

Capitalism and Developed Culture

The beginning of the bourgeois epoch is characterized by a great intellectual activity in art, natural science and mathematics. This is veiled by the words Renaissance, *Rinascimento*, and so on. Rather, in intellectual activity as well as in social and economic life, the peoples of northern Europe grew into a developed culture in the capitalist period. The opposite side of this developmental process consists in the fact that in the capitalist period it was asked how much everything costs: the natural material, the commodity, human life. Every being, inorganic and living, is measured according to its quantitative value.

In the whole of world history, developed culture is determined by three processes: first by the establishment of the big cities, second by the establishment of the state and third, by the introduction of writing into the colloquial language of the people. Measured by these determinations, modern bourgeois society in northern Europe counts as a developed culture. The Middle Ages presents itself as the period of transition to the developed culture in Europe in the capitalist period. The medieval states of northern Europe were small in relation to the numbers in the population, and the extent of their activities was limited in relation to those in the cities of the East; the system of state was weak through the contradictions of its centripetal and centrifugal tendencies, and writing in the colloquial languages first experienced its hours of birth. In antiquity there was no developed culture in the European region at all. When Marco Polo reported on the cities in the Orient, his

audience laughed at his remarks and called the world traveller *Marco Millions*. They believed that he exaggerated everything, and they could not understand that there were such large cities in the world. In Europe the largest city in 1550 was Naples with a population of 210,000 inhabitants; there was no city of this size in northern Europe. The medieval state of northern Europe was unusual in comparison to that in ancient China, in Persia, Rome, Byzantium as well as in comparison to the state of modern times on account of the above-mentioned contradictions. The large cities, the unified and centralized state power and writing in the indigenous languages of northern Europe, developed only in modern bourgeois society. The result of this process is—for the first time in the history of northern Europe—the origin of a culture characterized by the features mentioned, whose foundation, the systematization and expansion of capital and of wage labour, has been outlined here.