: the countryside or town areas. Braudel used the historical evidence of some civilizations (Europe, Asia, Russia, America etc.) to show the forms and the realities of this infra-economic structure across continents during the era before industrialization.

The level treated in the second volume is the *market economy*. When translated into English this term occasionally confused people; here, it refers to real-life transactions, and should not be understood as the *market economy system* (vs. central planning system). Economic activities at this level are dominated by organized agents that channel goods and services in provinces and regions or neighbouring countries.

The third level is the international and intercontinental level, or the world-economy level. This level contains central cities such as Amsterdam in the XVIIIth century or Genoa in the XVIth century which fostered world trade and production. The formation and development of networks in these cities provided a fertile ground for modern capitalism.

Economic activities at these three levels do not compete but co-exist. The first level has existed for thousands of years. The formation of the market economy at the second level began first in Europe about the XVth century. The world-economy was still embryonic as late as the XVIth-XVIIIth centuries. As the stages of economic development varied, the relative importance of these three levels also varied in different countries at different periods. In fact, Braudel tried to accumulate as many documents as possible from different continents to provide a historical picture to show how the economic activities currently named capitalism were slowly changing in a non-linear form between the XVth and XVIIIth centuries.

### 2.2 Contents

In terms of complexity, the subjects contained in volume I are the most

diversified: they include food, housing, clothes, transportation, technology, money, towns etc.. Braudel's treatment of these diverse topics depends largely on second-hand studies, statistics and findings, compared to his first-hand digging into many archives in various countries when he was preparing his master work *The Mediterranean* during the 1930s. The problem is to knit these scattered sources into a logical structure: how can one present 'the structure of everyday life'? Braudel was aware of this difficulty and complained that historians avoided this problem. He insisted that if one seeks to understand the economic activities of the era before the Industrial Revolution, and really to feel its depth and breadth, this painstaking approach is unavoidable.

A key concern in volume I is: in every epoch economic activity has its own 'floor' and 'ceiling', as the subtitle of the French version indicates: "the possible and the impossible". The idea is to investigate the limits of the possible and the impossible of each century. Human achievements can be regarded as pushing outward the frontiers of possibility. This point of view is meaningful. His research shows that during the XVth-XVIIIth centuries, the highest possible frontier was not reached although it was possible. He gave some examples of this failure: railway was popularized only in the mid-XIXth century, long after the first utilization of the railway; if the railway had become popular much earlier, the socio-economic progress of Europe might have been more impressive. In volume I Braudel attempted to delineate the changes of these frontier limits to see how they moved, in what directions and in what speed. His real contribution is to remind us of the importance the often neglected level of 'daily life', which is essential for the reconstruction of new perspectives in socio-economic history.

The aim of volume II is to analyze different forms of transaction: street markets, stalls, shops, fairs, market zones, etc., i.e. from basic exchanges to much more sophisticated capitalistic international trading. In 230 pages of the first two chapters he describes detailed activities of exchange instruments and different market forms. The next two chapters forms the core of the book: the meaning of capitalism (this topic is further discussed in Section 3.2 below), and its manifestations in the process of production and circulation at national and international levels. The final chapter presents Braudel's description of the interaction between social hierarchies and economic activities, the role of the state, and the impact on other cultures during the process of economic exchanges. An instructive finding is the degree of competition during the period of XVth-XVIIIth centuries: at the level of basic exchange in daily life (such as street and town markets), the competition was keen; at the second level (wholesale, long-distance trade, money trading), market domination, speculation and price control prevailed; at the third level (international and intercontinental trade, or world-economy), franchise or state monopoly were dominant (such as the British and Dutch East Indian companies).

The French title of the final trilogy is *Le Temps du monde* which is not easy to translate into English (*The Time of the World*). The title of the English version

*The Perspective of the World* is a good 'translation' of the contents. Braudel was proud of this French title as he claimed in the first paragraph of his preface: "this is certainly a beautiful title, but it promises more than I can offer" (the English version omitted this sentence). The unit of analysis in volume III is 'world-economy', and he wanted to match it with a 'world time'. He used India to illustrate this idea in the preface (III: 18): some parts of India maintained "the same pace as the outside [capitalistic] world, keeping up with the traders and rhythm of the global", but in other parts of India ancient economic activities were continued. Thus India can be divided into several economic time zones; the most advanced parts belong to the world time, and the retarded parts belong to the traditional time zones. With this idea in mind, one can redraw a world map according to 'world trade time'. This proposition is certainly attractive. After proposing this concept in three paragraphs in the preface, he failed to substantiate this concept with historical evidence in this volume; we can find neither 'world time' nor 'temps du monde' in the indexes of the English and French versions. I conjecture that Braudel sought to use the concept of time as 'the eyes of the dragon', as the Chinese artists often said, but the eyes are pale.

### 3 COMMENTS

The comments below are centred on three themes. The first is the theoretical structure of the whole book; the second is Braudel's notion of capitalism; the third is Braudel's discursive writing style and his loss of control of historical data.

#### 3.1 The framework

As summarized in Section 2, Braudel's main framework is his division of economic activities into three levels. Nobody will object to this instructive framework. Taking a warehouse as a metaphor, Braudel constructed a new warehouse with three floors; this is a significant advance compared to other previously constructed designs having one floor. What is more significant is that Braudel was able to fill these immense floors with diversified commodities from different civilizations. This enterprise is spectacular, but one finds that the over-burdened floors are supported by insufficient pillars, and that the connections within the floors are not clearly indicated. It would be much more convincing if he had divided each floor into several sections, in each of which he had a small or middle-sized theory to grasp his materials; then readers would feel that the whole floor is much more solid. In other words, Braudel did not sufficiently theorize his data; even if he did in some cases, the effort was still far from sufficient.

For example, in volume I on the structure of daily life, he provided many historical facts, but he provided so little theory or perspective in proportion to the materials that he presented. One must ask why Braudel, who possessed tremendous historical knowledge, asked disproportionately so few questions: the rich material can be formulated into many attractive hypotheses and propositions. I am willing to believe that Braudel was capable of doing so; it is unfortunate for social scientists that he did not! He defended himself in the introduction of volume I (p. 25): «... I had deliberately set out to write outside the world of theory, of all theories, and had intended to be guided by concrete observation and comparative history alone». I regret that he chose this strategy.

However, I suggest that social scientists and historians can be inspired by Braudel's rich materials to formulate new propositions and hypotheses for different disciplines. Thus, hopefully, each field can benefit from Braudel's study, and in return this process could enlighten our further understanding of the history of capitalism.

### 3.2 The notion of capitalism

Capitalism is a word which has raised blood pressure in intellectual debates since about 1850. In his history of capitalism, Braudel was careful not to define capitalism at all. He mentioned this key word not even once in volume I (see index). He used 'capitalism' and 'capitalist' on such minor occasions (see indexes of volumes II & III) that one might doubt this *chef-d'oeuvre* is misnamed. One cannot even find 'capitalism' in the index of the French version.

In the first section of volume II "Capital, Capitalist, Capitalism" (II:232-249) Braudel discussed these key words, but he used less than two pages (II:234-7) on "Capitalist and capitalists", and the same length (II:237-9) on "Capitalism: a very recent word"; most pages of this section are on "capital". For the key word 'capitalism', he quoted the definitions offered by the *Encyclopédie* in 1753, by J.-B. Richard in 1842, by Louis Blanc in 1850, by Werner Sombart in 1902, and by many others. Most readers expect Braudel to have given a clear definition of capitalism, but there exists no such definition. Instead, what he offered is a notion, a kind of open definition readers have to read the entire text to find their own answers; after which one remains unsure what Braudel meant by capitalism. Put differently, Braudel offered his concept of capitalism much more by fact and by contents, rather than by properties. An open definition of this kind enables greater freedom of interpretation, but the disadvantage is that readers cannot distinguish between what they receive and what Braudel really meant.

Braudel always impressed people by his frankness and straightforwardness: why was he timid, elusive, ambiguous in his presentation of the notion of capitalism? "[I]t has enabled me, by taking a new, and a somewhat more

peaceful route, to avoid and by-pass the passionate dispute which the explosive word *capitalism* always arouses" (I:25). I am afraid the result of this approach is not a "more peaceful route".

This ambiguous attitude toward a clear definition of capitalism contrasts sharply with his previous attitude. In his methodological essays, when he discussed another interesting topic 'civilization', he said: "The second task is then to seek a definition of civilization, the least unsatisfactory, meaning the most convenient one, the easiest to manage for the pursuit of our task" (Braudel 1980:200); and "Once the ground has been cleared, we can proceed to ask the question: what is a civilization? I know of only one good definition, good in the sense of being easily used for purposes of observation and sufficiently removed from any kind of value judgement. It can be found, ... in some article by Marcel Mauss, from whom I borrowed it without ever having to regret it" (Braudel 1980:202). Regrettably, he did not pursue the same path in his history of capitalism.

Wallerstein skilfully summarized three features of capitalism presented in Braudel's work. (1) "Most liberals and most Marxists have argued that capitalism involved above all the establishment of a free, competitive market. Braudel saw capitalism instead as the system of the anti-market". (2) "Liberals and most Marxists have argued that capitalists were the great practitioners of economic specialization. Braudel believed instead that the essential feature of successful capitalists was their refusal to specialize". (3) Braudel viewed capitalism in a way that ... could only be termed seeing it "upside down" (Wallerstein 1991:354).

By "upside down" I understand that previous histories of capitalism offered by Marx, Sombart, Schumpeter etc. emphasized capitalistic activities; Braudel put much more emphasis on the level of daily life and the 'market' economy because Braudel thought that without these two levels, "capitalism is unthinkable: this is where it takes up residence and prospers" (I:24). Wallerstein's summary and interpretation helps many readers of Braudel to 'dispel the clouds and to see the sun'.

### 3.3 *Essentia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem*

This principle known as Occam's Razor says: essences should not be multiplied beyond what we need for what we study. I argue that Braudel's writing was contrary to this principle. One can easily deduce how much effort Braudel had invested during his 25 years of reading and writing: there are 40, 47 and 46 pages of notes and references in volumes I, II and III respectively. In terms of erudition, no single work on the history of capitalism is comparable to that of Braudel's, although perhaps Wallerstein will break this record when his four-volume work on the World System is completed.

In terms of efficiency, I feel that Braudel was not an 'economic' writer; many

examples and references can be deleted without losing his essential points. Consider his interesting section on wheat as an example (I:2:1): he did not pose such questions as how food production and the price of food were related to population changes at different economic stages. Instead, this section contains some irrelevant topics such as "To buy bread, or bake it at home?" (I:139). Another instance of his loose style, volume II: 49-54 was intended to discuss the labour market, but he said nothing about the central topic between pages 49-51; instead he wrote about the land market. He entered the main topic on page 51 but it is difficult to follow his logic and the connections between the pieces of evidence. I feel that he noted down what he had at hand, rather than offering a mechanism, or a systematic explanation. Moreover, he touched on so many topics, summarizing from such heterogeneous sources, that one feels that he could have expanded this volume *ad infinitum* or stopped it wherever he liked.

This book contains so many topics that no single scholar can know each in depth. In many cases Braudel had to rely on the research of others. For instance, in III:2:101-106 on "The Rise of the Hansa", he relied heavily on Philippe Dollinger (1964): *La Hanse (XIII-XVIIe siècles)*. There are 30 notes in this subsection (see III:638-639, notes 37-66), in which Braudel mentioned Dollinger at least 18 times. Similarly, in II:143-157 on Antwerp, he relied heavily on Van der Wee (1963): *The Growth of the Antwerp Market and the European Economy (14th-16th Centuries)*. In the notes of pp. 642-3, he cited Van der Wee in more than half the notes. A 'summary' of this kind is made more clear in chapter 5 of volume III on "The Rest of the World" because he explicitly stated in the first note (p. 661) that: "Throughout this chapter I have been guided by two books, ...", and in the conclusion of this chapter he confessed that: "Long though this chapter has been, the picture it gives of 'non-Europe' is clearly far from complete" (III:533).

It would be easy to determine by whom Braudel was most inspired, or from whose works Braudel benefited most, if the name index had been good enough. However, both the French and English versions cannot meet this demand. For instance, we cannot find the name Dollinger in the index, and the name Van der Wee appears only twice. The indexes of both versions are not well prepared.

On occasion Braudel initiated a topic without terminating it properly. For instance, in III:266-273 on the decline of Amsterdam, he tells us in great detail about the financial crises that Amsterdam had encountered, but he omitted why and how the crises were caused; he reiterated that the financial crises occurred and that people had tried to save themselves. He failed to describe how Amsterdam declined and how it was overtaken by London — this important dynamic process is omitted, unfortunately.

By contrast, what amazed me most was his understanding of the various theories about the business cycle. He was familiar with the major works on this subject, such as the writings of Joan Robinson, Heckscher, Kindleberger, Kuznets etc. From III:71-88 on the business cycle, I think he really grasped the main debates and major literature on this topic published before 1970.

On many occasions his data seems beyond his control. He wrote about too many topics in too few pages, especially in the first volume. I find that he sometimes just abandoned the subject; I can feel his helplessness, as he confessed elsewhere (Braudel 1977:3): "And so the years have passed. I have despaired of ever reaching the harbour". Also, "...trying to look at things in as much detail as possible, I may have taken too much pleasure in these details, and some readers may find me a bit long-winded". (1977:20). One has to read the three volumes to understand what he really meant by this statement. He defended himself by writing: "But is it not a good thing for history to be first of all a description, a plain observation, a scrutiny, a classification without too many previously held ideas: To see and to show is half the historian's task" (1977:20-1).

We understand that he was defending his excessively descriptive style, but I totally disagree with his defence that it is "a good thing for history to be first of all a description, a plain observation ...". Historians must pass more than 70% of their time on data, but the purpose of historiography is above all to offer new perspectives and valuable propositions. Like money, historical materials are good servants, but bad masters. To conclude these diverse comments, I offer in Appendix 2 ten short instances to demonstrate why I think that 1,000 pages suffice for Braudel's objectives.

## 4 EVALUATION

### 4.1 Criteria

To evaluate Braudel's work in the following manner is bold, but the purpose here is, I think, much more suggestive than definite. As a subjective reader, I assign asterisks (\*) to each section. Evaluation is better at the section level than the chapter because each volume (nearly 700 pages) is divided into five to eight chapters; each chapter contains three to six sections, whereas each section contains from seven to twenty sub-sections. Within this structure, I consider sections to be more representative. I summarize the distribution of these asterisks in Table I to show my preference. My evaluation is based on the following criteria:

(1) I give fewer asterisks to purely descriptive sections because I believe that historical materials do not mean historiography. Historical evidence is of course a part of the historian's craft, but materials without a central framework or proposition are only dead data. Exceptions are, for instance, III:2:2 (signifying volume III, chapter 2, section 2) on the belated rise of Venice which contains no beautiful theory or hypothesis, but Braudel's elegant presentation and detailed relevant information can seduce any reader.

(2) I give greater weight to sections with new hypotheses, new explanations or new arguments, such as I:1:1 on the impact of climate on human economic activities. With this understanding, one can clearly see from Table 1 that I value most volume III because, except for chapter 5, it is better structured with more of Braudel's own arguments. Volume I is less appreciated because it is replete with detailed evidence but hardly structured, although Braudel claimed in the preface that this part of the entire undertaking is the most difficult.

(3) There is a preference for discipline. As an economist I appreciate his historical evidence for Say's Law (II:172-183), his critiques on von Thünen's (location) zone theory (III:38-39) and his critiques of various theories about the business cycle (III:1:3). I think these parts are instructive to economists.

#### 4.2 An example

Space here allows only us to pick out one instance. Of all the instructive arguments in the three volumes, what strikes me most is his challenge to the Weberian proposition, which I marked with five asterisks (II:5:3). Since Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, (1904), there have been lively debates on the relationship between cultural factors (such as religion, Confucianism) and economic development in various disciplines (sociology, history, economics) in different countries. The literature on this topic is so abundant that one reads many distorted forms of the Weberian proposition. This generated a 'Weber phenomenon', and the Weberian proposition became a controversial issue in social sciences in this century. A 'standard' assertion has the form: the rise of Protestantism after the Reformation is correlated with the rise of capitalism. Most debates centred on the 'post-Weberian' proposition to prove or falsify this relationship. Few discussions were on the "pre-Weberian" propositions: (1) on what historical evidence did Weber base this thesis? (2) was his understanding of history reliable? Braudel's objection to the Weberian proposition is on these grounds, as he discusses in II:159-160, 231-2, 566-78.

Hereunder I summarize Braudel's main arguments to show his insight. The basic fact was "it is true that after the sixteenth century there is a clear correlation between the countries which welcomed the Reformation and the areas in which merchant and, later, industrial capitalism pursued its successful career, from the glories of Amsterdam to the later glories of London. This condition must be more than mere coincidence. Was Weber right? His argument is rather disconcerting... Weber seeks to discover a Protestant minority inspired by a very particular ethic, the ideal-type capitalist mentality" (II:567). Braudel then traced the origin of Weber's inspiration: "A statistical survey carried out in Baden in 1895 has just established that Protestants are more likely than Catholics to be wealthy and engaged in economic activity... Popular wisdom sums this up as ... the Protestant prefers to eat well, while the Catholic prefers to sleep peacefully" (II:567).

Table 1  
Evaluation by Chapter Sections

Remark: (a) For example, 2:3 means chapter 2 section 2, (b) More asterisks (\*) mean greater commendation.

Degree of commendation	Volume I	Volume II	Volume III	Total
*	2:3; 2:5; 3:2; 4:2; 6:3; 7:1; 7:2. (7 sections)	2:5; 3:5; 4:4; 5:4. (4 sections)		11
**	1:2; 1:3; 1:4; 2:1; 2:2; 2:4; 4:1; 4:3; 5:2; 6:1; 6:2; 7:4; 8:1; 8:3. (14 sections)	1:3; 2:4; 3:4; 4:2; 4:3; 5:1; 5:2. (7 sections)		21
***	1:1; 3:1; 5:4; 7:3; 8:2. (5 sections)	1:4; 2:3; 3:1; 4:1. (4 sections)	1:2; 2:4; 3:2; 4:2; 5:1; 5:2; 5:3; 5:4; 5:5; 5:6, 6:3. (11 sections)	20
****		1:2; 2:1; 3:2; 3:3. (4 sections)	2:1; 3:3; 3:4; 3:5; 4:4; 6:2. (6 sections)	10
*****		1:1; 2:2; 5:3. (3 sections)	1:1; 1:3; 2:2; 2:3; 3:1; 4:1. 4:3; 6:1. (8 sections)	11
Total	26	22	25	73

Braudel escaped from the culture-capitalism framework, offering arguments forcefully from the viewpoint of the changes of geo-economic advantages. He argued "that Reformation Europe as a whole overtook the Mediterranean economy, brilliant as this was and already long-established in the ways of capitalism. (I am thinking of Italy in particular). But such transfers are the common coin of history; Byzantium declined as Islam rose; Islam made way for Christian Europe; Mediterranean Christendom won the first race to conquer the Seven Seas, but about 1590, the center of gravity of Europe swung over to the protestant North which became the most prosperous region" (II:569). The key concept here are the shifts of the centres of economic gravity.

Why and how did the centre of gravity move to the North? "When the balance finally swung in favour of the North, with its lower wages, its increasingly unbearable industry, its cheap transport, its fleet of coasters and small sailing ships which could make voyages at low cost, this was a matter of pounds, shillings and pence, of competitive costs. Everything could be produced more cheaply in the North: grain, canvas, woollens, ships, timber, etc. The victory of the North was undoubtedly in a way the victory of the proletarian, the underdog, who had eaten less well, if not less copiously than the South. To this must be added the economic downturn in about 1590, the crisis which, in the past as in the present, strikes first the most advanced countries with their more complex machinery. To the North, this brought a series of good opportunities, perceived and recognized as such, and seized by businessmen who flocked into Holland from Germany, France and indeed Antwerp. The consequence was the powerful rise of Amsterdam, bringing with it general good fortune for the Protestant countries.... Protestant communities, richer, more adventurous and sharper than the local merchants — just as the Italians had once seemed to the countries of the North, ... the unrivalled experts on trade and barking. I find this a persuasive explanation" (II:570). Indeed, it is.

## 5 Conclusions

To write a history of capitalism during the XVth-XVIIIth centuries is not an easy task for the most brilliant historians in any century. To write such a history in the style of 'global history' (or *histoire totale*) is an even more difficult undertaking. The reason is that in addition to economic aspects one has to take into account social, political and all other aspects named 'civilization'. Braudel was brave enough to complete his task during a quarter of century of endeavour.

My overall impression is illustrated by another metaphor. Thinking of the electricity light bulbs that we use at home: we may say that when the lighting effect is inefficient, electricity is transferred into heat rather than into useful light. What we expect from a great historian is the light (insight) rather than the heat (popularising). I am inclined to consider Braudel's history of capitalism 'more heat than light'.

The history of capitalism will undoubtedly be rewritten again and again. Braudel's volumes will be repeatedly consulted for several reasons. (1) Among historians of capitalism in the XXth century, he is a significant figure who offered a unique perspective on the process of the development of capitalism. (2) He also summarized major sources related to this enormous topic; later researchers will certainly benefit from his bibliographies contained in the end-notes. (3) The many maps, figures, statistics, tables, photos, constitute a useful visual counterpart to the text; they are carefully presented, and they are sometimes more attractive than the text itself, encouraging readers to turn pages. I conjecture that, if Braudel's history of capitalism will be read in the next centuries, it will be more because of its encyclopaedic content than its framework, concepts, theories and detailed arguments.

## APPENDIX 1

### *Compare with other eight reviews*

For comparison with my own opinions, I briefly summarize the main points of eight other reviews, according to the alphabetical order of the authors. Dat (1980) started his review by making clear that Braudel's methodology is "resolutely atheoretical, ... the proper tools of the economic historian as opposed to the social theorist or the theoretical economist are nondeductive models where the object is not the formulation of 'rules' or 'laws' but the organization of the raw materials of history into intelligible patterns bearing on specific problems" (p. 508). He presented Braudel's well known model of historical time: time of event, time of *'conjoncture'* and time of *'longue durée'*. In his discussion of "The Uses of Theory" he mentioned so many names (Karl Polanyi, J.S. Mill, David Ricardo, Thomas Mun, Adam Smith and so on) and so many concepts (uneven development, invisible hand, monopoly, physiocratic idea, classic trade theory, historical materialism, etc.) in so few pages (pp. 510-13) that readers become lost. In his "Capitalism Redefined" (pp. 514-5) I expected his interpretation of Braudel's "capitalism", but what I read is one and a half pages of summary. The other two sections on "Cycles and Trades" (pp. 515-7) and "History and the Social Sciences" (pp. 517-8) contain Dat's scattered remarks. In short, this is not a recommendable review.

Fritz (1986) is basically a summary of Braudel's work. In the first section (less than two pages), he explains what the Annales school is, and in the next section, also two pages long, he talks about Braudel's method of analysis, especially about the three sorts of historical time that most Braudel readers already know. Section 3 summarizes the contents of his work in four pages, the final section contains two paragraphs of criticism. As a whole, I do not consider Fritz's piece as a good review: he has no argument at all.

By contrast, Howard's review is full of arguments. He takes the point of

view of a Marxian economist. His review concerns "Braudel's treatment of capitalism from a particular perspective, that of economic theory" (Howard 1985:469). What he means by "economic theory" is the Marxian theory of capitalism. In his review he hardly touches on any historical facts; instead, he focuses wholly on the abstract discussions of the theory of the development of capitalism. He starts with Braudel's definition of capitalism and criticizes the defects of such a definition: "So summarized, Braudel's thesis on capitalism appears to be definite and distinct, but in actual fact these properties are absent to a distressing degree. Instead, there is an all-pervading vagueness of terminology so that there are few firm propositions, and exposition is frequently indecisive. Misinterpretation of alternative theories is also common, while inconsistency is rampant. Substantive criticism is thereby hampered, and the ground is fertile for provoking sterile controversies whose only force is confusion coupled with ill-feeling. Thus, many of Braudel's central concepts are left undefined.... Braudel's undisciplined habits even flow into the critical discussion of his competitors" (Howard 1985:471).

These are harsh accusations, but I am not surprised to see this kind of criticism from Marxian economists. Braudel clearly defended himself from the very beginning of the book: "... I had deliberately set out to write outside the world of theory, of all theories, and had intended to be guided by concrete observations and comparative history alone" (I:25). What Braudel did not explicitly state is that he had no intention to argue with Marxists about the theory of the development of capitalism. Despite this claim, Howard still uses Marxian language to attack. It is legitimate for him to do so if and only if he can support his criticism with concrete historical examples. But I find very little evidence of this kind in his review. In short, this pure theoretical review does not hurt Braudel and his followers. Moreover, Howard's arguments are not always easy to follow by non-Marxists.

Kinser (1981b) gives a more profound analysis of the framework and arguments of the book. This essay is highly recommended. I was also very impressed by his long and penetrating review (Kinser 1981a) of Braudel's masterpiece *The Mediterranean* (1949). In contrast, in his second review of *Civilization & Capitalism* published in the same year (Kinser 1981b), we find his many complaints that "[t]here is little first-hand research in these volumes (p. 675); "[t]his work is a diligent and impressive compilation of the research of others.... By choosing to compile everything rather than to investigate selectively, Braudel is condemned continually to resort to illustration more than to analysis, to exhibit more than to critical interpretation",... (p. 676). He concludes his review by writing: "And after the travel, as one relaxes and recounts its difficulties and its pleasure, as one hefts the volumes and scans their endless pages a last time, one rubs one's reddened eyes with admiration at the stupendous reach of this historian's search for totality" (p. 682). I think Kinser was honest and polite.

The subtitle of Lovett's review (1983) is quite derogatory: "total history for

beginners". In his seven pages review, Lovett is in fact summarizing the contents of Braudel's book, as well as unsystematically commenting on randomly chosen points. His main criticism is focused on England (pp. 751-2), with the intent of showing that Braudel had no convincing arguments on the history of England; Lovett adds one page of references to supplement Braudel's book. I think this is not a good way to write a review article, especially if publishing it in the prestigious *Historical Journal*. Counter-arguments are more useful than simple bad-intentioned criticism.

A long review critique appeared in Braudel's home country. To publish such a review in France requires courage because of the Parisian atmosphere of intellectual tension and Braudel's 'hegemony' in France. Morineau (1988) first explained his personal relationship with Braudel and Braudel's reaction to his critiques; then he selected a few instances and offered detailed counter-arguments. A distinctive feature of Morineau's review is that he provided his arguments with different historical evidence and statistics, for instance, on the movement of prices between 1756 and 1790 at the national, 'province' and 'average' levels. In brief, this review combines personal recollection and detailed technical evidence on selected topics.

To my best knowledge, Perrot's review (1981) may be the only review article published in the official journal of the Annales school *Annales ESC*. The main text of this review is about ten pages long. Perrot uses four pages (pp. 3-6) to summarize the book with short comments, but he does so in an unsystematical manner. As I see it, the only place where he offers a counter-argument is on the concept of historical time (from page 7 on), and he sticks to this point throughout the rest of his review.

The concept of historical time is the core of Braudelian history, it encompasses: time of event, time of «conjoncture» (business cycle time), and the trade mark of Braudel: *la longue durée*. Perrot was right to point out that Braudel used this framework throughout all his works, applying the same framework to different topics, in different forms with different materials. In the second half of his review (pp. 7-12), Perrot compares the economists' time concept with Braudel's concept of historical time. I feel uncomfortable about this approach. The first time concept used by economists, as Perrot illustrates, is one of a year by year base:  $t, t+1, t+n$ . Can one contrast this with Braudel's "time of event"? Certainly not. The  $t, t+1, t+n$  approach is used by neo-classical economists, taken from Alfred Marshall's study on the economic effect of short-run changes. Yet Braudel's time of event refers to historical events such as war, flood, etc. The two are simply non-compatible.

Perrot does not touch the *longue durée* because he could not find an equivalent time unit (taking a century as the unit of analysis) used by economists. He concentrates on the concept of "conjoncture" on which he was able to find abundant literature on business-cycle economics. If the concept of "conjoncture" equals "business cycle", then Braudel cannot compete with economists both at the level of analytical tools, and on that of historical facts. In

fact, Braudel relies heavily on the concept, terminology and empirical findings of economists, as one can see from the references that he cited so extensively in the related chapters.

Perrot cites a great amount of economic literature in his footnote 33, and this makes it clear that he is using the economists' business-cycle theories (the more mathematically inclined models), and compares them with Braudel's historical results. He even cites articles published in *Econometrica* (notes 40, 43). I think this is mis-directed because Braudel's concern is historical movement, while papers published in *Econometrica* are heavily mathematically and statistically oriented; Braudel uses a century as his unit of analysis, while *Econometrica* authors perhaps have never heard of Braudel, and have little interest in the *longue durée*.

Wallerstein (1991) offered a selective review by concentrating on Braudel's concept of capitalism. While I (and most readers as well, I believe) am disconcerted by Braudel's notion of capitalism, Wallerstein's interpretation sheds some light on this complex key concept. This issue has been discussed in Section 3.2.

## APPENDIX 2

### *Uninteresting parts of the book (10 instances)*

Remark: Instances are concentrated on volumes II and III, one can find many more instances in the first volume.

1. II:194-204, on "precious metals". This chapter is on "Markets and the Economy"; precious metals have nothing to do with the chapter. His discussion on sugar (II:190-194) is also strange because he suddenly dropped the subject on page 194, and jumped to precious metals.

2. II:216-9, on "Overall balances": trade balances between nations. This interesting topic was treated in an unsystematic way; he touched on a theme quickly and soon skipped to another one.

3. II:455-457, "Back to a Threefold Division". Here he repeated what was already clearly stated above that is, the economic activities of capitalism on three levels: material life, economic life, world economy (see the preface to volume I). The repetition here contains no new idea, and was loosely written.

4. III:57-61, on "War and the zones of the world-economy". He tried to explain the relationship between wars and the world-economy, but the contents are more on "the art of war" (see especially page 58) than the claimed subject. An irrelevant digression.

5. III:287-9, on "The nation-state, yes — but the national market?" I confess that I am completely lost in his diversified paragraphs. He ended this sub-section by asking two questions: "But what were these thresholds? And above all, which were the crucial turning points?" He offered no answer, nor

single hint, and I understand neither the meaning nor the importance of the questions.

6. III:314-5, on "Visible continuities". He wrote about the GNP level and the rise of the state in one page; I fail to see its relevance to the chapter "National Markets".

7. III:347-35 1, on "The French interior". A digression on the French interior problems, no central theme, no interesting idea, not organized.

8. III:413-7, on "Spanish America reconsidered". The contents are mainly on smuggling in Spanish America. Completely irrelevant.

9. III:595-599, on "The industrialists" and "British economy and society by sector". Two huge subjects in less than four pages!

10. III:605, 611-8. He inserted much irrelevant historical information when he discussed the Industrial Revolution; it is difficult to discover his main points.

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