

Modernization and Its Discontents

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Modernization became so popular a term among the social scientists that even historians took to using it. Often we employed it as a synonym for history itself or for change, a kind of stylish accessory on a costume in archive drab. But fashions change, and in some circles a reference to modernization now evokes the distrust of a crew-cut; both are seen as symbols of the fifties and sixties and of an optimistic American imperialism. A more winning first paragraph these days is likely to promise that what follows disproves, or at least rejects, modernization theory, usually treated as a simple ideological cover for the skeletons of ethnocentrism, capitalism, elitism, or an outmoded faith in rationality and progress. For many, ideas of modernization are fatally intertwined with the experience of cold war and of economic and military aid from the United States. It may be, of course, that the horrors of Vietnam are no more necessarily tied to modernization than Stalin's purges to Marxism; but the mood of the moment is often not lenient.

THE MOOD OF REJECTION

In addition there are broader reasons for the common charge that modernization is the political ideology of Western self-interest, defensive and conservative. In some respects the drumbeats of modernization just a decade old now echo as strangely out of date. Although the definitions of modernization vary considerably, they agree in an

emphasis on man's increasing control of his environment (Hagen, 1962: 7; Black, 1966; Organski, 1965: 7). For economists, the temptation is simply to look at those relatively objective conditions that allow greater productivity (Uphoff and Ilchman, 1972: 77-108). But many today—in the prosperous countries, to be sure—distrust productivity; and for those worried about nuclear war and pollution, talk of our control of nature is ironic at best. Maybe modernization, the kinder critics suggest, does not speak to current values, to a world concerned about limited resources and the autonomous role of international corporations.

The mood of antipathy toward growth (or development), modernity (or modernization), or theories about them contains a strong distrust of cold rationality, whereas the theories distrusted have been put forward by those who would make the social sciences the "sober trustee" (the phrase is Almond and Powell's, applied to political science alone, however, 1966: 332) of the Enlightenment. And there are historians, even more than other social scientists, eager to share the patricidal enthusiasm with which some contemporaries turn on their rationalist heritage. The prejudice against approaches that have been misused is hard to overcome. When some pedant notes that Leopold von Ranke did not really advocate description without interpretation or that August Comte did not claim that facts endlessly piled would speak for themselves, the revision remains a footnote on a tombstone. Modernization is so attractive a target that there is reason to suspect it too will not survive. Troubled by the limits of our reason, the likelihood our views are culture-bound, the fact that scholarship itself rests comfortably in various establishments, we can forbear some criticism by disassociating ourselves from talk of modernization. And there is no more convenient way in which to make the conventional finding that real societies are complex seem courageous than to present it as an attack on modernization theory.

The students of modernization are in part themselves to blame for this revulsion against their doctrines; they have too often claimed, or at least implied, too much. Ideas and modes of analysis that seemed a kind of breakthrough by the social sciences turned out on inspection to be part of, and surprisingly close to, an old tradition. The new methods continued an old Western habit of seeing a dialectic between change and tradition; the new model was like an old one: progress, with new gadgets on it. If modernization was rooted in the Enlightenment, in old views of progress (including the anthropology of Tyler, the history of de

Tocqueville and Michelet, the sociology of Condorcet and the economics of Adam Smith), and in the methods of Durkheim, Tönnies, and Weber (who is constantly quoted in the literature) then it seemed likely to carry the prejudices and bad habits of old-fashioned optimism and pretense to science. Modernization was itself an old Western (and imperial) tradition (see Mazrui, 1968; Nisbet, 1969), out-of-date except for its reflection of the era after World War II when the ties of empire were transformed from political dominance to economic and military aid. The concept, then, appeared doubly dated: old-fashioned and a product of the 1950s as in this universal conclusion:

It appears that economic progress may well be an organic process similar to others which take place in various forms of biological development. Once started, it will grow and spread its seed in evergrowing circles over ever greater parts of the earth wherever and whenever conditions are suitable [Brenner, 1969: 292].

We are back to those old questions of cultural and biological evolution (Sahlins and Service, 1960: 5ff.). "Far from being a universally applicable schema for the study of the development of human societies, the nature of modernization theory reflects a particular phase in the development of a single society, that of the United States" (Tipps, 1973: 211). Concepts antiseptically scientific that are discovered to carry the bacteria of values; development "involves, for those who propose it as for those to whom it is proposed, central value choices about the meaning of life" (Goulet, 1973: 301). the disillusionment that usually follows such confessions may be extraneous, the result more of the fact that political theory is nearly moribund than of anything wrong with ideas of modernization, but it adds to the mood of rejection.

None of these reservations needs to be viewed as devastating. If ideas of modernization reflect a particular time and place, so do all others including the current critiques; and in any case, the quality of a theory need not depend on the circumstance that produced it. The intellectual tradition from which modernization comes is not ignoble; technology, science, and economic growth have brought impressive benefits no matter what else is attributed to them. Even the disdain for ethnocentricity, one might note with comforting irony, is characteristically Western and not to be eradicated by proclamation. Nevertheless, the merits of modernization—as process and theory—are now an open question; and the meaning of the term, always a loose one (Eisenstadt, 1973: 109) has not been much clarified by debate or brave efforts to distinguish "modernization" from "development," itself "one of the most

deprecated terms in social science literature, having been used vastly more than it has been understood" (Uphoff and Ilchman, 1972: ix). Reinhard Bendix thought modernization as a term "useful despite its vagueness because it tends to evoke similar associations in contemporary readers" (Bendix, 1967: 292), but antimodernist sentiment has in the decade since he wrote brought forth associations quite contrary to those once dominant. Cyril Black (1966: 7-8) ascribed to modernization the advantage of being "less encumbered with accretions of meaning" than terms like progress or westernization, but the barnacles of success—measured in hundreds of books and articles—have obscured that trim and innocent line of thought.

The various theories of modernization have been subjected to so much pointed and systematic criticism that there is no need to repeat that here (Tipps, 1973; Holt and Turner, 1966: 12-50; Horowitz, 1966: 397-426; Tilly, 1975: 601-638). For the historian, however, applying concepts of modernization presents some problems and temptations of particular force.

THE DIFFICULTY OF APPLYING THE MODEL

The ideas and methods of structural functionalism have been central to the concept of modernization (to such an extent that attacks on the sociological method and on the concept have, falsely, often treated the two as interchangeable so that any flaw in one reflects badly on the other), and the writings of such scholars as David Apter, Neil Smelser, Marion Levy, and Talcott Parsons (as well as scores of others who are less rigorous and less formally structural functionalists) have carried into the understanding of modernization one of Max Weber's classic formulations of dichotomous ideal types: traditional and modern society. Now ideal types are not intended to fit any specific piece of reality or describe any moment of history, and Shiner (1975) has effectively made the case that tradition and modernity are not the extremes of a single scale. Bendix (1967: 295, 313-320) considers the contrast "invidious." Within the pair, tradition is the insidious, misleading term. Modernization, it is often pointed out, is not the same as modernity (Bendix, 1967: 329), and we enjoy some at least rough agreement as to what the term, a description of process, means. But traditional society as an ideal type is so clear as to be impossible. It can mislead historians into sentences about "this structured, change-

less, compact, traditional order" (Shorter, 1975: 21) and is probably more dangerous when less provocative. In an effort to make the term more useful it has been re-defined even to the point of including creativity as one of its qualities, and constricted by modifiers until there are various traditions, as Eisenstadt notes, adding that the term has never been carefully refined. Indeed, he and others agree that traditional behavior played its part in the industrialization of many societies and can still be found in all modern ones (Eisenstadt, 1973: 13, 99-103, 119-120; Braibanti and Spengler, 1961; Hoselitz and Moore, 1963: 83-114). Nor does Shils' distinction between tradition and traditionalism help much; for, as he points out, all traditional beliefs are forever being modified and new traditions evolve from older ones (Shils, 1960: 144-145, 154). Logic adds that "non-innovational" responses can be "progressive" just as traditional behavior is a part of bureaucratic (modern) societies (Sklair, 1970: 137-139), and historians could happily add dozens of cases in which putting-out systems were more efficient than factories, patron-client networks proved better mobilizers than parties, and local elites were more rational than central governments. Max Weber would never have assumed that historic survivals can be considered doomed anachronisms, and modern historians should not either. Perhaps Karl Deutsch's wry comment is correct that ideal types may produce good results "in the hands of empirical masters" but that this is "due less to the excellence of the method used than to the competence of the men who use it" (Deutsch, 1966: 49). In any case, those concerned with history might do better to reduce the concept of traditional society to a modest operational level: a convenient shorthand for dismissing the past prior to the particular change one intends to study.

Elimination of the category, traditional society, would, however, more clearly expose a second difficulty in the application of ideas of modernization, one that strikes close to historians' concern for chronology. Modernization has no beginning and no natural periodization. This awkward quality is most apparent as models of modernization designed for non-Western societies are applied to European history, but in principle it holds everywhere. Even on a scale less grand than that of Hegel, Buckle, Comte, Marx, Spengler, or Toynbee there is an unprescribed choice as to whether the proper units are civilizations, societies, states, or eras. A more modest periodization must depend on whether the central historical problem is thought to lie in certain in-

stitutions (the church, the army, the bureaucracy, the national bank, or public school—each has its appropriate chronological frame), groups (elite or mass), markets, or ideas. The problem is hardly new, and historians have managed to write important books without solving it. When the proposition (about modernization) being tested controls the social sample to be examined, the circularity becomes graver. The more common choice, of course, is in the case of Europe to start with industrialization and the French Revolution (although that is awkward with regard to state-building, see Tilly, 1975), and, outside Europe, begin with imperialism. Thoroughly defensible, such a traditional periodization invites and maybe even necessitates reliance on traditional emphases, allowing older views of political and economic history to remain dominant (it also tends to treat revolution, industrialization, or colonization as a sudden external stimulus, whereas historians of those phenomena usually find them part of a continuing process). In such a context, modernization is likely to become a convenient summary of standard lore rather than the use of new concepts and better measures of modernization with which to build new structures of analysis. This is merely disappointing. The problem becomes serious on the time scale within which most new historical research is conducted. The course of modernization which provides such bright guiding beacons as one sails from feudal to modern, from a hypothetical past to a predicted future, casts very dim light on what development to expect within a decade. This is not so true where the prediction is one of straightforward aggregate growth; and historical work has benefitted significantly from concepts of modernization (although by no means always sustaining them) applied even to short-term studies of schooling, political participation, vaccination, the use of technology, and so forth. Significantly, concepts of modernization applied to detailed study of more complex processes have been less notable. Indeed, the flow in this case is often in the opposite direction: observed changes in administrative structure, urbanization, economic relations, or politicization—like the differences in society before and after revolution—are allowed to define the immediate meaning of modernization. There is, of course, no law to say how much of the changes ascribed to a whole society over a century or two should be reflected in a single institution or group or region in the course of a few years. But most historical research will

not be much improved by ideas of modernization, and concepts of modernization will not be much affected by what historians do until the reasons for expecting any connection between long-term development and short-term change are clearly stated and the measures of such changes formally established.

This is even harder than it sounds. Everyone agrees that not all of society changes together (Smelser, 1976: 161-162) and that change does not occur at a regular rate. But if the critical changes can be recognized, their presence or absence in a limited space and time can at least be fruitfully related to the larger process. Unfortunately, the sorts of social change the concept of modernization has best described—increased capacity, control over nature, rationality, equality, differentiation, and secularization (logically, a subset of differentiation that is, however, often treated separately)—do not provide clear guides to research. Is every new title or office, regulation or expansion of bureaucracy to be considered differentiation? How do we understand capacity, except in the limited terms of what happened? Even if such terms can be given very precise behavioral definitions, it is not certain we could establish measures that would allow comparisons of degree or rate of change, while preserving something of the richness and breadth of the initial concept.

Finally, historians will do well to jettison that aspect of modernization called convergence theory, the assumption that modernizing societies became more alike. A tempting extension of the model, it is not the logical next step it seems to be, with its implications of total social transformations and technological determinism (see the searing critiques of Weinberg, 1969, and Skinner, 1976). For the historian, its danger is in the tendency to make change a juggernaut, to discourage that discrimination that is the historian's forte which allows for different degrees and forms of change and change itself as mere adaptation. The instinctive suspicion of simplification, which is not methodologically heroic nor even always sound, remains in this case a safer bet, more likely to open important questions and to lead to fresh comparisons. When we find ourselves talking of postmodern societies, we can suspect we have stripped the concept of modernization of much of its suggestive sense of process and variety.

THE BURDEN OF BIAS

Less accustomed to claiming methodological objectivity, historians may be less shocked than other social scientists at the suggestion that some bias shows through. Critics have had no trouble in showing that some of the literature on modernization is loaded with assumptions and preferences that stem from the author's place, time, and values. The important question, however, lies elsewhere. Are certain consistent biases so basic to the model that they cannot be escaped, that to use it at all is to risk falling into hidden traps? The most frequent charges are that theories of modernization are ethnocentrically Western; teleological (if not downright deterministic); conservative in their preference for stability over conflict, their attention to institutions, and their policy-oriented admiration of skilled crisis management; and that they nevertheless exaggerate change over continuity. Since one of the attributes of modernization models, also much lamented, is their looseness, scholars willing to live with that (but are they then social scientists?) should also enjoy the freedom to avoid these biases (while recognizing that the concept of modernization provides little protection against those prejudices the scholar happens to share).

This temptation to judge the world in terms of Western development is probably no more intrinsic to models of modernization than to Western culture itself, and many social scientists have effectively struggled against it (see Gellner, 1965 on the dangers of the confusion of Western and non-Western societies). Three precautions can go far to lessen the danger. If the early literature on modernization was especially laden with ethnocentrism, that was often due less to parochial misunderstanding of non-Western society than to a falsely simple, uniform, and foreshortened view of Western history. As the study of modernization has turned more to Western examples, strong corrections are available and should be heeded. Historians should find that familiar. Second, one must escape that limited imagination which assumes that the modes of efficiency, rationality, of differentiation in one culture cannot be fundamentally different in another. Anthropologists have established techniques, with some marked successes, for limiting such culture-bound assumptions. After Lévi-Strauss everyone should be wary of labelling alien cultures as simple just because their economy is poor or their society based on ties of kinship. The third precaution is to pay close attention to the form in which the challenge to modernize is pre-

sented, whether it comes in terms of competition or conquest, ideas or force or markets, suddenly or slowly. These differences of context will, in combination with the nature of the society being modernized, shape the course of its development—a consideration well known to political science and economics. With such precautions, no scholar need be afraid to acknowledge that Europe industrialized first or exported its institutions and values through example, conversion, and raw aggression unparalleled in modern history. Nor need one throw out the model to concede that within Europe and elsewhere both regions more modern and those less developed were affected by the process.

Adherence to such warnings will restrict some of the intellectual ventures made in the interests of studying modernization. One of the strengths of the entire approach has been its attention to cultural and psychological change. Understandably, Daniel Lerner's book has been one of the most influential of the last generation (Lerner, 1958). Yet the psychological types adduced as modern can quickly erode into assertions of the necessity for Western values. With care that pitfall can be avoided; the psychology of modernizers is no more uniform than their economies. Convenient lists of some other society's impediments to development, on the other hand, will probably always be open to charges of "intellectual neo-colonialism" (Uphoff and Ilchman, 1972: 17-19).

Enough social scientists have written of modernization as an open-ended process to establish that, conceptually at least, teleology is not inherent, although hints of it appear likely to creep back whenever one's philosophic guard is relaxed. The danger for any researcher who knows the shape of destiny is the tendency to close off good questions before they are posed. The solution is in a good research design (which could choose *explicitly* teleologic positions), and it is worth adding that to apply a particular model does not mean that it must be proven correct. The urge to give history a goal is not the original sin of modernization. Similarly, conservatism may be embedded in the history of the concept of the heart of an author, but liberals of every stripe and socialists, too, have made effective use of the idea. To confuse attention to the role of institutions with conservative bias is itself a prejudice. On the other hand, there is a more serious charge—aimed especially at structural functionalism—that the concept of modernization mistakes stability for a sign of health and normality, viewing conflict as transitional distress. Its thrust is methodological, and it points to the tendency

to let abstract descriptions of social systems (in equilibrium) become narrowing and normative. Talcott Parsons, Smelser, and others have insisted that mode of analysis can and does allow for change, although the point is still somewhat in dispute. The potential of an analytic tool is hard to distinguish from the way it is most commonly used. Structural functionalists certainly do not think conflict abnormal, but they need rare skill to keep from treating it as extrinsic to the social system. A far graver danger, however, lies in the urge to make of modernization a basis for wise advice. To analyze the means of system maintenance may be neutral, though one worries; to prescribe the strategies that will keep an elite in power, a party strong, or a system operative is not. It is simply not true that because scientific theories predict (in very controlled circumstances), social scientific theories should be tested in the king's council (see Tilly, 1975: 621). Unaccustomed to being consulted by those in power, historians ought to be able to resist the temptation. The tendency to exaggerate change, on the contrary, is one of historians' favorite vices, applied most liberally to the period under study. Since concepts of modernization often incorporate a kind of law of inertia whereby change once launched is more likely to continue or even accelerate, there is a tendency to confuse the fact of flux with a vector of change, the fact of change with a consciousness of it, consciousness with social habit. Marxists know the problem. In fact, as Barrington Moore points out (Moore, 1966: 485-487), continuity is as problematic as change and deserves comparable historical attention. That the past survives in the present may be the only sense in which any change is irreversible. Here too the solution lies in method; the best models of modernization will allow for distinctions as to the source, nature, durability, direction, and extent of change, will view social systems in their parts as well as wholes (thereby not confusing political endurance with social stability), and will consequently be ill-suited to serve as statesmen's handbooks. As wise statesmen suspect, there are not yet good measures for many of the changes that matter most.

THE UNIT OF ANALYSIS

Hegel had no doubt that the state was among the great achievements of historical development, and, therefore, a fundamental unit for its analysis, and most of the writing on modernization across two centuries

of Western nationalism has seemed to share his confidence. Yet the students of state-building, historians, sociologists, or political scientists, have always known that the modern national state is not the natural unit nineteenth-century romanticism portrayed (see Tilly, 1975; Eisenstadt and Rokkan, 1973); and conversation with a Basque patriot, a glance at the political maps of Africa, or a moment's reflection on the history of Burgundy would sustain the point. Having learned again to distrust the state, we are more inclined to count its costs in repression, resources extracted, and warfare. That and our interest in social and economic history, in popular culture and behavioral analyses of politics makes it easier to perceive that the state is not the unit in which social change or modernization occurs. Neither is it the unit in which technology spreads, not within which capitalism develops, or on which it builds.

A strong case can be made, then, for the region as the unit of analysis for modernization (Schneider et al. 1972: 330). Here the interrelationship of economy and culture, elite and institutions, tends to be tighter and levels of development more homogenous. Through this smaller but sharper focus the relationship between external stimuli and factors intrinsic to local development can be more clearly assessed. The connections between modernization and a powerful state can be analyzed in terms of relations between center and periphery, bringing into play an impressive battery of political-science literature (see Tarrow, 1977: esp. 17ff for an assessment of three such models). Once one of the clearest implications in theories of modernization was that in the modern state linguistic conflict would be eliminated; now it appears that such conflict may be a result of modernization having strengthened regional resistance to the national center. Much of the future of modernization studies is likely to lie in work at this level; yet it must be quickly acknowledged that regions are harder to define than states, and that economic, cultural, political, and geographic regions are rarely neatly coterminous.

An alternative now proving immensely stimulating is to leap from analysis of regions to what Wallerstein calls the modern world-system (Wallerstein, 1974a, 1974b). So broad a canvas fits modernization well. The world, says Eisenstadt, is the "cardinal category" of social science; when the world is the system, all nations are developing—also backward (Eisenstadt, 1973: 107). Like the neo-Marxist analysis on which it

builds (see Frank, 1969, 1975; and the essays, especially Frank's and Barani's in Rhodes, 1970), Wallerstein's studies portray the creation of a world-wide division of labor through the expansion of European capitalism. The partial and stifled modernization of third world countries, which has disappointed analysts for whom modernization was a principle to live by as well as a topic, is readily explained. Andre Frank's preferred subject becomes the development of underdevelopment. As a universal process, modernization has turned itself off. It is not yet clear how much autonomy such theories of dependence can grant to politics or culture or whether parallel theories will be developed for these other spheres. A heavy emphasis on the dominance of capitalist markets could of course leave local society visible only as a victim, an affect that like ethnocentrism would ignore the creative adaptability of local cultures. The world frame should, Wallerstein argues (1974b), aid comparative study; but he, too, calls for better local studies; and his center, periphery, and semiperiphery are no crisper units for empirical study than state or region. At the very least, international factors (economic and political if not intellectual and religious) will have to be better woven into subsequent models of modernization.

Perhaps geographical space is not the proper unit at all. In fact, it is usually the system (social, political, or economic) within that space that is the real object of analysis; nation, region, or world give it familiarity and attractive concreteness. With the social system as the unit of analysis, concepts of modernization share the yeasty theory-making potential of structural functionalism. The problems that follow are familiar. In the real world the boundaries of systems are fuzzy, artificial, or both. Analysis in terms of social systems leads to distinctions between exogenous and endogenous factors and that may well underlie an often noted weakness of developmental theories, their inadequate treatment of international factors affecting the process of modernization. A military threat, new technology, a political or religious movement may initially be exogenous, but domestic responses will normally combine exogenous and endogenous elements, and that in turn may alter the exogenous factors (or at least their impact). The system in short is being continually redefined. The problems of diffusion versus autonomous development that fascinated generations of anthropologists are still alive in discussions of modernization, and some of the most imaginative work in the field has used theories of communication. Here as well as in more conventional political-science approaches, emphasis is placed on

the role of elites. There are many sound reasons for doing so (Smith, 1971: 86-150), in the course of which, however, it becomes frighteningly easy to associate the rich and varied process of modernization with the values and ambitions of the middle class (Qadeer, 1974: 283). That may be one of the reasons the literature on modernization has made little contribution to our understanding of the place of social class in social change, increasing the likelihood of Western bias, distrust of conflict, and indifference to local variations. Perhaps, then, social classes and institutions should in themselves be the units of analysis. After all, most of the talk about states has really been directed to leaders and armies and administrations. Alas, that leads to a third difficulty which stems from the subtlety and power of structural-functional analysis: the systematic functions of that analysis are not each performed by a different institution or group. Rather, the units of analysis to which empirical social scientists are accustomed—bureaucracies and classes, for example—may each contribute to many or all of the various systemic functions. There is no neat checklist of which groups and institutions to investigate or in which systemic categories to place them. When one adds attention to the importance of social values and systems of belief—and it is one of the great strengths of most writing on modernization that these matters have not been left in the background as mere cultural climate to be selectively cited when useful, but have been given central place—then the problem is compounded. One can understand the sober conclusion that the difficulties of determining the proper unit of analysis are simply not surmountable (Tilly, 1975: 619-620).

No wonder Tipps has told us to abandon modernization (Tipps, 1973: 223). The concept is vague as well as unattractive, even offensive to many. Its various models are difficult to apply; it may after all have some serious built-in biases, and it does not define its units of analysis with the clarity the social sciences seek. But a kind of common sense makes one hesitate to throw the concept out.

In the last two centuries, something similar has happened to most of the world—in technology obviously, through economics clearly, but also in politics and social organization. Perhaps no evidence makes the point so clearly as the demographic revolutions that have swept the world, slightly different in each case, rarely simultaneous, but with common patterns that are inescapable (Vinovskis, 1976: 81-85). These large-scale changes that put people in schools and change their diets,

redefine work, amass new wealth and power, and alter the organizations through which all this is structured while maintaining surprising continuity—this whole complex process deserves a name and modernization springs to mind.

The effort to understand that process has stimulated one of the most magnificent intellectual outpourings of which we know for well over a century, grand theories and specific research on at first a Western and now a worldwide scale. With all its pretensions and repetitions, its looseness and confusion, this great literature is close to the heart of the social sciences. A significant part of it claims to be about modernization, and any attempt to amputate it is likely to harm some of the vital organs to which it is attached.

MODERNIZATION AND HISTORY

“Every system is prisoner of its past” (Almond and Powell, 1966: 301). The concerns of modernization include those resonant themes that have stimulated the most admired historical writings: broad social transformations, the clash of cultures, and the tension between determinism and choice. In addition, the belief that some other society is better organized, more powerful or richer and that it has become so not by accident but as a result of superior learning, freedom, justice, loyalty, or organization has been held by most leaders since the early nineteenth century. Belief in modernization is a central fact of modern history and one in which liberalism, nationalism, and Marxism have concurred. (on the contemporary importance of that belief, see Nettl and Robertson, 1968). The burden of proof, adds Talcott Parsons (1971: 137), is on those who think that there is any society that will not adopt some variety of modernization.

Ironically, a concept developed from the Western perspective on “backward” countries has proved especially useful when applied to development in the richly documented West, exposing it as complex, uneven, and incomplete, the national state well-established, and communication comparatively easy. The close look that concepts of modernization require of the relationship between values and social change had the added advantage when seen in our own culture of making clear that those who have at one time or another resisted modernizing change cannot simply be dismissed as provincial (or peripheral), illiterate, or

peasant captives of tradition. As a laboratory for investigating determinisms, study of modernization has made us grant a larger part to climate and bacteria, restrict the claims for technology and mode of production, and eliminate those of race and perhaps religion.

Long regarded, by others, as the retarded member in the family of the social sciences, the discipline of history has been stimulated and changed by the insights of social psychology, the concepts of anthropology, the theories of economics, the models of sociology, and the behavioral methods of political science. The findings and methods of the other social sciences have met history, challenged it and learned from it, primarily through related attempts to analyze modernization. Historians who still take pride in crisp (or orotund) prose are inclined to smile on learning of their neighbors' new interest in time-series, diachronic analysis, or longitudinal studies; but the future of the discipline is made brighter by the widespread recognition of the need to study social behavior in context and across time. The interest in modernization is fundamentally an historical one, and historians have a stake in it. As they turn to the *longue durée*, adopt the techniques of demography, use quantitative methods, apply formal models, and test explicit hypotheses, they have more and more to contribute. One is tempted to add that a discipline able to find analytic potential in concepts so loose as Renaissance, the rising middle class, or feudalism ought to be able to do a good deal more with modernization.

A well-known report on history and the social sciences sees three major concerns of social-scientific history: collective behavior, theoretical concepts and models, and extensive comparison (Landes and Tilly, 1971: 71-73). In turning to modernization historians should make contributions through all three approaches. Despite well-founded criticism, even those skeptical of mechanical applications of the concept still expect to find it useful for a wide range of questions from new work on the family (Hareven, 1976: 203-204) to discriminating among forms of fascism (Turner, 1975: 131-133).

MODERNIZATION AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

"Man is not a captive of history" (Black, 1966: 157). From the standpoint of the other social sciences much the same can be said. Few subjects have brought these disciplines to such borrowings and coopera-

tion. A close sampling of the enormous literature on the subject will incidentally show that many of the errors attributed to modernization theory were effectively avoided by the ablest scholars all along. More important, it will show an extraordinary awareness of each other's work. The debates within each discipline—on evolution, capital, diffusion, community, center and periphery, class conflict, institutions, markets, religion, and elites—have in the context of modernization flowed across disciplines. This gives much of the writing on modernization something of the dull refinement of a faculty club as scholars endlessly cite each other; but it also offers hope of that cumulative quality that is a mark of science, a quality which requires that we "link our efforts to the mainstream of social and historical thought" (Goody, 1976: 41). Works on politics now pay more attention to the general culture, works on economics to politics, on culture to both, and all of them to history. The effect has been to integrate social change in the analysis of society, to recognize that alternation of one part affects the others (see, e.g., Weinstein and Platt, 1966). On the whole, the books have improved.

One of the strengths of that literature has been its effort to avoid simple ethnocentrism and evolutionism, to expand our awareness of social variety to include non-Western experience on an equal plane, as Auguste Comte and John Stuart Mill once wanted to do and most students of society in the late nineteenth, and early twentieth century considered false relativism (Burrow, 1966; Goody, 1976: 1-2; Almond and Powell, 1966: 1-8). Another strength has been the consistent effort to see society whole, interrelated in its complex parts though disassembled for analysis. Too often such goals stand firmer in the introductions than in the analyses—because the task is hard, methods less certain than they sound are easily abused even by the most careful scholar, and visions of definitive findings often urge galloping prospectors to push past complexity. More than any single intellectual movement, interest in modernization among the social sciences has revived that systematic comparison essential to all science (Easton, 1965: 483-484). Suspect evolutionism has been so closely associated with the aspiration for a science of society that it may be wiser to tame it through a sophisticated view of modernization (which even in its simplest forms rarely comes close to proposing unilinear evolution and which in principle at least allows for "negative or regressive" development) [Almond and Powell, 1966: 34-35] than to abandon the latter because of the naive

positivism common to the former. So long as we conduct our research as if the process of change has some direction and those changes affect all the world, we are operating in the seas of modernization. In doing so, we might as well start with the charts we have, especially since we now have some measures of their magnetic deviation.

Obviously, these common enterprises will go forward whether or not modernization continues to serve as the esperanto of the social sciences. The point lies there: the problems will remain even if the name is removed. Broadside at the concept will add to the confusion more than aid the battle to understand modern change. So far the effort has suffered no greater flaw than the tendency of those with fine conceptual schemes to fill them with borrowed and bad history. Significantly, a high proportion of the best work on modernization has been done by Europeans in America whose personal culture included rich knowledge of history combined with training in the social sciences and employed independent of traditional disciplinary lines. That lesson may be more important than the dangers of the "vague and generalized images" modernization evokes, at least so long as its severest critics can find no better alternative (Tipps, 1973: 202, 224).

The metaphors and syndromes of modernization became the sort of intellectual fad to which the social sciences, in their eagerness to prove themselves a science, are particularly subject. While some worried about clean definitions, usable models, and testable hypotheses, the subject was swamped as everyone attached his study to the term (with historians generally arriving last and loosest). Thus modernization theory without further specification is meaningless. We laugh at Don Quixote for tilting at windmills because he mistook them for something else, something more vital and less prosaic. In the case of those who break a lance against modernization theory (or even more tendentiously modernization theory of the family, of workers, or urbanization, of democracy, or of progress) the windmill is not even there. There is no modernization theory as such only particular theories, and certainly no theory of how specific institutions or movements must change, only the general implication that their changes are related to larger historical tendencies.

CONSIDERATIONS ON METHOD AND (WHAT IS LEFT OF) MODERNIZATION

Modernization refers to the opportunities and challenges of greater wealth and power that have become common to the modern world. These opportunities and challenges may arrive through diffusion (of ideas, institutions, or techniques), through formal exchange, or by force. The primary subject of study for students of modernization is the various adaptations to these common challenges and opportunities, adaptations that may include modification of established customs and institutions or the importation or invention of new ones, adaptations that may be primarily endogenous or externally determined, partial or extensive, both conscious and involuntary. These in turn may unleash a seemingly continuous process of change, build new resistance to further adaptation, or simply stop short. But the "form of adaptation is of greater concern to the study of modernization than the fate of civilizations" (Black, 1966:61).

The goal in studying these adaptations is systematic comparison to establish (1) the differences that follow from the various ways and timing by which these different challenges and opportunities make themselves felt, (2) the patterns of adaptation within various sectors of society and the interconnection between them as adaptive change takes place, and (3) the relationship to society at large of the social forms that emerge.

The broader periodizations of modernization stem from these common opportunities and challenges. More immediate periodizations follow from the particular cases of adaptation. Between the two, one can study with Braudel (1969: 43) the infinitely repeated "dialectic of the *durée*" between the specific instant and the slow unfolding of time. *Conjuncture* is not so different from development.

The units of analysis will be specific kinds of challenges and opportunities (whose commonality provides the sense, now decently faint, of historical direction); the groups, institutions, or regions that adapt; the common and specific forms of adaptation (a basis for building theory). Structural-functional approaches have been so important because they provide a conceptual way of relating these units to each other. It does not follow, although the leap in logic is easy to make, that similar social accomplishments require similar societies. But nota bene, this

analysis is still not in itself a theory. It does not predict the form or effect of change nor even its general cause; there is no assumption that these units of analysis evolve by internal laws.

Each of the social sciences has contributions to make at each level of analysis; but the most fruitful, especially for historians, is likely to be the middle level—the groups, institutions, or regions that adapt. In the analysis of these specific cases, models and methods can be borrowed from different disciplines with less risk of “interdisciplinary hangovers” and avoiding the early mistake of devoting “too much attention to total systems” (LaPalombara, 1969: 1254, 1259). The evolution observed will be “specific evolution” rather than “general,” and there will be no difficulty in acknowledging that “adaptive improvement is relative to the adaptive problem” (Sahlins and Service, 1960: 15, 26, 43-44). Nor is this adaptation to be confused with progress, for it includes responses like Hagen’s (1962: 197, 216, 415-416, 500-501) retreatism. Attention to adaptation at this middle level may indeed be similar to the shift Nisbet (1969: 230-231) has noted in Durkheim and Marx from interest in the panoramic to internal processes.

Once a critical group (of kinship, class, or occupation, for example) or institution (of trade, bureaucracy, or religion) or region (however defined) has been identified and isolated, systematic comparison still requires great care. A common error has been to assume that analogous social organizations have comparable social roles in different societies or at different times in the same society, and to assume a priori that the opportunities or threats they face are similar. This is why comparisons of armies have worked better than comparisons of parliaments, comparisons of parliaments better than of priests, of priests better than of the family. The more comparable their social functions, the more fruitful the comparison, and the test of effectiveness is less how useful the comparison is to some grand system than whether it increases understanding of the cases compared. The usual weakness in comparing Western feudalism with land tenure in Japan before the Tokugawa lies not in the comparison itself but in cutting it short to leap to a label for common stages. Knowledge is more surely increased when the comparison is of reality rather than abstractions, of particular cases to each other rather than to ideal types. In the literature on modernization there is ample illustration of the merits of this middle level and of careful comparison.

Current work on social indicators and the growing data banks of historical statistics should also be prominent in future work on modernization. Skillful use of aggregate data—on population, migration, urbanization, education, public services, housing, wages, arrests and convictions—can provide the sort of overall measures of change that economists and students of voting behavior have long exploited. As always, specific problems will call for particular methods; quantification, model-building, and archival research will, if our central questions are good and our hypotheses carefully posed, all make their contributions (Wallerstein, 1974b: 415). Modernization as a subject of study can continue to help identify vital questions; it provides no methods of its own. The ecological models of anthropologists as well as their conception of culture; the behavioral research of political scientists (and their example in eschewing formalism); newer fields like sociolinguistics with much to say about the nature of cultural contact and adaptation; econometrics and political economy; demography—all are enticingly relevant. Perhaps even the visions of team research and of common research designs to be employed across disciplines and in various parts of the world can be revived, despite the passing of the exuberance of the 1950s and 1960s. Healthy doubts about what modernization does to society (and what social scientists claim they are about to discover) could in their way be as useful a spur to exciting research as the open purses and luxurious conferences that once, in a double sense, seemed an intrinsic part of modernization.

If there is an historical lesson, it is not to expect too much. Modernization is essentially about social processes; it speaks but faintly to the outcome of entire cultures. Its most important findings in the future are likely to be about differences—in forms of adaptation, in opportunities presented, and threats endured in each era and area. Although that will make overarching theory more difficult, it does not reduce the chance for higher levels of generalization or make the continued study of modernization less worthwhile. Twenty-five years ago Marion Levy (1952: viii) foresaw that no definitive treatment of the task he had set himself would ever be completed but found the attempt worthwhile. The road to modernity, Edward Shils (1960: 411) warned an optimistic age, would be neither straight nor easy; and those who arrived would find their destination very different from what their ancestors had supposed. There is no reason to expect any less of the scientific study of social change.

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