

MODERNIZATION AND HUMAN VALUES

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INTRODUCTION

The focus of this paper is the contemporary use of the concept of modernization by many historians and social scientists to reinstate pernicious ideas of the past to explain human nature, history, and politics, in respect to the third world.¹ Any attempt to comprehend the global dynamics of the interaction between modernization and human values involves an attempt to understand at least three realities: 1) the process of modernization; 2) human values; and 3) the endeavor of the art of politics to deal with modernization in the light of human values. How we assess the above realities determines whether we have an optimistic or pessimistic future; for there is a universal consensus among developed² and developing nations that modernization has produced many advances as well as many results which are understood to be evil. The potency for good and evil develops equally and side by side in human history, because through time man tends to manifest all the potentialities of his nature.³ The knowledge and power that development concentrates in the hands of men can produce a progression of goods both material and moral, as well as a progression of evils, the likes of which have no historical antecedent. Thus we find that modernization has created an abundance of material goods and also environmental problems of momentous proportions which might even threaten the survival of the human race.

Also modernization has created a development of the democratic state of mind, that is, a deeper understanding of human rights. But also intense perversions of the understanding of human rights. Modernization has produced both the worse forms of totalitarianism and a very intense crisis in personal morality. Such an assessment causes many to ask: what can we do? or what should we do? or can anything be done? At this point we turn to the juncture of the study of history and moral philosophy, what Maritain properly designated as the philosophy of history.⁴ A juncture at which it is discovered that there is a necessary relationship between ethics and politics. If politics is to have a genuinely positive goal, its goal must be derived from authentic ethical principles in conjunction with a purification of the means

employed. Now the philosophy of history that one develops will also determine whether one sees the creativity of man as a moral agent as described in the *Existence and the Existent*⁵ as having any potency to deal with the issues related to modernization or whether man is trapped in an historical tidal wave which, irrespective of the actions of men, has the results already determined.

Our common experience in regard to notions such as modernization, human values, and politics is that we feel we have a comfortable grasp of their meaning until we undertake to discover an insightful scientific vision of these realities and how they are interacting to determine our lives. Such undertakings cause all kinds of ambiguities to creep into our thought and our judgments become fraught with ambivalence. This is the case because modernization is a process of the transformation of civilizations or cultures, and processes are subject to real definitions only when we can identify their goal. Thus, if we ask what is the goal of the process of modernization, no clear empirically verifiable answer comes forth and very little agreement is found among scholars of various disciplines. In fact some have questioned whether modernization has a final cause at all; a view that leads one immediately to question whether man through history has a final cause. This has led many, especially in the social sciences, to fashion nominalistic descriptive definitions which while informative do not satisfy the mind in its natural desire for real definitions that are productive of understanding. These persons also tend to define a part of the process as a definition of the whole. For example, there are those who consider modernization to be primarily economic, and reduce all other aspects of modern history to a function of economic processes. This view ultimately eclipses man's creative freedom and his knowledge of himself as a moral being. Those who give credence to this popular myth place man in the world as a helpless victim of economic forces simply to be described by the economic historian.

APRIORI DEDUCTIVE VS INDUCTIVE APOSTERIORI APPROACHES TO MODERNIZATION

There are two fundamentally different approaches to understanding history and the process of modernization. The first is the application of deductive models to history from apriori principles. The second is an inductive aposteriori approach to history and its processes.

The first approach produces a number of variations which assume one or a combination of the following as their apriori principles: a) something akin to the positivistic epistemology of Auguste Comte; b) the Idealistic metaphysics of Hegel; or c) the reductive materialism of Marx. It is interesting that many contemporary theorists in these schools do not recognize the roots of their viewpoint since they have become the unexamined fabric of the *modus operandi* of their discipline.

Within this framework we find two definitions of modernization prevalent today. Modernization means Capitalization or Marxification; and

both are essentially moral philosophies whether or not this is generally recognized. What must be remembered is that Adam Smith was a professor of moral philosophy at Glasgow University. His *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776)⁶ was a work in moral philosophy. Smith viewed his work as moral advice to the British Crown as to the best way to rule the empire. In Smith's view, power and wealth were the criteria for judging the status of nations; and undirected free enterprise was offered as the best means of fostering the growth of the power and wealth of nations. The invisible hand⁷ of competition would produce for the Crown and her subjects the greatest economic development. Since this view is primarily concerned with defining the good and providing priority values as a guide for human decisions, it can only be understood as essentially a moral philosophy. Marx on the other hand replaces the invisible hand of competition with the invisible hand of the necessary dialectical forces of matter which, again offers us a set of values and priorities as a guide for human action.⁸ Marxism with its glorification of dialectical praxis again is essentially a moral philosophy. Although Marx rejects contemplative philosophy and moral philosophy vis-a-vis Hegel, he does not hesitate to develop a moral philosophy of his own, with its own set of values and prescriptions for human action. There are necessitating laws determining history and human nature.

What causes both not to want to be identified as moral philosophies is that the first wounds our understanding of human freedom and human nature and therefore corrupts our notion of justice; whereas the second eradicates the need for a concept of justice, along with the notions of human freedom and human nature by rendering man a relativistic monad of dialectical forces. Both these views in their pure forms, Liberalism and Marxism, have their myths. If these myths are given credence, one falls victim to the despair that results from attempts to establish justice on concepts drawn from the material order of things. For a more detailed analysis of my view, see "Democracy of the Human Person or Man as a Moral Agent."⁹

What must be avoided is the ever present danger of the creative forces of history being threatened by a pernicious past, in this case the intellectual corpses of two deterministic economic views of human history that are purported to be ultimate explanations of human nature and modern human history. Those who adhere to these views are men suffering from intellectual and moral necrophilia; they represent an attempt to impose dead moral philosophies on the world in the name of modernization. Both share the myth that government is an evil which either will disappear as the process comes to term with the forces driving it, or that government is to be rendered invisible by giving it only a negative role in protecting economic rights. Thus libertarianism and Marxism are not significantly different.

These deterministic reductionistic models reject the need for genuine moral philosophy because they assume a total immanency of human values

in respect to the economic process itself, in that the process is posited with the power to produce progressive values in and of itself, independently of human freedom. Therefore actions which appear to be the product of human choices are merely the product of apriori determining forces. What appear then subjectively to be free choices, objectively are merely the ripe economic forces becoming manifest. These views lay claim to being scientific sociology or scientific social history. Once the complexity of the deterministic process becomes known, human history and human actions become quite predictable. The indeterminacy that appears is a consequence of our ignorance of the process, or something akin to Heisenberg's uncertainty principle in physics. The study of values is contained within economics or is viewed as a discipline subordinate to economics.

The consequence of the above is that the creativity of man as moral agent, and man's self-knowledge through his existential experience of his free moral actions, is forever lost. Man is said to make history not by free choices but by conditions bequeathed by the past and the eternal economic force inherent in the process.

There is however an inductive aposteriori approach to understanding the processes of history, an approach that recognizes the fact that human history is the study of the sequence of singular concrete contingent realities, an approach that sees the uniqueness of entire courses of events as reflecting the dynamics of free choices made by men, free choices that enable men to create new currents in regard to the dynamics of development. This understanding of the process of development reflects a genuine grasp of human nature, and the creativity of man as moral agent. In this understanding of the historical process one recognizes that man lives in a world characterized by adventure. In other words, the course of events is flexible and mutable, filled with contingency and chance, even though the world of essences is filled with necessary laws. Therefore there can not be a genuine apriori explanation of history nor a reconstruction of history according to necessitating laws, even though there can be a deciphering of general aspects or tendencies. The necessity proper to laws does not make the events necessary, because laws refer to universal essences known by abstraction while events take place in existential concrete reality, subject to independent lines of causation.

This is not only a true view of the nature of historical processes but the only one that will enable man to rediscover the vitality of his moral creative freedom in regard to historical processes as described in *Existence and the Existent*. In such a view of the historical process man is recognized to be the kind of being who becomes a person and is revealed to himself in his uniqueness through moral action. Man is an existent who becomes a person when the freedom of spontaneity proper to animals becomes, through knowledge and love, the freedom of autonomy. Man is that being who by a genuine act of love and justice can cast a stone at an impervious universe

and shatter it with one blow. Man is *homo sapiens*, capable of recognizing means as means to an end, and therefore capable of recognizing that economic systems exist for the sake of man and should be subject to the needs of justice. Man is also that existent who is capable of rejecting the proposition that man exists for the sake of economic systems and that he should put his faith in invisible forces of history to determine the course of future events. Man is a person who refuses to surrender what is most beautiful about human nature; namely, that man like God is the author of his actions and that he is even capable of creating his own hell by failing to have a genuine vision of his calling. For, where there is no vision, the people perish. For we still live in a world full of false gods and we will remain condemned to enslavement unless we exorcise these false gods from our world.¹⁰

LEVELS IN DEVELOPING A DEFINITION OF MODERNIZATION AND THE GOALS OF HUMAN HISTORY

There are at least three stages to be noted in order to develop a proper definition of modernization. The first stage is understood in terms of the process by means of which men consume natural resources in order to create great quantities of inanimate energy to replace the animate labor of brute animals and men. Thereby human labor is rendered more efficient, and the productivity of human labor geometrically increased. Technological industrialization and the commercialization of human activity became a necessary means to this end. This is economic modernization. The second stage is understood in considering that skilled labor forces were required in order to keep the process going. However, skills become obsolete even within a generation; thus an ever increasing amount of time and energy has to be invested to provide a well trained, if not well educated, commercially usable work force to feed into the technologically advancing economies. Man thus might erroneously come to view himself as a cybernetic economic unit. In this context, urbanization and geographic mobility appear to become a necessary social reality, and the individual's identification with family and communities become diminished proportionally. This process might be termed social modernization, with many concomitant results such as secularization. These processes have created havoc in respect to the common good of mankind, in regard to the environment in which we live, and in regard to our personal lives. The third level of modernization is political modernization. At this level of the process of modernization, man attempts to develop his moral conscience and to properly conceive justice. He strives to attain a proper understanding of human rights in the light of genuine justice. Only when this last form of modernization is properly achieved will the process of modernization tend towards what is its real final cause. Also only through justice can the evils created by the first two levels of modernization be corrected. It is clear that modernization in the

end is primarily a matter of man searching for a genuine moral vision of what he is and what he must do.

The great danger is that we can become preoccupied with only one of the three levels of modernization. For when this happens, one commits oneself, by an act of faith, to one of the apriori deductive models of human history, and the principles of that model become the object of a secular religion with an economic eschatology. The danger here is that the believer sees only one of the three major tendencies of modern history, namely that of subduing nature without understanding the serious need for man to organize his freedoms and direct the forces he himself has created. Only if man develops a proper use of his freedom in light of the progress in man's moral conscience can genuine modernization be accomplished.

For only then will the purification of the means take place that is required for man to give primacy to the development of good over the development of evil. For man must not only subdue nature to attain autonomy and he must subdue the mechanisms he has created in order to subdue nature. Man must tame the industrialized world and all the threats to his existence and human rights that it has created.

THE CRISIS IN PERCEPTION OF MODERNIZATION IN UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRIES

Unfortunately there is a global crisis in the perception of what the process of modernization entails and what means are available to the Third world countries to develop. If this misperception continues it will cause the world to experience ever more traumatic eruptions in the environment and in the social order. The problem is that the prevailing modes of conceptualizing modernization in the third world and in particularly central and south America are in terms of the apriori deductive models discussed above. Here a global perspective has become contracted into a globalist theory. This theory which begins with a fact, namely, that there is a world economic system, but insists that every event in the system can be properly interpreted only in terms of the apriori deductive models described above. The dynamics of modernization for the majority of globalists is to be understood only in terms of Marxist- Leninist dialectics. Thus we have the contemporary Latin American theorists such as Enzo Faletto,¹¹ Immanuel Wallerstein,¹² and Patrick McGowan¹³ advocating the view that less developed countries are faced with a world- imperialistic capitalistic system which is controlled by the more developed countries. They are critical of the realistic conception of international relations in which the desire to maintain a balance of power and peace are advocated by the developed countries. Most globalists view the realistic approach to international relations as a means whereby the developed countries try to keep the less developed countries dependent upon them.¹⁴ All of the above, they claim, is directed to producing and preserving a situation of trade agreements which preserve the *status quo*. This has led some, like Augustin Cueva,¹⁵ to

follow rigidly Rosa Luxemburg¹⁶ in the belief that only the hammer blow of revolution can break the relationship of dependency between the developed and less developed countries. Therefore in order to find their national identity the less developed countries must revolt to break out of the state of dependency. The less developed countries must overthrow their own rulers who cooperate in and perpetuate this system for their private interest at the expense of their own nation. What they fail to see is that these revolutions merely exchange one relationship of dependency for another.

Irrespective of the above, globalists persist in the belief that only through a violent pushing forward of the ripened economic forces, and by introducing a good dose of anarchy into the system, can the national identity of the less developed countries be made manifest. Thus nationalism and marxism become blended together. Fortunately there are some who advocate a less rigid view of the process e.g. the Argentine economist Raul Prebisch¹⁷ who recognizes the problem of national identity but rules out the rigid view that large-scale historical processes are immune from the actions of human beings. Fernando Henrique Cardoso,¹⁸ for example, calls for a transfiguration of the present structures, thereby replacing these socialist structures with others not so predetermined, while Prebisch calls for a state-guided capitalism. Both men however admit that man can use his freedom in a positive way to provide a viable solution.

As I said in 1975,¹⁹ the modern technological mind-set as we have experienced it is inherently violent but it need not necessarily be that way. This can be avoided if the process of industrialization is made subject to the demands of justice by good men, who will purify the means of modernization in light of a genuine understanding of the various levels of the process of modernization and how they are related to the common good of this and future generations. Only in this way can the aspirations of mankind become fulfilled and the development of good be given precedence over that of evil. For the natural goal of history is not only that man subdue nature and that all his potentialities be actualized, but also that man civilize the means whereby he subdues nature, the modern technological industrialized economies he has created. This can be accomplished only by fulfilling the democratic political aspirations of man in terms of social justice properly understood, when economics is made subject to justice. Otherwise developing countries will repeat all the past mistakes of developed countries, a scenario that the world in a genuinely human sense might not survive.

What is needed immediately are treaties to be created where men of different intellectual persuasions agree on a practical mode of cooperation so as to avoid having developing countries repeat the errors of the past. This is in the interest of all, for the world can ill afford the ecological and political consequences that would otherwise follow. We can not afford to have Brazil continue to destroy the rain forest through a misperception of its

agricultural possibilities; nor can the world afford further development of nuclear energy where uncontrollable nuclear accidents like Chernobyl are not only likely but morally certain. The health cost of this to present and future generations is immeasurable. In addition it is becoming clear that nuclear energy is economically unsound. The effect of having developing countries invest in another dead end is simply unacceptable. Lastly, the cost of perpetuating in the political realm the misconceptions about modernization will lead as it has in the past to the enslavement of many. These false gods will pervert man's understanding of human rights and the common good. When the common good is misrepresented all forms of evil pour forth. Developed nations must provide less developed nations with a viable alternative in which they can participate in the benefits of modernization without suffering the consequences of repeating the past. This is possible only if we regain the dynamic view of history, and of man as a moral agent, to be found in Maritain's *Existence and the Existent*.

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NOTES

1. H. Elbaki, "Changing Patterns in Research on the Third World," *Annual Review of Sociology* 4 (1978) 239-257.
2. See M. B. Jansen, ed., *Changing Japanese Attitudes Toward Modernization* (Princeton, 1965) and D. H. Shively, ed., *Tradition and Modernization in Japanese Culture* (Princeton, 1976).
3. See J. Maritain, *On the Philosophy of History*, ed. J. W. Evans (New York, 1957) ch. 2 and 4.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
5. See J. Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, ch. 2-4.
6. Ed. E. Cannan (New York, 1937). It is interesting to compare this with his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (New York, 1966).
7. *Wealth of Nations*, p. 423.
8. See *Capital* (Chicago, 1906-1909), *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (Chicago, 1904), *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (New York, 1965), and *the Poverty of Philosophy* (1910).
9. J.-L. Allard, ed., *Jacques Maritain: A Philosopher in the World* (Ottawa, 1985) 303 ff.
10. See E. Gilson, *God and Philosophy* (Clinton, MA, 1955) 136.
11. *Dependence Theory and the Development of Latin America* (Berkeley, 1979).
12. *The Modern World System*, 2 vols. (New York, 1974, 1980).
13. P. J. McGowan and B. Kordan, "Imperialism in World System Perspective," *World System Structure*, ed. Hollist and Rosenau (Beverly Hills, 1981).
14. Theories of international relations fall into three categories: (1) Realism, in which the state is assumed to be the principal rational unitary actor in international relations and in which national security is the primary final cause influencing foreign policy; (2) Pluralism, in which the foreign policy of the state reflects the interaction of competing individuals, interest groups, multinational corporations, and bureaucracies within the state (a multipurpose foreign policy develops, stressing social and ecological issues as well as national security issues); (3) Globalism, in which all foreign policy is understood in terms of the history of economic hegemony and the mechanisms of domination that economic hegemony produces. Realism stresses peaceful change by minor adjustments in the balance of power. Pluralism advocates the peaceful transformation of world politics, hoping that international institutions can aid in the process. But Globalism stresses revolutions as the only means of changing international relations. See P. R. Vikotti and M. V. Kauppi, *International Relations Theory* (New York, 1987).
15. "Perspectives of Dependency Theory," *Latin American Perspectives* (1976).
16. *Reform and Revolution* (New York, 1973). The original German text dates from 1889.
17. *Toward a Dynamic Development Policy for Latin America* (New York, 1963).
18. "The Consumption of Dependency Theory in the United States," *Latin American Reach Review* (1977).
19. "Technology and Violence," *Divus Thomas (Piacenza)* 78 (1975).