

Modern, Anti, Post and Neo*

History is not a text, not a narrative, master or otherwise. [Yet] as an absent cause, it is inaccessible to us except in textual form, [and] our approach to it and to the Real itself necessarily passes through its prior textualization.

Fredric Jameson

Sometime during the mid 1970s, at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, a major debate erupted around modernization theory that crystallized a decade of social and intellectual change. Two speakers were featured, Alex Inkeles and Immanuel Wallerstein. Inkeles reported that his studies of 'modern man' had demonstrated that personality shifts toward autonomy and achievement were crucial and predictable results of social modernization, which revolved most centrally around the industrialization of society.¹ The response to Inkeles was appreciative from many of the senior members of the audience, sceptical from the younger. Wallerstein responded to Inkeles in a manner that pleased the younger generation more. 'We do not live in a modernizing world but in a capitalist world,' he proclaimed, asserting that 'what makes this world tick is not the need for achievement but the need for profit'. When Wallerstein went on to lay out 'an agenda of intellectual work for those who are seeking to

understand the *world systemic transition from capitalism to socialism in which we are living*, he literally brought the younger members of the audience to their feet.²

Fifteen years later, the lead article in the *American Sociological Review* was entitled 'A Theory of Market Transition: From Redistribution to Markets in State Socialism'. The transition referred to in this article was rather different from the one Wallerstein had in mind. Written by Victor Nee, once inclined to Maoism and now a rational-choice theorist specializing in China's burgeoning market economy, the article suggested that the only hope for organized socialism was capitalism. In fact, Nee portrayed socialism exactly as Marx had depicted capitalism, and provoked remarkably similar expectations. State socialism, he wrote, was an archaic, outdated mode of production, one whose internal contradictions were leading to capitalism. Employing the class-conflict analytic of Marx to the productive system that Marx believed would end such conflict for all time, Nee argued that it is state socialism, not capitalism, that 'appropriates surplus directly from the immediate producers and creates and structures social inequality through the processes of its reallocation'. Such expropriation of surplus—exploitation—can be overcome only if workers are given the opportunity to own and sell their own labour power. Only with markets, Nee insisted, could workers develop the power to 'withhold their product' and protect their 'labour power'. This movement from one mode of production to another would shift power to the formerly oppressed class. 'The transition from redistribution to markets,' he concluded, 'involves a transfer of power favouring direct producers'.³

A New 'Transition'

In the juxtaposition between these formulations of modernity, socialism, and capitalism there lies a story. They describe not only competing theoretical positions but deep shifts in historical sensibility. We must understand both together, I believe, if either contemporary history or contemporary theory is to be understood at all.

Social scientists and historians have long talked about 'the transition'. A historical phrase, a social struggle, a moral transformation for better or for worse, the term referred, of course, to the movement from feudalism to capitalism. For Marxists, the transition initiated the unequal and contradictory system that produced its antithesis, socialism and equality. For liberals, the transition represented an equally momentous transfor-

* To give it its full subtitle: 'How Intellectuals Have Coded, Narrated, and Explained the "New World of Our Time"'. An earlier version of this text appeared in the *Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1994. A more elaborate variant is forthcoming in my book *Fin-de-Siècle Social Theory: Relativism, Reduction, and the Problem of Reason*, Verso, London 1995.

² A. Inkeles and D.H. Smith, *Becoming Modern: Industrial Change in Six Developing Countries*, Cambridge, Mass. 1974.

³ I. Wallerstein, 'Modernization: Requiescat in Pace', in I. Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World Economy*, New York 1979, pp. 133 and 135. Original emphasis.

⁴ V. Nee, 'A Theory of Market Transition: From Redistribution to Markets in State Socialism', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 54, 1989, p. 666.

mation of traditional society but created a set of historical alternatives—democracy, capitalism, contracts and civil society—that did not have a moral or social counterfactual like socialism ready to hand.

In the last five years, for the first time in the history of social science, 'the transition' has come to mean something that neither of these earlier treatments could have foreseen. It is the transition from communism to capitalism, a phrase that seems oxymoronic even to our chastened ears. The sense of world-historical transformation remains, but the straight line of history seems to be running in reverse.

In this recent period we have witnessed perhaps the most dramatic set of spatially and temporally contiguous social transformations in the history of the world. The more contemporary meaning of transition may not entirely eclipse the earlier one, yet there is no doubt that it has already diminished its significance and will arouse significantly more intellectual interest for a long time to come.

This second great transformation, to redirect Polanyi's famous phrase, has produced an unexpected, and for many an unwelcome, convergence in both history and social thought. It is impossible even for already committed intellectuals to ignore the fact that we are witnessing the death of a major alternative not only in social thought but in society itself. In the foreseeable future, it is unlikely that either citizens or elites will try to structure their primary allocative systems in non-market ways.

For their part, social scientists will be far less likely to think of anti-market 'socialist societies' as counterfactual alternatives with which to explain their own. They will be less likely to explain economic stratification by implicitly comparing it with an egalitarian distribution produced by publicly rather than privately held property, a 'plausible world'⁴ that inevitably seems to suggest that economic inequality is produced by the existence of private property itself. Social scientists will, perhaps, also be less likely to explain status stratification by postulating the counterfactual tendency to communal esteem in a world that is uncorrupted by individualism of a bourgeois rather than socialist kind. Similarly, it will become much more difficult to speak about the emptiness of formal democracy, or to explain its limitations by pointing merely to the existence of a dominant economic class, for these explanations, too, require counterfactuals of a traditionally 'socialist' kind. In brief, it will be much less easy to explain contemporary social problems by pointing to the capitalist nature of the societies of which they are a part.

In this essay, I do not propose a return to 'convergence' or modernization theories of society as such, as some reinvigorated proponents of the early tradition apparently do.⁵ I will propose, however, that contemporary social theory must be much more sensitive to the apparent reconvergence of the world's regimes and that, as a result, we must try to incorporate

⁴ G. Hawthorn, *Plausible Worlds: Possibility and Understanding in History and the Social Sciences*, Cambridge 1991.

⁵ A. Inkeles, 'Transitions to Democracy', *Society*, vol. 28, no. 4, 1991; S.M. Lipset, 'The Death of the Third Way', *The National Interest*, summer 1990.

some broad sense of the universal and shared elements of development into a critical, undogmatic, and reflective theory of social change. Indeed, in the conclusion of this essay I will demonstrate that a growing range of widely diverse contemporary social theorists, from literary radicals and rational choice theorists to postcommunists, are speaking convergence even if (apologies to Molière) they are unaware of the fact, and I will address the challenging question, recently raised so trenchantly by Muller,⁶ of whether this emerging conversation can avoid the relatively simplistic and totalizing form that obliterated the complexities of earlier societies and the particularisms of our own.

Despite this new and more sophisticated form, however, what I will later call neo-modern theory will remain as much myth as science,⁷ as much narrative as explanation.⁸ Even if one believes, as I do, that such a broader and more sophisticated theory of social development is now historically compelling, it remains the case that every general theory of social change is rooted not only in cognition but in existence, that it possesses a surplus of meaning in Ricoeur's deeply suggestive phrase.⁹ Modernity, after all, has always been a highly relativist term.¹⁰ It emerged in the fifth century when newly Christianized Romans wished to distinguish their religiosity from two forms of barbarians, the heathens of antiquity and the unregenerate Jews. In medieval times, modernity was reinvented as a term implying cultivation and learning, which allowed contemporary intellectuals to identify backward, with the classical learning of the Greek and Roman heathens themselves. With the Enlightenment, modernity became identified with rationality, science, and forward progress, a semantically arbitrary relationship that seems to have held steady to this day. Who can doubt that, sooner or later, a new historical period will displace this second 'age of equipoise'¹¹ into which we have so inadvertently but fortuitously slipped. New contradictions will emerge and competing sets of world-historical possibilities will arise, and it is unlikely that they will be viewed in terms of the emerging neo-modernization frame.

It is precisely this sense of the instability, the imminent transitoriness of the world, that introduces myth into social theory. Despite the fact that we have no idea what our historical possibilities will be, every theory of social change must theorize not only the past but the present and future as well. We can do so only in a non-rational way, in relation not only to what we know but to what we believe, hope, and fear. Every historical period needs a narrative that defines its past in terms of the present, and suggests

a future that is fundamentally different, and typically 'even better', than contemporary time. For this reason, there is always an eschatology, not merely an epistemology, in theorizing about social change.

I proceed now to examine early modernization theory, its contemporary reconstruction, and the vigorous intellectual alternatives that arose in the period between. I will insist throughout on the relation of these theoretical developments to social and cultural history, for only in this way can we understand social theory not only as science but also as an ideology in the sense made famous by Geertz.¹² For unless we recognize the interpenetration of science and ideology in social theory, neither element can be evaluated or clarified in a rational way. With this stricture in mind, I delineate four distinctive theoretical-cum-ideological periods in postwar social thought: modernization theory and romantic liberalism; anti-modernization theory and heroic radicalism; postmodern theory and comic detachment; and the emerging phase of neo-modernization or reconvergence theory, which seems to combine the narrative forms of each of its predecessors on the postwar scene.

While I will be engaging in genealogy, locating the historical origins of each phase of postwar theory in an archeological way, it is vital to keep in mind that each of the theoretical residues of the phases which I examine remains vitally alive today. My archeology, in other words, is an investigation not only of the past but of the present. Because the present is history, this genealogy will help us to understand the theoretical sedimentation within which we live intellectually today.

Modernization: Code, Narrative, and Explanation

Drawing from a centuries-long tradition of evolutionary and Enlightenment-inspired theories of social change, 'modernization' theory as such was born with the publication of Marian Levy's book on Chinese family structure¹³ and died sometime in the mid 1960s, during one of those extraordinarily heated rites of spring that marked student uprisings, antiwar movements, and newly humanist socialist regimes, and which preceded the long hot summers of the race riots and Black Consciousness movement in the US.

Modernization theory can and certainly should be evaluated as a scientific theory, in the post-positivist, *wissenschaftlich* sense. As an explanatory effort, the modernization model was characterized by the following ideal-typical traits:

- 1) Societies were conceived as coherently organized systems whose subsystems were closely interdependent.
- 2) Historical development was parsed into two types of social systems, the traditional and the modern, statuses which were held to determine the character of their societal subsystems in determinate ways.
- 3) The modern was defined with reference to the social organization

⁶ K. Muller, "Modernizing" Eastern Europe: Theoretical Problems and Political Dilemmas', *European Journal of Sociology*, vol. 33, 1992.

⁷ I. Barbour, *Myths, Models, and Paradigms: The Nature of Scientific and Religious Language*, London 1974.

⁸ N. Entrikin, *The Betweenness of Place*, Baltimore 1991.

⁹ P. Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, Toronto 1977.

¹⁰ J.C.A. Pocock, 'Modernity and Anti-Modernity in the Anglophone Political Traditions', in S.N. Eisenstadt, *Patterns of Modernity, Vol. 1: The West*, London 1987; J. Habermas, 'Modernity versus Postmodernity', *New German Critique* 22, 1981; F. Bourricaud, 'Universal Reference' and the Process of Modernization', in *Patterns of Modernity*.

¹¹ W.L. Burn, *The Age of Equipoise*, London 1974.

¹² C. Geertz, 'Ideology as a Cultural System' (1964), in Geertz, *The Interpretation of Culture*, New York 1973.

¹³ M. Levy, *The Family Revolution in Modern China*, Cambridge, Mass. 1949.

and culture of specifically Western societies, which were typified as individualistic, democratic, capitalist, scientific, secular, and stable, and as dividing work from home in gender-specific ways.

4) As a historical process, modernization was held to involve non-revolutionary, incremental change.

5) The historical evolution to modernity—modernization—was viewed as likely to succeed, thus assuring that traditional societies would be provided with the resources for what Parsons¹⁴ called a general process of adaptive 'upgrading', including economic take-off to industrialization, democratization via law, and secularization and science via education.

There were important aspects of truth in these models, which were articulated by thinkers of considerable historical and sociological insight. One truth, for example, lay in the insight that there are functional and not merely idealistic exigencies that push social systems toward democracy, markets, and the universalization of culture, and that shifts toward 'modernity' in any subsystem create considerable pressures on the others to respond in a complementary way. This understanding made it possible for the more sophisticated among them to make prescient predictions about the eventual instability of state socialist societies, thus avoiding the rational-is-the-real embarrassments encountered by theorists of a more leftist kind. Thus, Parsons insisted long before perestroika 'that the processes of democratic revolution have not reached an equilibrium in the Soviet Union and that further developments may well run broadly in the direction of Western types of democratic government, with responsibility to an electorate rather than to a self-appointed party'.¹⁵ It should perhaps also be emphasized that, whatever their faults, modernization theorists were not provincials. Despite their ideological intent, the most important of them rarely confused functional interdependence with historical inevitability. Parsons's theorizing, for example, stressed that systemic exigencies actually opened up the possibility of historical choice:

Underneath the ideological conflicts [between capitalism and communism] that have been so prominent, there has been emerging an important element of very broad consensus at the level of values, centring in the complex we often refer to as 'modernization' ... Clearly, definite victory for either side is not the only possible choice. We have another alternative, namely, the eventual integration of both sides—and of uncommitted units as well—in a wider system of order.¹⁶

Despite these important insights, however, the historical judgement of subsequent social thought has not erred in its evaluation of modernization theory as a failed explanatory scheme. Neither non-Western nor pre-contemporary societies can be conceptualized as internally homogeneous.¹⁷ Their subsystems are more loosely coupled¹⁸ and their cultural

codes more independent.¹⁹ Nor is there the kind of dichotomized historical development that can justify a single conception of traditional or modern, as Eisenstadt's extensive investigation of 'Axial Age' civilizations makes clear.²⁰ Even the concept 'Western society', built upon spatial and historical contiguity, fails sufficiently to recognize historical specificity and national variation. Social systems, moreover, are not as internally homogeneous as were supposed, nor are there necessarily grounds for optimism that modernization will succeed. In the first place, universalizing change is neither imminent nor developmental in an idealist sense; it is often abrupt, involving contingent positions of power, and can have murderous results. In the second place, even if one were to accept a linear conceptual scheme, one would have to acknowledge Nietzsche's observation that historical regression is just as possible as progress, indeed, perhaps even more likely. Finally, modernization, even if it does triumph, does not necessarily increase social contentment. It may be that the more highly developed a society, the more it produces, encourages, and relies upon strident and often utopian expressions of alienation and criticism.²¹

When we look back on a 'scientifically invalidated' theory that dominated the thinking of an entire intellectual stratum for two decades, those of us who are still committed to the project of a rational and generalizing social science will be inclined to ask ourselves, why was it believed? While we would ignore at our peril the partial truths of modernization theory, we would not be wrong to conclude that there were extra-scientific reasons involved. Social theory must be considered not only as a research programme but as a generalized discourse, one very important part of which is ideology.²² It is as a meaning structure, as a form of existential truth, that social-scientific theory functions effectively in an extra-scientific way.

Modernization as Metalanguage

To understand modernization theory and its fate, then, we must examine it not only as a scientific theory but as an ideology—not in the mechanistic Marxist or more broadly Enlightenment sense of 'false consciousness'²³ but rather in the Geertzian one. Modernization theory was a symbolic system that functioned not only to explain the world in a rational way, but to interpret the world in a manner that provided 'meaning and motivation'.²⁴ It functioned as a metalanguage that instructed people how to live.

¹⁹ J. Hall, *Powers and Liberties: Causes and Consequences of the Rise of the West*, Oxford 1985.

²⁰ See for example S.N. Eisenstadt, 'Social Change, Differentiation, and Evolution', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 29, 1964; J.C. Alexander, 'The Fragility of Progress: An Interpretation of the Turn Toward Meaning in Eisenstadt's Later Work', *Acta Sociologica*, vol. 35, 1992.

²¹ E. Durkheim, *Suicide* (1897), New York 1937.

²² J.C. Alexander and P. Colomy, 'Traditions and Competition: Preface to a Postpositivist Approach to Knowledge Accumulation' (1992), in J.C. Alexander, *Neofunctionalism and Beyond*, New York 1995.

²³ R. Boudon, *L'Idéologie*, Paris 1986.

²⁴ R.N. Bellah, 'The Sociology of Religion', in Bellah, *Beyond Belief*, New York 1970.

¹⁴ T. Parsons, *The Evolution of Societies*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 1966.

¹⁵ T. Parsons, *The System of Modern Societies*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 1971, p. 127.

¹⁶ T. Parsons, 'Evolutionary Universals in Society', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 29, no. 3, 1964, pp. 466 and 474.

¹⁷ M. Mann, *The Sources of Social Power. Vol. 1*, New York 1986.

¹⁸ J. Meyer and B. Rowan, 'Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 83, 1971; J.C. Alexander and P. Colomy, eds, *Differentiation Theory and Social Change*, New York 1990.

Intellectuals must interpret the world, not simply change or even explain it. To do so in a meaningful, reassuring, or inspiring fashion means that intellectuals must make distinctions. They must do so especially in regard to phases of history. If intellectuals are to define the 'meaning' of their 'time', they must identify a time that preceded the present, offer a morally compelling account of why it was superseded, and tell their audiences whether or not such a transformation will be repeated vis-à-vis the world they live in. This is, of course, merely to say that intellectuals produce historical narratives about their own time.

The ideological dimension of modernization theory is further illuminated by thinking of this narrative function in a structuralist, or semiotic way.²¹ Because the existential unit of reference is one's own time, the empirical unit of reference must be totalized as one's own society. It must, in other words, be characterized as a whole regardless of the actual nature of its divisions and inconsistencies. Not only one's own time, then, but one's own society must be characterized by a single linguistic term, and the world that preceded the present must be characterized by another single broad term as well. In light of these considerations, the important ideological, or meaning-making function that modernization theory served seems fairly clear. For Western but especially American and American-educated intellectuals, modernization theory provided a telos for postwar society by making it 'historical'. It did so by providing postwar society with a temporal and spatial identity, an identity that could be formed only in a relation of difference with another, immediately preceding time and place. As Pocock has recently emphasized, 'modernity' must be understood as the 'consciousness rather than the condition of being "modern"'. Taking a linguistic model of consciousness, he suggests that such consciousness must be defined as much by difference as identification. The modern is a 'signifier' that functions as an 'excluder' at the same time:

We call something (perhaps ourselves) modern in order to distance that of which we speak from some antecedent state of affairs. The antecedent is most unlikely to be of neutral effect in defining either what is to be called 'modern' or the 'modernity' attributed to it.²⁶

If I may give to this approach a late-Durkheimian turn,²⁷ I would like to suggest that we think of modernity as constructed upon a binary code. This code serves the mythological function of dividing the known world into the sacred and profane, thereby providing a clear and compelling picture of how contemporaries must act to manoeuvre the space in between. In this sense, the discourse of modernity bears a striking resemblance to metaphysical and religious salvation discourse of diverse kinds.²⁸ It also resembles the more secular dichotomizing discourses that citizens employ to identify themselves with, and to distance themselves

from, the diverse individuals, styles, groups, and structures in contemporary societies.²⁹

It has been argued, in fact, that a 'discourse of civil society' provides a structured semiotic field for the conflicts of contemporary societies, positing idealized qualities like rationality, individuality, trust, and truth as essential qualities for inclusion in the modern, civil sphere, while identifying qualities such as irrationality, conformity, suspicion, and deceit as traditional traits that demand exclusion and punishment.³⁰ There is a striking overlap between these ideological constructions and the explanatory categories of modernization theory, for example Parsons's pattern variables. In this sense, modernization theory may be seen as a generalizing and abstracting effort to transform a historically specific categorial scheme into a scientific theory of development applicable to any culture around the entire world.

Because every ideology is carried by an intellectual cadre,³¹ it is important to ask why the intellectual cadre in a particular time and place articulated and promoted a particular theory. In regard to modernization theory, despite the importance of a small number of influential Europeans like Raymond Aron,³² we are speaking primarily about American and American-educated intellectuals. Following some recent work by Eyer-
man³³ on the formation of American intellectuals in the 1950s, I would begin by emphasizing the distinctive social characteristics of the postwar period in the United States, particularly the sharpness of the transition to the postwar world. This transition was marked by massive suburbanization and the decline of culturally-bounded urban communities, a dramatic reduction in the ethnicity of American life, an extraordinary lessening of labour-capital conflict, and unprecedented long-term prosperity.

These new social circumstances, coming as they did at the end of two decades of massive national and international upheaval, induced in postwar American intellectuals a sense of a fundamental historical 'break'. On the Left, intellectuals like C. Wright Mills and David Riesman issued jeremiads against what they feared was the massification of society. In the liberal centre, theorists like Parsons suggested how the same transition had created a more egalitarian, more inclusive, and significantly more differentiated society. On the Right, there were cries of alarm about the

²⁹ R. Wagner-Pacifici, *The Moro Morality Play: Terrorism as Social Drama*, Chicago 1986; P. Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1979), Cambridge, Mass. 1984.

³⁰ J.C. Alexander, 'Citizen and Enemy as Symbolic Classification: On the Polarizing Discourse of Civil Society', in M. Fournier and M. Lamont, eds, *Cultivating Differences*, Chicago 1992; J.C. Alexander and P. Smith, 'The Discourse of American Civil Society: A New Proposal for Cultural Studies', *Theory and Society*, vol. 22, 1993.

³¹ G. Konrad and I. Szelenyi, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*, New York 1979; S.N. Eisenstadt, ed., *The Origins and Diversity of Axial Age Civilizations*, Albany, NY 1986.

³² R. Aron, *Eighteen Lectures on Industrial Society*, New York 1962.

³³ R. Eyer-
man, 'Intellectuals: A Framework for Analysis, with Special Reference to the United States and Sweden', *Acta Sociologica*, vol. 35, 1992. Cf. A. Jamison and R. Eyer-
man, *Seeds of the Sixties*, Berkeley 1994.

²¹ R. Barthes, 'Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Myths' (1966), in Barthes, *Image - Music - Text*, London 1977.

²⁶ J.G.A. Pocock, 'Modernity and Anti-Modernity ...', p. 48.

²⁷ J.C. Alexander, ed., *Durkheimian Sociology*, New York 1989.

²⁸ M. Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (1922), Boston 1964; M. Walzer, *Revolution of the Saints*, Cambridge, Mass. 1965.

disappearance of the individual in an authoritarian and bureaucratic welfare state.¹⁴ On every side of the political spectrum, in other words, American intellectuals were motivated by a sense of dramatic and bifurcating social change. This was the social basis for constructing the traditional/modern binary code, an experience of bifurcation that demanded an interpretation of present anxieties, and future possibilities, in relation to the imagined past.

The Romance of Progress

To fully understand the interrelation between history and theory that produced the new intellectuals, however, we must think about narrativity in addition to symbolic structure. In order to do so, we will draw upon the dramaturgical terms of genre theory, which stretches from Aristotle's poetics to the path-setting literary criticism of Northrop Frye,¹⁵ which inspired the more recent 'negative hermeneutics' of historically-oriented literary critics like White, Jameson, Brooks, and Fussell.¹⁶

In such dramaturgical terms we can characterize the historical period that preceded the era of modernization theory as one in which intellectuals 'inflated' the importance of actors and events by emplotting them in a heroic narrative. The 1930s and the war years that followed defined a period of intense social conflict that generated millennial—world-historical—hopes for utopian social transformation, either through communist and fascist revolutions or by the construction of an unprecedented kind of 'welfare state'. Postwar American intellectuals, by contrast, experienced the social world in more 'deflationary' terms. With the failure of revolutionary proletarian movements in Europe and the headlong rush to normalization and demobilization in the United States, the heroic 'grand narratives' of collective emancipation seemed less compelling. No longer was the present perceived primarily as a way-station to an alternative social order, but, rather, as more or less the only possible system there ever could be.

Such a deflationary acceptance of 'this world' was not necessarily dystopian, fatalistic, or conservative. In Europe and America, for example, there emerged a principled anticommunism that wove together the bare threads of a collective narrative and committed their societies to social democracy. Yet even for these reformist groups, the deflation of prewar social narratives had strong effects, effects that were very widely shared. Intellectuals as a group became more 'hard-headed' and 'realistic'. Realism diverges radically from the heroic narrative, inspiring a sense of limitation and restraint rather than idealism and sacrifice. Black-and-white thinking, so important for social mobilization, is replaced by 'ambiguity' and 'complexity', terms favoured by New Critics like

Empson and particularly Trilling,¹⁷ and by 'scepticism', a position exemplified in Niebuhr's writings.¹⁸ The conviction that one has been 'born again'—this time to the *social* sacred—which inspires utopian enthusiasm, is succeeded by the 'thrice born' chastened soul described by Bell¹⁹ and by an acute sense that the social God has failed.⁴⁰ Indeed, this new realism convinced many that narrative itself—history—had been eclipsed, which produced the representations of this newly 'modern' society as the 'end of ideology' and the portrayal of the postwar world as 'industrial' rather than as capitalistic.⁴¹

Yet, while realism was a significant mood in the postwar period, it was not the dominant narrative frame through which postwar social-science intellectuals charted their times. Romanticism was. Relatively deflated in comparison with heroism, romanticism tells a story that is more positive in its evaluation of the world as it exists today. In the postwar period it allowed intellectuals and their audiences to believe that progress would be more or less continuously achieved, that improvement was likely. This state of grace referred, however, more to individuals than to groups, and to incremental rather than revolutionary change. In the new world that emerged from the ashes of war, it had finally become possible to cultivate one's own garden. This cultivation would be an enlightened, modernist work, regulated by the cultural patterns of achievement and neutrality,⁴² culminating in the 'active'⁴³ and 'achieving'⁴⁴ society.

Romanticism, in other words, allowed America's postwar social-science intellectuals, even in a period of relative narrative deflation, to continue to speak the language of progress and universalization. In the United States, what differentiates romantic from heroic narratives is the emphasis on the self and private life. In America's social narratives, heroes are epochal; they lead entire peoples to salvation, as collective representations like the American revolution and the civil-rights movement indicate. Romantic evolution, by contrast, is not collective; it is about Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn,⁴⁵ about the yeoman farmer,⁴⁶ and Horatio Alger. American intellectuals, then, articulated modernization as a process that freed the self and made society's subsystems responsive to its needs. In this sense modernization theory was behavioural and pragmatic; it focused on real individuals rather than on a collective historical subject like nation, ethnic group, or class.

¹⁴ W. Buckley, *God and Man at Yale*, Chicago 1951; A. Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*, New York 1957.

¹⁵ N. Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, Princeton 1957.

¹⁶ H. White, *The Content of Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*, Baltimore 1987; F. Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, Ithaca 1980; P. Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, New York 1984; P. Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Oxford 1973.

¹⁷ W. Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, New York 1927; L. Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination*, New York 1950.

¹⁸ R. Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History*, New York 1952.

¹⁹ D. Bell, 'The Mood of Three Generations', in Bell, *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties*, New York 1962.

⁴⁰ R. Crossman, *The God that Failed*, London 1950.

⁴¹ R. Aron, *Eighteen Lectures ...*; S.M. Lipset and R. Bendix, *Social Mobility in Industrial Society*, Berkeley 1960.

⁴² T. Parsons and E. Shils, 'Values, Motives, and Systems of Action', in Parsons and Shils, eds, *Towards a General Theory of Action*, Cambridge, Mass. 1951.

⁴³ A. Etzioni, *The Active Society*, New York 1968.

⁴⁴ D. McClelland, *The Achievement Motive*, New York 1953.

⁴⁵ L. Fiedler, *An End to Innocence*, Boston 1955.

⁴⁶ H.N. Smith, *Virgin Land*, Cambridge, Mass. 1950.

Existentialism was basic to the romantic American ideology of 'modernism'. American intellectuals, indeed, developed an idiosyncratic, optimistic reading of Sartre. In the milieu saturated with existentialism, 'authenticity' became a central criterion for evaluating individual behaviour, an emphasis that was central to Trilling's modernist literary criticism⁴⁷ but also permeated social theory that ostensibly did not advocate modernization—for example, Erving Goffman's microsociology,⁴⁸ with its equation of freedom with role distance and its conception of back-versus-front stage, and David Reisman's eulogy for the inner-directed man.⁴⁹

These individualistic romantic narratives stressed the challenge of being modern, and they were complemented by an emphasis on irony, the narrative Frye defines as deflationary vis-à-vis romance but not downright negative in its effects. In the 1950s and early 1960s, the modernist aesthetic in Britain and America stressed irony, introspection, ambiguity. The dominant literary theory, so-called New Criticism, while tracing its origins back to Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, came into its own only after the heroic and much more historicist criticism of the 1930s. The key contemporary figure in American letters was Lionel Trilling, who defined the psychological and aesthetic goal of modernity as the expansion of complexity and tolerance for ambiguity. Psychoanalysis was a major critical approach, interpreted as an exercise in introspection and moral control.⁵⁰ In visual art, 'modern' was equated with abstraction, the revolt against decoration, and with minimalism, all of which were interpreted as drawing attention away from the surface and providing pathways into the inner self.

It is evidently difficult, at this remove, for contemporary postmodern and post-postmodern intellectuals to recapture the rich and, indeed, often ennobling aspects of this intellectual and aesthetic modernism, almost as difficult as it is for contemporaries to see the beauty and passion of modernist architecture that Pevsner so effectively captured in his epoch-defining *Pioneers of Modern Design*.⁵¹ The accounts of intellectual-cum-aesthetic modernism proffered by contemporary postmodernists—from Baumann, Seidman and Lash to Harvey and Jameson—is a fundamental misreading.⁵² Their construction of it as dehumanizing abstraction, mechanism, fragmentation, linearity, and domination, I will suggest

below, says much more about the ideological exigencies that they and other contemporary intellectuals are experiencing today than it does about modernism itself. In culture, in theory, and in art, modernism represented a sparseness that devalued artifice not only as decoration but as pretension, and undercut utopianism as a collective delusion that was homologous with neurosis of an individual kind.⁵³ It was precisely such admirable qualities that Bell designated as early or 'classical modernity' in his attack on the sixties in *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*.⁵⁴

This picture was not, of course, an entirely homogeneous one. On the Right, engagement in the Cold War provided for some intellectuals a new field for collective heroism, despite the fact that America's most influential modernist thinkers were not as rule Cold Warriors of the most righteous kind. On the Left, both within and outside the us, there were important islands of social criticism that made self-conscious departures from romanticism of both a social-democratic and individualist ironic sort. Intellectuals influenced by the Frankfurt School, like Mills and Reisman, and other critics such as Arendt, refused to legitimate the humanism of this individualist turn, criticizing what they called the new mass society as forcing individuals into an amoral, egotistical mode. They inverted modernization theory's binary code, viewing American rationality as instrumental rather than moral and expressive, big science as technocratic rather than inventive. They saw conformity rather than independence; power elites rather than democracy; and deception and disappointment rather than authenticity, responsibility, and romance.

In the 50s and early 60s, these social critics did not become highly influential. To do so they would have had to pose a compelling alternative, a new heroic narrative to describe how the sick society could be transformed and a healthy one put in its place. This was impossible to do in the deflationary times. Fromm's *Art of Loving* followed his denunciation of *The Sane Society*; in the fifties, social solutions often were contained in individual acts of private love. No social programme issued from Adorno's *Authoritarian Personality*.⁵⁵ Not only did C. Wright Mills fail to identify any viable social alternatives in his stream of critical studies, but he went out of his way to denounce the leaders of the social movements of the thirties and forties as 'the new men of power'.⁵⁶ After nearly twenty years of violence-producing utopian hopes, collective heroics had lost their sheen. The right-wing populism of McCarthy reinforced the withdrawal from public life. Eventually, however, Americans and Western Europeans did catch their breath, with results that must be related, once again, to history and social theory alike.

Antimodernization Theory: The Heroic Revival

Sometime in the mid 1960s, between the assassination of President Kennedy and the San Francisco 'summer of love' of 1967, modernization

⁴⁷ L. Trilling, *The Opposing Self: Nine Essays in Criticism*, London 1955.

⁴⁸ E. Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, New York 1956.

⁴⁹ D. Reisman, N. Glazer and P. Denny, *The Lonely Crowd*, New Haven 1950.

⁵⁰ P. Rieff, *Freud: The Mind of the Moralizer*, New York 1959.

⁵¹ N. Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design from William Morris to Walter Gropius*, New York 1949.

⁵² Z. Baumann, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Ithaca 1989; S. Seidman, 'The End of Sociological Theory: The Postmodern Hope', *Sociological Theory*, vol. 8, fall 1991; 'Postmodern Social Theory as Narrative with a Moral Intent', in S. Seidman and D.G. Wagner, eds, *Postmodernism and Social Theory*, New York 1992; S. Lash, 'Postmodernity and Desire', *Theory and Society*, vol. 14, 1985; D. Harvey, *The Conditions of Post-Modernity*, Oxford 1989; E. Jameson, 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society', in E.A. Kaplan, ed., *Postmodernism and its Discontents*, Verso, London 1988.

⁵³ E. Fromm, *The Sane Society*, New York 1955, and *The Art of Loving*, New York 1956.

⁵⁴ D. Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, New York 1976.

⁵⁵ T.W. Adorno et al., *The Authoritarian Personality*, New York 1950.

⁵⁶ C.W. Mills, *The New Men of Power: America's Labor Leaders*, New York 1948.

theory died. It died because the emerging younger generation of intellectuals could not believe it was true.

Even if we regard social theory as semiotic system rather than pragmatically inducted generalization, it is a sign system whose signifieds are empirical reality in a rather strictly disciplined sense. So it is important to recognize that during this second postwar period serious 'reality problems' began to intrude on modernization theory in a major way. Despite the existence of capitalist markets, poverty persisted at home¹⁷ and perhaps was even increasing in the Third World. Revolutions and wars continually erupted outside of Europe and North America,¹⁸ and sometimes even seemed to be produced by modernization itself. Dictatorship, not democracy was spreading throughout the rest of the world;¹⁹ postcolonial nations seemed to require an authoritarian state⁶⁰ and a command economy to be modern, not only in the economy and state but in other spheres as well. New religious movements⁶¹ emerged in Western countries and in the developing world, with sacralization and ideology gaining ground over secularization, science, and technocracy. These developments strained the central assumptions of modernization theory, although they did not necessarily refute it.

Factual problems, however, are not enough to create scientific revolutions. Broad theories can defend themselves by defining and protecting a set of core propositions, jettisoning entire segments of their perspective as only peripherally important. Indeed, if one looks closely at modernization theory during the middle and late 1960s, and even during the early 1970s, one can see an increasing sophistication as it geared up to meet its critics and to address the reality problems of the day. Dualistic simplifications about tradition and modernity were elaborated—not replaced by— notions that portrayed a continuum of development, as in the later neo-evolutionary theories of Parsons, Bellah, and Eisenstadt.⁶² Convergence was reconceptualized to allow parallel but independent pathways to the modern.⁶³ Notions like diffusion and functional substitutes were proposed to deal with the modernization of non-Western civilizations in a less ethnocentric manner.⁶⁴ The postulate of tight subsystem links was replaced by the notion of leads and lags,⁶⁵ the

insistence on interchange became modified by notions of paradoxes,⁶⁶ contradictions,⁶⁷ and strains.⁶⁸ Against the metalanguage of evolution, notions about developmentalism⁶⁹ and globalism⁷⁰ were suggested. Secularity gave way to ideas about civil religion⁷¹ and reference to 'the tradition of the modern'.⁷²

Against these internal revisions, antagonistic theories of anti-modernization were proposed on the grounds that they were more valid explanations of the reality problems that emerged. Moore replaced modernization and evolution with revolution and counterrevolution.⁷³ Thompson replaced abstractions about evolving patterns of industrial relations with class history and consciousness from the bottom up.⁷⁴ Discourse about exploitation and inequality⁷⁵ contended with, and eventually displaced, discussions of stratification and mobility. Conflict theories replaced functional ones;⁷⁶ state-centred political theories⁷⁷ replaced value-centred and multidimensional approaches; and conceptions of binding social structures were challenged by microsociologies that emphasized the liquid, unformed, and negotiated character of everyday life.

What pushed modernization theory over the edge, however, were not these scientific alternatives in and of themselves. Indeed, as I have indicated, the revisors of the earlier theory had themselves begun to offer coherent, equally explanatory theories for many of the same phenomena. The decisive fact in modernization theory's defeat, rather, was the destruction of its ideological, discursive, and mythological core. The challenge that finally could not be met was existential. It emerged from new social movements that were increasingly viewed in terms of collective emancipation—peasant revolutions on a world-wide scale, black and Chicano national movements, indigenous people's rebellions, youth culture, hippies, rock music, and women's liberation. Because these

¹⁷ M. Harrington, *The Other America*, New York 1962.

¹⁸ P. Johnson, *Modern Times: The World from the Twenties to the Eighties*, New York 1983.

¹⁹ B. Moore, *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, Boston 1963.

⁶⁰ S. P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, New Haven 1968.

⁶¹ R. Bellah and C. Glock, eds, *The New Religious Consciousness*, Berkeley 1976.

⁶² T. Parsons, 'Evolutionary Universals in Society',; also *The Evolution of Societies and The System of Modern Societies*; R.N. Bellah, 'Religious Evolution' (1964), in Bellah, *Beyond Belief*, New York 1970; S.N. Eisenstadt, 'Social Change, Differentiation, and Evolution', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 29, 1964.

⁶³ E.g. on India, E. Shils, *Intellectuals and the Powers*; on empires, S.N. Eisenstadt, *The Political System of Empires*, New York 1963; on citizenship, R. Bendix, *Nation-Building and Citizenship*, New York 1964.

⁶⁴ R.N. Bellah, *Tokugawa Religion*, Boston 1957; R.E. Cole, *Work, Mobility, and Participation*, Berkeley 1979.

⁶⁵ N. Smelser, 'Toward a Theory of Modernization', in Smelser, *Essays in Sociological Explanation*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 1968.

⁶⁶ W. Schluchter, 'The Paradox of Rationalization', in W. Schluchter and G. Roth, *Max Weber's Vision of History*, Berkeley 1979.

⁶⁷ S.N. Eisenstadt, *The Political System of Empires*.

⁶⁸ N. Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior*, New York 1963.

⁶⁹ W. Schluchter and G. Roth, *Max Weber's Vision of History*.

⁷⁰ J.P. Nettl and R. Robertson, *International Systems and the Modernization of Societies*, New York 1968.

⁷¹ R.N. Bellah, 'The Sociology of Religion', in Bellah, *Beyond Belief*.

⁷² J. Gusfield, 'Tradition and Modernity: Misplaced Polarities in the Study of Social Change', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 72, 1966.

⁷³ B. Moore, *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*.

⁷⁴ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, New York 1963.

⁷⁵ E.g. J. Goldthorpe et al., *The Affluent Worker and the Class Structure*, Cambridge 1969; M. Mann, *Workers on the Move*, Cambridge 1973.

⁷⁶ L. Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict*, New York 1956; R. Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society*, Stanford 1959; J. Rex, *Key Problems in Sociological Theory*, London 1961.

⁷⁷ R. Bendix et al., eds, *State and Society*, Berkeley 1968; R. Collins, *Conflict Sociology*, New York 1976; T. Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*, New York 1979; P. Evans, D. Rueschmga and T. Skocpol, eds, *Bringing the State Back In*, New York 1985.

movements profoundly altered the *Zeitgeist*⁷⁸ — the experienced tempo of the times — they captured the ideological imaginations of the rising cadre of intellectuals.

In order to represent this shifting empirical and existential environment, intellectuals developed a new explanatory theory. Equally significant, they inverted the binary code of modernization and 'narrated the social'⁷⁹ in a new way. In terms of code, 'modernity' and 'modernization' moved from the sacred to the profane side of historical time, with modernity assuming many of the crucial characteristics that had earlier been associated with traditionalism and backwardness. Rather than democracy and individualization, the contemporary modern period was represented as bureaucratic and repressive. Rather than a free market or contractual society, modern America became 'capitalist', no longer rational, interdependent, modern, and liberating but backward, greedy, anarchic, and impoverishing.

This inversion of the signs and symbols associated with modernity polluted the movements associated with its name. The death of liberalism⁸⁰ was announced, and its reformist origins in the early twentieth century dismissed as a camouflage for extending corporate control.⁸¹ Tolerance was associated with fuzzy-mindedness, immorality, and repression.⁸² The asceticism of Western religion was criticized for its repressive modernity, and Eastern and mystical religions were sacralized instead.⁸³ Modernity was equated with the mechanism of the machine.⁸⁴ For the Third World, democracy was defined as a luxury, strong states a necessity. Markets were not luxuries but enemies, for capitalism came to be represented as guaranteeing underdevelopment and backwardness. This inversion of economic ideals carried into the First World as well. Humanistic socialism replaced welfare-state capitalism as the ultimate symbol of the good. Capitalist economies were held to produce only great poverty and great wealth,⁸⁵ and capitalist societies were viewed as sources of ethnic conflict,⁸⁶ fragmentation, and alienation.⁸⁷ Not market society but socialism would provide wealth, equality, and a restored community.

These recordings were accompanied by fundamental shifts in social narratives. Intellectual myths were inflated upwards, becoming stories of

collective triumph and heroic transformation. The present was reconceived, not as the dénouement of a long struggle but as a pathway to a different, much better world. In this heroic myth, actors and groups in the present society were conceived as being 'in struggle' to build the future. The individualized, introspective narrative of romantic modernism disappeared, along with ambiguity and irony as preferred social values.⁸⁸ Instead, ethical lines were sharply drawn and political imperatives etched in black and white. In literary theory, the new criticism gave way to the new historicism.⁸⁹ In psychology, the moralist Freud was now seen as anti-repressive, erotic, and even polymorphously perverse.⁹⁰ The new Marx was sometimes a Leninist and other times a radical communitarian; he was only rarely portrayed as a social democrat or humanist in the earlier, modernist sense.

The historical vignette with which I opened this essay provides an illustration of this shift in sensibility. In his confrontation with Inkeles, Wallerstein portentously announced that 'the time has come to put away childish things, and look reality in the face'.⁹¹ He was not adopting here a realist frame but rather donning a heroic guise. For it was emancipation and revolution that marked the narrative rhetoric of the day, not, as Weber might have said, the hard dreary task of facing up to workaday demands. To be realistic, Wallerstein suggested, was to realize that 'we are living in the transition' to a 'socialist mode of production, our future world government'.⁹² The existential question he put to his listeners was, 'How are we relating to it?' He suggested that there were only two alternatives. They could relate to the imminent revolution 'as rational militants contributing to it or as clever obstructors of it (whether of the malicious or cynical variety)'. The rhetorical construction of these alternatives demonstrates how the inversion of binary coding (the clear line between good and bad, with modernity being polluted) and the creation of a newly heroic narrative (the militantly millennial orientation to future salvation) were combined. Wallerstein made these remarks, it will be recalled, in a scientific presentation, later published as 'Modernization: Requiescat in Pace'. He was one of the most influential and original social-scientific theorists of the anti-modernization theory phase.

The social theories that this new generation of radical intellectuals produced can and must be considered in scientific terms.⁹³ Their cognitive achievements, indeed, became dominant in the 1970s and have remained hegemonic in contemporary social science long after the ideological totalities in which they were initially embedded have since disappeared. Yet to study the decline of a mode of knowledge, I would insist once again, demands broader, extra-scientific considerations as well. Theories are created by intellectuals in their search for meaning. In

⁷⁸ E.g. J. Weiner, *Come Together: John Lennon in His Times*, New York 1984.

⁷⁹ S.J. Sherwood, 'Narrating the Social: Postmodernism and the Drama of Democracy', *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, vol. 4, no. 1/2, 1994.

⁸⁰ T. Lowi, *The End of Liberalism*, New York 1969.

⁸¹ J. Weinstein, *Corporate Ideology in the Liberal State, 1900-1918*, Westport, Conn. 1968; G. Kolko, *Triumph of Conservatism: Reinterpreting American History 1900-1916*, New York 1967.

⁸² R.P. Wolff, H. Marcuse, and B. Moore, Jr., *A Critique of Pure Tolerance*, Boston 1965.

⁸³ N.O. Brown, *Love's Body*, New York 1966; cf. Brown, *Life Against Death*, Middletown, Conn. 1959.

⁸⁴ T. Roszak, *The Making of a Counter-Culture*, New York 1969.

⁸⁵ G. Kolko, *Wealth and Power in America*, London 1962.

⁸⁶ E. Bonacich, 'A Theory of Ethnic Antagonism: The Split Labor Market', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 37, 1972.

⁸⁷ B. Ollman, *Alienation: Marx's Concept of Man*, London 1971.

⁸⁸ T. Gitlin, *The Sixties*, New York 1987.

⁸⁹ H.A. Veeger, ed., *The New Historicism*, New York 1988.

⁹⁰ N.O. Brown, *Love's Body*.

⁹¹ I. Wallerstein, 'Modernization: Requiescat in Pace', p. 133.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁹³ See e.g. A. Van den Berg, 'Critical Theory: Is There Still Hope?', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 86, no. 3, 1980; J.C. Alexander, *Twenty Lectures: Sociological Theory Since World War II*, New York 1987.

response to continuing social change, generational shifts occur that can make the scientific and ideological efforts of earlier intellectual generations seem not only empirically implausible but psychologically shallow, politically irrelevant, and morally obsolete.

By the end of the 1970s, the energy of the radical social movements of the preceding period had dissipated. Some of their demands become institutionalized; others were blocked by massive backlash movements that generated conservative publics and brought right-wing governments to power. The cultural-cum-political shift was so rapid as to seem, once again, to represent some kind of historical-cum-epistemological break. Materialism replaced idealism among political influentials, and surveys reported increasingly conservative views among young people and university students. Maoist ideologues—one thinks of Bernard-Henri Levy in Paris⁹⁴ and David Horowitz⁹⁵ in the us—became anticommunist *nouveaux philosophes* and, some of them, neoconservatives. Yuppies became yuppies. For many intellectuals who had matured during the radicalism of the 1960s and 1970s, these new developments brought unbearable disappointment. Parallels with the 1950s were evident. The collective and heroic narrative of socialism once again had died, and the end of ideology seemed once again to be at hand.

Postmodernization Theory: Defeat, Resignation, and Comic Detachment

'Postmodernism' can be seen as an explanatory social theory that has produced new middle-range models of culture,⁹⁶ science and epistemology,⁹⁷ class,⁹⁸ social action,⁹⁹ gender and family relations,¹⁰⁰ and economic life.¹⁰¹ In each of these areas, and others, postmodern theories have made original contributions to the understanding of reality. It is not as a theory of the middle range, however, that postmodernism has made its mark. These discussions have become significant only because they are taken to exemplify broad new trends of history, social structure, and moral life. Indeed, it is by intertwining the levels of structure and process, micro and macro, with strong assertions about the past, present, and future of contemporary life that postmodernism has formed a broad and inclusive general theory of society, one which, like the others we have considered here, must be considered in extra-scientific terms, not only as an explanatory source.

⁹⁴ B.-H. Levy, *Barbarism with a Human Face*, New York 1977.

⁹⁵ D. Horowitz and P. Collier, *Destructive Generation: Second Thoughts about the 60s*, New York 1989.

⁹⁶ J.-F. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, Minneapolis 1984; M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, New York 1977; A. Huyssen, 'Mapping the Postmodern', in Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, Bloomington 1986.

⁹⁷ R. Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Princeton 1979.

⁹⁸ P. Bourdieu, *Distinction*...

⁹⁹ F. Crespi, *Power and Action*, Oxford 1992.

¹⁰⁰ D. Halpern, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love*, New York 1990; S. Seidman, *Romantic Longings: Love in America 1830-1980*, New York 1991.

¹⁰¹ D. Harvey, *The Conditions of Post-Modernity*; S. Lash, 'Postmodernity and Desire', *Theory and Society*, vol. 14, no. 7, 1985.

If we consider postmodernism as myth—not merely as cognitive descriptions but as their coding and narration into a 'meaningful' frame—we must deal with it as the successor ideology to radical social theory, animated by the failure of reality to unfold in a manner that was consistent with the expectations generated by that anti-modernization creed. From this perspective, we can see that while postmodernism seems to be coming to grips with the present and future, its horizon is fixed by the past. Initially (at least) an ideology of intellectual disappointment, postmodernism was articulated by Marxist and post-Marxist intellectuals in reaction to the fact that the period of heroic and collective radicalism seemed to be slipping away. They redefined this exalted collective present, which had been held to presage an even more heroic imminent future, as a period that was now passed. They declared that it had been superseded not for reasons of political defeat but because of the structure of history itself. The defeat of utopia had threatened a mythically incoherent possibility, namely that of historical retrogression. It threatened to undermine the meaning structures of intellectual life. With postmodern theory, this imminent defeat could be transformed into an immanent one, a necessity of historical development itself. The heroic 'grand narratives' of the Left had merely been made irrelevant by history; they were not actually defeated. Myth could still function. Meaning was preserved.

The most influential early attributions of postmodernism were filled with frank revelations of theoretical perplexity, testimonies to dramatic shifts in reality, and expressions of existential despair. Fredric Jameson, for example, identified a 'new and virtually unimaginable quantum leap in technological alienation'.¹⁰² Despite his methodological commitments, Jameson resists the impulse to fall back on the neo-Marxian certainties of the earlier age. Asserting that shifts in the productive base of society had created the superstructural confusions of a transitional time, he bemoaned 'the incapacity of our minds, at least at present, to map the great global multinational and decentred communication network in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects'.¹⁰³ Referring to the traditional role of art as a vehicle for gaining cultural clarity, Jameson complained that this meaning-making reflex had been blocked: we are 'unable to focus our own present, as though we have become incapable of achieving aesthetic representations of our own current experience'.¹⁰⁴

Yet the intellectual meaning-making triumph of mature postmodernism is already visible in Jameson's depiction of this new order as privatized, fragmented, and commercial. With these terms, the perplexities and blockages of rationality which Jameson succeeded in articulating can be explained not as personal failure but as historical necessities based on reason itself. What threatened meaninglessness now becomes the very basis for meaning; what has been constructed is a new present and a new past. No wonder that Jameson described postmodernism as first and foremost a 'periodizing concept', suggesting that the term was created so

¹⁰² F. Jameson, 'Postmodernism and its Discontents', p. 25.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

that intellectuals and their audiences could make sense of these new times: 'The new postmodernism expresses the inner truth of that newly emergent social order of late capitalism.'¹⁰¹

Postmodern theory, then, may be seen, in rather precise terms, as an attempt to redress the problem of meaning created by the experienced failure of 'the sixties'. Only in this way can we understand why the very dichotomy between modern and postmodern was announced, and why the contents of these new historical categories are described in the ways they are. From the perspective developed here, the answers seem clear enough. Continuity with the earlier period of antimodern radicalism is maintained by the fact that postmodernism, too, takes 'the modern' as its explicit foe. In the binary coding of this intellectual ideology, modernity remains on the polluted side, representing 'the other' in postmodernism's narrative tales.

In this third phase of postwar social theory, however, the contents of the modern are completely changed. Radical intellectuals had emphasized the privacy and particularism of modern capitalism, its provinciality, and the fatalism and resignation it produced. The post-modernization alternative they posited was, not postmodern, but public, heroic, collective, and universal. It is precisely these latter qualities, of course, that post-modernization theory has condemned as the very embodiment of modernity itself. In contrast, they have coded privacy, diminished expectations, subjectivism, individuality, particularity and localism as the embodiments of the good. As for narrative, the major historical propositions of postmodernism—the decline of the grand narrative and the return to the local,¹⁰⁶ the rise of the empty symbol, or simulacrum,¹⁰⁷ the end of socialism,¹⁰⁸ the emphasis on plurality and difference¹⁰⁹—are transparent representations of a deflationary narrative frame. They are responses to the decline of 'progressive' ideologies and their utopian beliefs.

The resemblances to radical antimodernism, then, are superficial and misleading. In fact, there is a much more significant connection between postmodernism and the period that preceded radicalism, that is, modernization theory itself. Modernization theory, we recall, was itself a deflationary ideology following an earlier heroic period of radical quest. It, too, contained emphases on the private, the personal, and the local.

While these similarities reveal how misleading the self-representations of intellectual ideologies can be, it is obviously true that the two approaches differ in fundamental ways. These differences emerge from their positions in concrete historical time. The postwar liberalism that inspired modernization theory followed upon a radical movement that under-

stood transcendence within a progressivist frame, one which, while aiming to radicalize modernism, hardly rejected it. Thus, while the romantic and ironic dimensions of postwar liberalism deflated heroic modernism, its movement away from radicalism made central aspects of modernism even more accessible.

Postmodernism, by contrast, followed upon a radical intellectual generation which had condemned not only liberal modernism but key tenets of the very notion of modernization as such. The New Left rejected the Old Left in part because it was wedded to the modernization project; they preferred the Frankfurt School,¹¹⁰ whose roots in German romanticism coincided more neatly with its own, antimodernist tone. While postmodernism, then, is indeed a deflationary narrative vis-à-vis heroic radicalism, the specificity of its historical position means that it must place both heroic (radical) and romantic (liberal) versions of the modern on the same negative side. Successor intellectuals tend to invert the binary code of the previously hegemonic theory. For postmodernism, the new code 'modernism:postmodernism' implied a larger break with 'universalist' Western values than did the 'traditionalism:modernism' of the immediate postwar period or the 'capitalist modernism:socialist anti-modernization' dichotomy that succeeded it.

In narrative terms as well there are much greater deflationary shifts. Although there remains, to be sure, a romantic tenor in some strands of postmodernist thought, and even collectivist arguments for heroic liberation, these 'constructive' versions¹¹¹ focus on the personal and the intimate and tend to be offshoots of social movements of the 1960s, e.g. gay and lesbian struggles, the women's movement, and ecology activists like the Greens. Insofar as they do engage public policy, such movements articulate their demands much more in the language of difference and particularism¹¹² than in the universalistic terms of the collective good. The principal, and certainly the most distinctive thrust of the postmodern narrative, moreover, is strikingly different. Rejecting not only heroism but romanticism as well, it tends to be more fatalistic, critical, and resigned, in short more comically agnostic, than these more political movements of uplift and reform suggest. Rather than upholding the authenticity of the individual, postmodernism announced, via Foucault and Derrida, the death of the subject. In Jameson's words, 'the conception of a unique self and private identity [are] thing[s] of the past'.¹¹³ Another departure from the earlier, more romantic version of modernism is the singular absence of irony. Rorty's political philosophy is a case in point. Because he espouses irony and complexity,¹¹⁴ he maintains a political if not an epistemological liberalism, and because of

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁰⁶ J. F. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*.

¹⁰⁷ J. Baudrillard, *In the Shadow of the Silent Majority*, New York 1983.

¹⁰⁸ A. Gorz, *Farewell to the Working Class*, London 1982.

¹⁰⁹ S. Seidman, 'The End of Sociological Theory', and 'Postmodern Social Theory as Narrative'.

¹¹⁰ E.g. M. Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, Boston 1973.

¹¹¹ K. Thompson, 'Social Pluralism and Post-Modernity', in Thompson et al., eds, *Modernity and its Futures*, Oxford 1992; P.M. Rosenau, *Postmodernism and the Social Sciences*, Princeton 1992.

¹¹² S. Seidman, 'The End of Sociological Theory', and 'Postmodern Social Theory as Narrative'.

¹¹³ Op. cit., p. 15.

¹¹⁴ R. Rorty, op. cit., and *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity*, New York 1989.

these commitments he must distance himself from the postmodernist frame.

Instead of romance and irony, what has emerged full blown in postmodernism is the comic frame. Frye calls comedy the ultimate equalizer. Because good and evil cannot be parsed, the actors—protagonists and antagonists—are on the same moral level, and the audience, rather than being normatively or emotionally involved, can sit back and be amused. Baudrillard is the master of satire and ridicule, as the entire Western world becomes Disneyland at large.¹¹⁵ In the postmodern comedy, indeed, the very notion of actors is eschewed. Postmodernism is the play within the play, a historical drama designed to convince its audiences that drama is dead and that history no longer exists. What remains is nostalgia for a symbolized past.

Postmodern theory is still, of course, very much in the making. As I have already mentioned, its middle-range formulations contain significant truths. Evaluating the importance of its general theorizing, by contrast, depends upon whether one places post-structuralism under its wing. Certainly theorists of the strong linguistic turn—thinkers like Foucault, Bourdieu, Geertz, and Rorty—began to outline their understandings long before postmodernism appeared on the scene. Nevertheless, their emphasis on relativism and constructivism, their principled antagonism to an identification with the subject, and their scepticism regarding the possibility of totalizing change make their contributions more compatible with postmodernism than either modernism or radical anti-modernization. Indeed, these theorists wrote in response to their disappointment with modernism (Geertz and Rorty vis-à-vis Parsons and Quine), on the one hand, and heroic antimodernism (Foucault and Bourdieu vis-à-vis Althusser and Sartre), on the other. Nonetheless, Geertz and Bourdieu can scarcely be called postmodern theorists, and strong culturalist theories cannot be identified with the broad ideological sentiments that term postmodernism implies.

I would maintain here, as I have earlier in this paper, that scientific considerations are insufficient to account for shifts either towards or away from an intellectual position. If, as I believe to be the case, the departure from postmodernism has already begun, we must look closely, once again, at extra-scientific considerations, at recent events and social changes that seem to demand yet another new 'world-historical frame'.

Neo-Modernism: Dramatic Inflation and Universal Categories

In postmodern theory intellectuals have represented to themselves and to society at large their response to the defeat of the heroic utopias of radical social movements, a response that, while recognizing defeat, did not give up the cognitive reference to that utopic world. Every idea in postmodern thought is a reflection upon the categories and false aspirations of the traditional collectivist narrative, and for most postmodernists the

dystopia of the contemporary world is the semantic result. Yet, while the hopes of Left intellectuals were dashed by the late 1970s, the intellectual imagination of others was rekindled. For when the Left lost, the Right won and won big. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Right was a backlash, reactive movement. By 1980 it had become triumphant and began to initiate far-reaching changes in Western societies. A fact that has been conveniently overlooked by each of the three intellectual generations we have considered thus far—and most grievously by the postmodernist movement that was historically coterminous with it—is that the victory of the neo-liberal Right had, and continues to have, massive political, economic, and ideological repercussions around the globe.

The most striking 'success' for the Right was, indeed, the defeat of Communism, which was not only a political, military, and economic victory but, as I suggested in the introduction to this essay, a triumph on the level of the historical imagination itself. Certainly there were objective economic elements in the bankruptcy of the Soviet Union, including growing technological deficiencies, sinking export proceeds, and the impossibility of finding desperately needed capital funds by switching to a strategy of internal growth.¹¹⁶ Yet the final economic breakdown had a political cause, for it was the computer-based military expansion of America and its NATO allies, when combined with the right-wing-inspired technology boycott, that brought the Soviet party dictatorship to its economic and political knees. While the lack of access to documents makes any definitive judgment decidedly premature, there seems no doubt that these policies were, in fact, among the principal strategic goals of the Reagan and Thatcher governments, and that they were achieved with signal effect.

This extraordinary, and almost completely unexpected triumph over what once seemed not only a socially but an intellectually plausible alternative world has had the same kind of destabilizing, de-ontologizing effects on many intellectuals as the other massive historical 'breaks' I have discussed above. It has created, as well, the same sense of imminence and the conviction that the 'new world' in the making demands a new and very different kind of social theory.

This negative triumph over state socialism has been reinforced, moreover, by the dramatic series of 'positive successes' during the 1980s for aggressively capitalist market economies. This has been most often remarked upon¹¹⁷ in connection with the NICs, the newly industrialized, extraordinarily dynamic Asian economies which have arisen in what was once called the Third World. It is important not to underestimate the ideological effects of this world-historical fact: high-level, sustainable transformations of backward economies were achieved not by socialist command economies but by zealously capitalist states.

What has often been overlooked, however, is that during this same time frame the capitalist market was also reinvigorated, both symbolically and

¹¹⁵ *In the Shadow of the Silent Majority*.

¹¹⁶ K. Muller, "Modernizing" Eastern Europe ...

¹¹⁷ Most recently by P. Kennedy, *Preparing for the Twenty-First Century*, New York 1993.

objectively, in the capitalist West. This transpired not only in Thatcherite Britain and Reaganite America, but perhaps even more dramatically under more 'progressive' and interventionist regimes like France and, subsequently, in countries like Italy, Spain, and more recently in Scandinavia itself. Not only was there, in other words, the obvious and ideologically portentous bankruptcy of most of the world's Communist economies, but there was the marked privatization of nationalized capitalist economies in both authoritarian-corporatist and social-democratic states. The world-wide recession that followed the longest period of sustained growth in capitalist history does not seem to have dampened the revival of market commitments, as the recent triumph of Clinton's neo-liberalism in the United States demonstrates very well. In the late 1960s and 1970s, the intellectual successors to modernization theory, neo-Marxists like Baran and Sweezy, and Mandel,¹¹⁸ announced the imminent stagnation of capitalist economies and an inevitably declining rate of profit. History has proved them wrong, with far-reaching ideological results.¹¹⁹

'Rightward' developments on the more specifically political plane have been as far-reaching as those on the economic. As I mentioned earlier, during the late 1960s and 1970s it had become ideologically fashionable, and empirically justifiable, to accept political authoritarianism as the price of economic development. In the last decade, however, events on the ground seem to have challenged this view, and a radical reversal of conventional wisdom is now under way. It is not only Communist tyrannies that have opened up since the mid 1980s, but the very Latin American dictatorships that seemed so 'objectively necessary' only an intellectual generation before. Even African dictatorships have recently begun to show signs of vulnerability to this shift in political discourse from authoritarianism to democracy.

These developments have created social conditions—and mass public sentiment—that would seem to belie the postmodern intellectuals' coding of contemporary (and future) society as 'fatalistic, private, particularistic, fragmented, and local. They also would appear to undermine the deflated narrative frame of postmodernism, which has insisted either on the romance of difference or, more fundamentally, on the idea that contemporary life can only be interpreted in a comic way. And indeed, if we look closely at recent intellectual discourse, we can observe a return to many earlier, modernist themes.

Because the recent revivals of market and democracy have occurred on a world-wide scale, and because they are categorially abstract and generalizing ideas, universalism has once again become a viable source for social theory. Notions of commonality and institutional convergence have re-emerged, and with them the possibilities for intellectuals to provide meaning in a utopian way. It seems, in fact, that we are witnessing the

¹¹⁸ P. Baran and P. Sweezy, *Monopoly Capital*, New York 1966; E. Mandel, *Late Capitalism*, London 1968.

¹¹⁹ D. Chitot, 'After Socialism, What? Ideological Implications of the Events of 1989 in Eastern Europe for the Rest of the World', ms., 1992.

birth of a fourth postwar version of mythopoeic social thought. 'Neo-modernism'¹²⁰ will serve as a rough-and-ready characterization of this phase of post-modernization theory until a term appears that represents the new spirit of the times in a more imaginative way.

Rational Market and Civil Society

In response to economic developments, different groupings of contemporary intellectuals have reinflated the emancipatory narrative of the market, in which they emplot a new past (anti-market society) and a new present/future (market transition, full-blown capitalism) that makes liberation dependent upon privatization, contracts, monetary inequality and competition. On one side, a much enlarged and more activist breed of intellectual conservatives has emerged. Although their policy and political concerns have not, as yet, greatly affected the discourse of general social theory, there are exceptions that indicate the potential is there. James Coleman's massive *Foundations of Social Theory*,¹²¹ for example, has a self-consciously heroic cast; it aims to make neo-market, rational choice the basis not only for future theoretical work but for the re-creation of a more responsive, law-abiding, and less degraded social life.

Much more significant is the fact that within liberal intellectual life, among the older generation of disillusioned utopians and the younger intellectual groups as well, a new and positive social theory of markets has reappeared. For many politically engaged intellectuals, too, this has taken the theoretical form of the individualistic, quasi-romantic frame of rational choice. Employed initially to deal with the disappointing failures of working-class consciousness,¹²² it has increasingly served to explain how state communism, and capitalist corporatism, can be transformed into a market-oriented system that is liberating or, at least, substantively rational.¹²³ While other politically engaged intellectuals have appropriated market ideas in less restrictive and more collectivist ways,¹²⁴ their writings, too, betray an enthusiasm for market processes that is markedly different from the Left-leaning intellectuals of earlier times. Among the intellectual advocates of 'market socialism', there has been a similar change. Kornai, for example, has expressed distinctly fewer reservations about free markets in his more recent writings than in the path-breaking works of the 1970s and 1980s that brought him to fame.¹²⁵

¹²⁰ E. Tiryakian, 'Modernization: Exhumetur in Pace', *International Sociology*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1991.

¹²¹ J. Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, Cambridge, Mass. 1990.

¹²² E.g. E.O. Wright, *Classes*, Verso, London 1985; and A. Przeworski, *Capitalism and Social Democracy*, New York 1985.

¹²³ A. Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Europe and Latin America*, New York 1991; K.O. Moene and I. Wallerstein, *The Decline of Social Democracy*, Working Paper Series 225, Institute of Industrial Relations, UCLA, 1992; V. Nee, 'A Theory of Market Transition'.

¹²⁴ I. Szelenyi, *Socialist Embourgeoisement in Rural Hungary*, Madison 1988; R. Friedland and A.F. Robertson, eds, *Beyond the Market Place: Rethinking Economy and Society*, New York 1990.

¹²⁵ J. Kornai, *The Road to a Free Economy*, New York 1990.

This neo-modern revival of market theory is also manifest in the rebirth and redefinition of economic sociology. In terms of research programme, Granovetter's¹¹⁶ earlier celebration of the strengths of the market's 'weak ties' has become a dominant paradigm for studying economic networks,¹¹⁷ one that implicitly rejects postmodern and antimodern pleas for strong ties and local communities. His later argument for the 'imbeddedness'¹¹⁸ of economic action has transformed the image of the market into a social and interactional relationship that has little resemblance to the deracinated, capitalist exploitor of the past.¹¹⁹ Similar transformations can be seen in more generalized discourse. Adam Smith has been undergoing an intellectual rehabilitation.¹²⁰ Schumpeter's 'market realism' has been revived; the individualism of Weber's marginalist economics has been celebrated;¹²¹ so has the market-acceptance that permeates Parsons's theoretical work.¹²²

In the political realm, neo-modernism has emerged in an even more powerful way, as a result, no doubt, of the fact that it has been the political revolutions of the last decade that have reintroduced narrative in a truly heroic form and challenged the postmodern deflation in the most direct way. The movements away from dictatorship, motivated in practice by the most variegated of concerns, have been articulated mythically as a vast, unfolding 'drama of democracy',¹²³ literally as an opening up of the spirit of humanity. The melodrama of social good triumphing, or almost triumphing, over social evil—which Peter Brooks¹²⁴ so brilliantly discovered to be the root of the nineteenth-century narrative form—has populated the symbolic canvas of the late twentieth-century West with heroes and conquests of truly world-historical scope. This drama started with the epochal struggle of Lech Walesa, and what seemed to be virtually the entire Polish nation,¹²⁵ against Poland's coercive party-state. The day-to-day dramaturgy that captured public imagination ended initially in Solidarity's inexplicable defeat. Eventually, however, good did triumph over evil, and the dramatic symmetry of the heroic narrative was complete. Mikhail Gorbachev began his long march through the Western

dramatic imagination in 1984. His increasingly loyal world-wide audience fiercely followed his epochal struggles in what eventually became the longest running public drama in the postwar period. This grand narrative—which might be entitled 'The Making, Unmaking, and Resurrection of an American Hero: Gorbachev and the Discourse of the Good'¹²⁶—produced cathartic reactions in its audience, which the press called 'Gorbymania' and Durkheim would have labelled the collective effervescence that only symbols of the sacred inspire. This drama was reprised in what the mass publics, media, and elites of Western countries construed as the equally heroic achievements of Nelson Mandela and Vaclav Havel, and later of Boris Yeltsin, the tank-stopping hero who succeeded Gorbachev in Russia's post-Communist phase¹²⁷. Similar experiences of exaltation and renewed faith in the moral efficacy of democratic revolution were produced by the social drama that took place in 1989 in Tianamen Square, with its strong ritualistic overtones¹²⁸ and its classically tragic dénouement.

It would be astonishing if this re-inflation of mass political drama did not manifest itself in equally marked shifts in intellectual theorizing about politics. In fact, in a manner that parallels the rise of the 'market', there has been the powerful re-emergence of theorizing about democracy. Liberal ideas about political life, which emerged in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and which were displaced by the 'social question' of the great industrial transformation, seem like contemporary ideas again. Dismissed as historically anachronistic in the anti- and post-modern decades, they have become quite suddenly à la mode.¹²⁹

This re-emergence has taken the form of the revival of the concept of 'civil society', the informal, non-state, and non-economic realm of public and personal life that Tocqueville, for example, defined as vital to the maintenance of the democratic state. Rising initially from within the intellectual debates that helped spark the social struggles against authoritarianism in Eastern Europe¹³⁰ and Latin America,¹³¹ the term was 'secularized' and given more abstract and more universal meaning by American and European intellectuals who were connected with these movements, like Cohen and Arato, and Keane.¹³² Subsequently, they utilized the concept to begin theorizing in a manner that sharply demarcated their own 'left' theorizing from the anti-modernization, anti-formal democracy writings of an earlier day.

¹¹⁶ M. Granovetter, *Getting a Job: A Study of Contracts and Careers*, Cambridge, Mass. 1974.

¹¹⁷ E.g. W.N. Powell, 'Neither Market nor Hierarchy: Network Forms of Organization', in B.M. Shaw and L.L. Cummings, eds, *Research in Organizational Behavior*, vol. 12, New York 1991.

¹¹⁸ M. Granovetter, 'Economic Action and Social Structure: A Theory of Imbeddedness', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 91, no. 3, 1985.

¹¹⁹ M. Granovetter and R. Swedberg, eds, *The Sociology of Economic Life*, Boulder 1992.

¹²⁰ J. Hall, *Powers and Liberties: Causes and Consequences of the Rise of the West*, Oxford 1985; R. Heilbroner, ed., *The Essential Adam Smith*, New York 1986; L. Boltanski and L. Thevenot, *De la justification*, Paris 1991; L. Boltanski, *La confiance à distance*, Paris 1993.

¹²¹ R. Holton and B. Turner, *Falcott Parsons on Economy and Society*, London 1986.

¹²² Ibid., and R. Holton, *Economy and Society*, London 1992.

¹²³ S.J. Sherwood, 'Narrating the Social ...'

¹²⁴ P. Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, New York 1984.

¹²⁵ E. Tiryakian, 'From Durkheim to Managua: Revolutions as Religious Revivals', in J.C. Alexander, ed., *Durkheimian Sociology* ...

¹²⁶ J.C. Alexander and S. Sherwood, unpublished ms, 1994.

¹²⁷ J.C. Alexander and S. Sherwood, 'Why Yeltsin Can't Get No Respect in America', *Los Angeles Times*, 2 February 1992.

¹²⁸ E. Chan, 'Tiananmen and the Crisis of Chinese Society', unpublished PhD thesis, UCLA, 1994.

¹²⁹ Cf. J.C. Alexander, 'Sociological Theory and the Claim to Reason', *Sociological Theory*, vol. 9, no. 2, 1991.

¹³⁰ Cf. J. Cohen and A. Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory*, Boston 1992.

¹³¹ A. Stepan, 'State Power and the Strength of Civil Society in the Southern Cone of Latin America', in P. Evans et al., eds, *Bringing the State Back In*.

¹³² J. Keane, *Democracy and Civil Society*, Verso, London 1988, and J. Keane, ed., *Civil Society and the State*, Verso, London 1988.

Stimulated by these writers and also by the English translation of Habermas's early book on the bourgeois public sphere,¹⁴³ debates about pluralism, fragmentation, differentiation and participation have become the new order of the day. Frankfurt theorists, Marxist social historians, and even some postmodernists have become democratic theorists under the sign of the 'public sphere'.¹⁴⁴ Communitarian and internalist political philosophers, like Walzer,¹⁴⁵ have taken up the concept to clarify the universalist yet non-abstract dimensions in their theorizing about the good. For conservative social theorists, civil society is a concept that implies civility and harmony.¹⁴⁶ For neo-functionalists, it is an idea that denotes the possibility of theorizing conflicts over equality and inclusion in a less anti-capitalist way.¹⁴⁷ For old functionalists,¹⁴⁸ it is an idea that suggests that formal democracy has been a requisite for modernization all along.

But whatever the particular perspective that has framed this new political idea, its neo-modern status is plain to see. Theorizing in this manner suggests that contemporary societies either possess, or must aspire to, not only an economic market but a distinctive political zone, an institutional field of universal if contested domain.¹⁴⁹ It provides a common empirical point of reference, which implies a familiar coding of citizen and enemy, and allows history to be narrated, once again, in a teleological manner that gives the drama of democracy full force.

Neo-Modernism and Social Evil

This problem of the demarcation of civil as opposed to uncivil society points to issues that go beyond the narrating and explanatory frameworks of neo-modern theory that I have described thus far. Romantic and heroic narratives that describe the triumph, or possible triumph, of markets and democracies have a reassuringly familiar form. When we turn to the binary coding of this emerging historical period, however, certain problems arise. Given the resurgence of universalism, of course, one can be confident that what is involved is a specification of the master code,

described earlier as the discourse of civil society. Yet, while this almost archetypal symbolization of the requisites and antonyms of democracy establishes general categories, historically specific 'social representations'¹⁵⁰ must also be developed to articulate the concrete categories of good and evil in a particular time and place. In regard to these secondary elaborations, what strikes one is how difficult it has been to develop a set of binary categories that is semantically and socially compelling, a black-versus-white contrast that can function as a successor code to 'postmodern:modern' or, for that matter, to the 'socialist:capitalist' and 'modern:traditional' symbolic sets that were established by earlier intellectual generations, and which by no means have entirely lost their efficacy today.

To be sure, the symbolization of the good does not present a real problem. Democracy and universalism are key terms, and their more substantive embodiments are free market, individualism, and human rights. The problem comes in establishing the profane side. The abstract qualities that pollution must embody are obvious enough. Because they are produced by the principle of difference, they closely resemble the qualities that were opposed to modernization in the postwar period, qualities that identified the pollution of 'traditional' life. But despite the logical similarities, earlier ideological formulations cannot simply be taken up again. Even if they effectuate themselves only through differences in second-order representations, the differences between present-day society and the immediate postwar period are enormous. Faced with the rapid onrush of 'markets' and 'democracy,' and the rapid collapse of their opposites, it has proven difficult to formulate equally universal and far-reaching representations of the profane. The question is this: Is there an oppositional movement or geo-political force that is convincingly and fundamentally dangerous, that is a 'world-historical' threat to the 'good'? The once powerful enemies of universalism seemed to be historical relics, out of sight and out of mind, laid low by a historical drama that seems unlikely soon to be reversed. It was for this semantic reason that, in the interim period after '1989', many intellectuals, and certainly broad sections of Western publics, experienced a strange combination of optimism and self-satisfaction, energetic commitment and moral disrepair.

In comparison with the modernization theory of the postwar years, neo-modern theory involves fundamental shifts in both symbolic time and symbolic space. In neo-modern theory, the profane can neither be represented by an evolutionarily preceding period of traditionalism nor identified with the world outside of North America and Europe. In contrast with the postwar modernization wave, the current one is global and international rather than regional and imperial, a difference articulated in social science by the contrast between early theories of dependency¹⁵¹ and more contemporary theories of globalization.¹⁵² The

¹⁴³ J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Boston 1989.

¹⁴⁴ C. Calhoun, 'Nationalism and Civil Society: Democracy, Identity, and Self-Determination', *International Sociology*, vol. 8, no. 4, 1993; also D. Held's recent writings, especially *Models of Democracy*, Stanford 1987.

¹⁴⁵ M. Walzer, 'The Civil Society Argument', in C. Mouffe, ed., *Dimensions of Radical Democracy*, Verso, London 1992, and 'Constitutional Rights and the Shape of Civil Society', in R.E. Calvert, ed., *The Constitution of the People: Reflections on Citizens and Civil Society*, Lawrence, Kansas 1992.

¹⁴⁶ See for example, E. Banfield, ed., *Civility and Citizenship*, forthcoming; J.Q. Wilson, 'Incivility and Crime' in *ibid.*; E. Shils, 'The Virtue of Civil Society', *Government and Opposition*, vol. 26, 1991; E. Shils, 'Civility and Civil Society', in E. Banfield, *Civility and Citizenship*.

¹⁴⁷ E.g. D. Sciuli, 'Differentiation and Collegial Formations: Implications of Societal Constitutionalism', in J.C. Alexander and P. Colomy, eds, *Differentiation Theory and Social Change*, New York 1991; L. Mayhew, 'The Differentiation of the Solidary Public', in *ibid.*; J.C. Alexander, 'Citizen and Enemy as Symbolic Classification ...'

¹⁴⁸ E.g. A. Inkeles, 'Transitions to Democracy', *Society*, vol. 28, no. 4, 1991.

¹⁴⁹ A. Touraine, *Qu'est-ce que la démocratie?*, Paris 1994.

¹⁵⁰ S. Moscovici, 'The Phenomenon of Social Representations', in R. M. Farr and S. Moscovici, eds, *Social Representations*, Cambridge 1984.

¹⁵¹ A.G. Frank, 'The Development of Underdevelopment', *Monthly Review*, vol. 18, no. 4, 1966.

¹⁵² R. Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Culture*, London 1992.

social and economic reasons for this change centre on the rise of Japan, which this time around has gained power, not as one of Spencer's military societies—a category that could be labelled backward in an evolutionary sense—but as a civilized commercial society.

Thus, for the first time in five hundred years,¹¹³ it has become impossible for the West to dominate Asia, either economically or culturally. When this objective factor is combined with the pervasive de-Christianization of Western intellectuals, we can understand the remarkable fact that 'orientalism'—the symbolic pollution of Eastern civilization that Said articulated so tellingly scarcely more than a decade ago¹¹⁴—seems no longer a forceful spatial or temporal representation in Western ideology or social theory, although it has by no means entirely disappeared. A social-scientific translation of this ideological fact, which points the way to a post-postmodern, or neo-modern code, is Eisenstadt's call for 'a far-reaching reformulation of the vision of modernization, and of modern civilizations'. While continuing to code modern in a thoroughly positive way, this conceptualization explains it, not as the end of an evolutionary sequence, but as a highly successfully globalizing movement:

Instead of perceiving modernization as the final stage in the fulfilment of the evolutionary potential common to all societies—of which the European experience was the most important and succinct manifestation and paradigm—modernization (or modernity) should be viewed as one specific civilization or phenomenon. Originating in Europe, it has spread in its economic, political and ideological aspects all over the world ... The crystallization of this new type of civilization was not unlike the spread of the great religions, or the great imperial expansions, but because modernization almost always combined economic, political, and ideological aspects and forces, its impact was by far the greatest.¹¹⁵

Original modernization theory transformed Weber's overtly Western-centric theory of world religions into a universal account of global change that still culminated in the social structure and culture of the postwar Western world. Eisenstadt proposes to make modernization itself the historical equivalent of a world religion, which relativizes it, on the one hand, and suggests the possibility of selective indigenous appropriation,¹¹⁶ on the other.

The other side of this decline of orientalism among Western theorists is what seems to be the virtual disappearance of 'Third World-ism'—what might be called occidentalism—from the vocabulary of intellectuals who speak from within, or on behalf of, developing countries. A remarkable indication of this discursive shift can be found in an opinion piece that Edward Said published in the *New York Times* protesting the imminent

Allied air war against Iraq in early 1991. While reiterating the familiar characterization of American policy toward Iraq as the result of an 'imperialist ideology', Said justified his opposition not by pointing to the distinctive worth of national or political ideology but by upholding universality: 'A new world order has to be based on authentically general principles, not on the selectively applied might of one country'. More significantly, Said denounced Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and the 'Arab world', representing them in particularizing categories that polluted them as the enemies of universalism itself:

The traditional discourse of Arab nationalism, to say nothing of the quite decrepit state system, is inexact, unresponsive, anomalous, even comic ... Today's Arab media are a disgrace. It is difficult to speak the plain truth in the Arab world ... Rarely does one find rational analysis—reliable statistics, concrete and undoctored descriptions of the Arab world today with its ... crushing mediocrity in science and many cultural fields. Allegory, complicated symbolism and innuendo substitute for common sense.¹¹⁷

When Said concludes that there appears to be a 'remorseless Arab propensity to violence and extremism', the end of occidentalism seems complete.

Because the contemporary re-coding of the antithesis of universalism can be geographically represented neither as non-Western nor temporally located in an earlier time, the social sacred of neo-modernism cannot, paradoxically, be represented as 'modernization'. In the ideological discourse of contemporary intellectuals, it would seem almost as difficult to employ this term as it is to identify the good with 'socialism'. Not modernization but democratization, not the modern but the market—these are the terms that the new social movements of the neo-modern period employ. These difficulties in representation help to explain the new saliency of non-national, international organizations,¹¹⁸ a salience that points, in turn, to elements of what the long-term representation of a viable ideological antinomy might be. For European and American intellectuals, and for those from outside of the West as well, the United Nations and European Community have taken on new legitimacy and reference, providing institutional manifestations of the new universalism that transcend earlier great divides.

Nationalism as Unreason

The logic of these telling institutional and cultural shifts is that 'nationalism'—not traditionalism, communism, or the 'East'—is coming to represent the principal challenge to the newly universalized discourse of the good. Nationalism is the name intellectuals and publics are now increasingly giving to the negative antinomies of civil society. The categories of the 'irrational', 'conspiratorial', and 'repressive' are taken to

¹¹³ See P. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers*, New York 1987.

¹¹⁴ E. Said, *Orientalism*, New York 1978.

¹¹⁵ S.N. Eisenstadt, in Eisenstadt, ed., *Patterns of Modernity. Vol. I: The West*, p. vii.

¹¹⁶ U. Hannerz, 'The World in Creolization', *Africa*, vol. 17, no. 4, 1987.

¹¹⁷ E. Said, 'A Tragic Convergence', *New York Times*, 11 January 1991.

¹¹⁸ G.M. Thomas and P. Lauderdale, 'State Authority and National Welfare Programs in World System Context', *Sociological Forum*, vol. 3, no. 4, 1988.

be synonymous with forceful expressions of nationality, and equated with primordiality and uncivilized social forms. That civil societies have always themselves taken a national form is being conveniently neglected, along with the continuing nationalism of many democratic movements themselves. It is true, of course, that in the geo-political world that has so suddenly been re-formed, it is the social movements and armed rebellions for national self-determination that trigger military conflicts that can engender large-scale wars.

Is it any wonder, then, that nationalism is now routinely portrayed as the successor of Communism, not only in the semantic but in the organizational sense? This equation is made by high intellectuals, not only in the popular press. 'Far from extinguishing nationalism,' Liah Greenfeld wrote recently in the *New Republic*:

Communism perpetuated and reinforced the old nationalist values. And the intelligentsia committed to these values is now turning on the democratic regime it inadvertently helped to create.

The democratic intelligentsia, which took shape in opposition to the Communist state, is, in fact, much more motivated by nationalist than by democratic concerns ... To accomplish a transition from communism to democracy, Russia needs to renounce the traditions that made communism possible: the anti-democratic values of its nationalism.¹⁵⁹

It does not seem surprising that some of the most promising younger generation of American social theorists have shifted from concerns with modernization, critical theory, and citizenship to issues of identity and nationalism. In addition to Greenfeld, one might note the new work of Rogers Brubaker, whose studies of central European and Russian nationalism¹⁶⁰ make similar links between Soviet communism and contemporary nationalism, although from a less culturalist, more neo-institutional perspective. One might note also some of the recent writings of Craig Calhoun.¹⁶¹

It is the failure to confirm such a semantic and organizational analogy with communism that has prevented religious fundamentalism from occupying a similar categorially polluting role. It has been unable to do so despite the currency of fundamentalism-versus-modernity in everyday speech¹⁶² and the myriad examples of its very real dangers to democracy, markets, and social differentiation that are ready to hand. On the one hand, because intellectuals in democratic nations are continually criticizing the renewal of fundamentalist forms of religiosity in their democratic countries, it is difficult for them to equate secular with democratic or to place fundamentalist religiosity completely outside the pale of democratic

¹⁵⁹ L. Greenfeld, 'Kitchen Debate: Russia's Nationalist Intelligentsia', *New Republic*, 21 September 1992.

¹⁶⁰ R. Brubaker, 'Nationhood and the National Question in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Europe', *Theory and Society*, vol. 23, no. 1, 1994.

¹⁶¹ C. Calhoun, 'Nationalism and Civil Society',

¹⁶² B. Barber, 'Jihad vs. McWorld', *Atlantic Monthly*, March 1992.

life. On the other hand, post-communist nations are not particularly fundamentalist; nor has fundamentalism posed the same kind of *Realpolitik* basis for the renewal of large-scale conflict as the militant assertion of national rights.

In winter 1994, *Theory and Society*, a bellweather of intellectual currents in Western social theory, devoted a special issue to nationalism. In their introduction to the symposium, John Comaroff and Paul Stern make particularly vivid the link between nationalism-as-pollution and nationalism-as-object-of-social-science:

Nowhere have the signs of the quickening of contemporary history, of our misunderstanding and misprediction of the present, been more clearly expressed than in the ... assertive renaissance of nationalisms ... World events over the past few years have thrown a particularly sharp light on the darker, more dangerous sides of nationalism and claims to sovereign identity. And, in so doing, they have revealed how tenuous is our grasp of the phenomenon. Not only have these events confounded the unsuspecting world of scholarship. They have also shown a long heritage of social theory and prognostication to be flatly wrong.¹⁶³

While these theorists do not, of course, deconstruct their empirical argument by explicitly relating it to the rise of a new phase of myth and science, it is noteworthy that they do insist on linking the new understanding of nationalism to the rejection of Marxism, modernization theory, and postmodern thought. In their own contribution to this special revival issue, Greenfeld and Chirot insist on the fundamental antithesis between democracy and nationalism in the strongest terms. After discussing Russia, Germany, Romania, Syria, Iraq, and the Khmer Rouge, they write:

The cases we discuss here show that the association between certain types of nationalism and aggressive, brutal behaviour is neither coincidental nor inexplicable. Nationalism remains the world's most powerful, general, and primordial basis of cultural and political identity. Its range is still growing, not diminishing, throughout the world. And in most places, it does not take an individualistic or civic form.¹⁶⁴

The new social representation of nationalism and pollution, based upon the symbolic analogy with Communism, also has permeated the popular press. Serbia's expansionist military adventures have provided a crucial field of collective representation. See, for example, the categorical relationships that are established in the following editorial from the *New York Times*:

¹⁶³ J.L. Comaroff and P.C. Stern, 'New Perspectives on Nationalism and War', *Theory and Society*, vol. 23, no. 1, 1994, pp. 35-7.

¹⁶⁴ L. Greenfeld and C. Chirot, 'Nationalism and Aggression', *Theory and Society*, vol. 23, no. 1, 1994.

Communism can pass easily into nationalism. The two creeds have much in common. Each offers a simple key to tangled problems. One exalts class, the other ethnic kinship. Each blames real grievances on imagined enemies. As a Russian informant shrewdly remarked to David Shipler in *The New Yorker*: 'They are both ideologies that liberate people from personal responsibility. They are united around some sacred [read profane] goal.' In varying degrees and with different results, old Bolsheviks have become new nationalists in Serbia and many former Soviet republics.

The editorialist further codes the historical actors by analogizing the current break-up of Czechoslovakia to the nationalism that preceded it, and which ultimately issued from the First World War:

And now the same phenomenon has surfaced in Czechoslovakia... There is a... moral danger, described long ago by Thomas Masaryk, the founding president of Czechoslovakia, whose own nationalism was joined inseparably to belief in democracy. 'Chauvinism is nowhere justified,' he wrote in 1927, 'least of all in our country... To a positive nationalism, one that seeks to raise a nation by intensive work, none can demur. Chauvinism, racial or national intolerance, not love of one's own people, is the foe of nations and of humanity.' Masaryk's words are a good standard for judging tolerance on both sides.¹⁶⁵

The analogy between nationalism and communism, and their pollution as threats to the new internationalism, is even made by government officials of formerly Communist states. For example, in late September 1992, Andrei Kozyrev, Russia's foreign minister, appealed to the United Nations to consider setting up international trusteeships to oversee the move to independence by former Soviet non-Slavic republics. Only a UN connection, he argued, could prevent the newly independent states from discriminating against national minorities. The symbolic crux of his argument is the analogy between two categories of pollution. 'Previously, victims of totalitarian regimes and ideologies needed protection,' Kozyrev told the UN General Assembly. 'Today, ever more often one needs to counter aggressive nationalism that emerges as a new global threat.'

Modernization Redux?

In 1982, when Anthony Giddens confidently asserted that 'modernization theory is based upon false premisses',¹⁶⁶ he was merely reiterating the common social-scientific sense of the day, or at least his generation's version of it. When he added that the theory had 'served... as an ideological defence of the dominance of Western capitalism over the rest of the world', he reproduced the common understanding of why this false theory had once been believed. Today both these sentiments seem anachronistic. Modernization theory stipulated that the great civilizations

of the world would converge towards the institutional and cultural configurations of Western society.¹⁶⁷ Certainly we are witnessing something very much like this process today, and the enthusiasm it has generated is hardly imposed by Western domination.

The sweeping ideological and objective transformations described in the preceding section have begun to have their theoretical effect, and the theoretical gauntlet that the various strands of neo-modernism have thrown at the feet of postmodern theory are plain to see. Shifting historical conditions have created fertile ground for such post-postmodern theorizing, and intellectuals have responded to these conditions by revising their earlier theories in creative and often far-reaching ways. Certainly, it would be premature to call neo-modernism a 'successor theory' to postmodernism. It has only recently become crystallized as an intellectual alternative, much less emerged as the victor in this ideological-cum-theoretical fight. It is unclear, further, whether the movement is nourished by a new generation of intellectuals or by fragments of currently competing generations who have found in neo-modernism a unifying vehicle to dispute the postmodern hegemony over the contemporary field. Despite these qualifications, however, it must be acknowledged that a new and very different current of social theorizing has emerged on the scene.

With this success, however, there comes the grave danger of theoretical amnesia about the problems of the past. Retrospective verifications of modernization theory have begun in earnest. One of the most acute reappraisals appeared in a *European Journal of Sociology* essay by Klaus Muller, who offered fulsome praise for the once disgraced modernization perspective even while suggesting that any current version must be fundamentally revised.¹⁶⁸ 'With an apparently more acute sense of reality,' Muller writes, 'the sociological theory of modernity had recorded the long-term developments within the Eastern European area, currently taking place in a more condensed form, long before they were empirically verifiable.' Muller adds, for good measure, that 'the *grand theory* constantly accused of lacking contact with reality seemingly proves to possess predictive capacity—the classical sociological modernization theory of Talcott Parsons'.¹⁶⁹ Another sign of this reappraisal can be found in the return to modernization theory made by distinguished theorists who were once neo-Marxist critics of capitalist society. Bryan Turner, for example, now defends Western citizenship against radical egalitarianism and lauds Parsons for his 'anti-nostalgic' acceptance of the basic structures of modern life.¹⁷⁰ While Giddens's position is more ambiguous, his recent work, too, reveals an unacknowledged yet decisive departure from the conspicuously antimodernization stance that marked

¹⁶⁵ *New York Times*, 16 June 1992.

¹⁶⁶ A. Giddens, *Sociology: A Brief but Critical Introduction*, London 1982, p. 144.

¹⁶⁷ E.g. T. Parsons, 'Evolutionary Universals in Society'.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. K. Muller, 'Modernizing Eastern Europe', also Muller, 'From Post-Communism to Post-Modernity? Economy and Society in the Eastern European Transformations', in B. Grancelli, ed., *Social Change and Modernization: Lessons from Eastern Europe*, New York 1994.

¹⁶⁹ 'Modernizing Eastern Europe', p. 111. Original emphasis.

¹⁷⁰ R. Holton and B. Turner, *Talcott Parsons on Economy and Society*.

his earlier ideas.¹⁷¹ A portentous tone of crisis frames this new work, which Giddens conspicuously anchors in the abrupt emergence of social developments that in his view could not have been foreseen:

In the social sciences today, as in the social world itself, we face a new agenda. We live, as everyone knows, at a time of endings ... *Fin de siècle* has become widely identified with feelings of disorientation and malaise ... We are in a period of evident transition-- and the 'we' here refers not only to the West but to the world as a whole.¹⁷²

The new and historically unprecedented world that Giddens discovers, however, turns out to be nothing other than modernity itself. Even among former Communist apparatchiks themselves, there is growing evidence¹⁷³ that similar 'retro-dictions' about the convergence of capitalist and communist societies are well under way, tendencies that have caused a growing number of 'revisits' to Schumpeter.

The theoretical danger here is that this enthusiastic and long overdue re-appreciation of some of the central thrusts of postwar social science might actually lead to the revival of ideas about convergence and modernization in their earlier forms. In his reflections on the recent transitions in Eastern Europe, Habermas employs such evolutionary phrases as 'rewinding the reel' and 'rectifying revolution'.¹⁷⁴ Inkeles's tractatus to American policy agencies is replete with such convergence homilies as that a political 'party should not seek to advance its objectives by extra-political means'.¹⁷⁵ Sprinkled with advice about 'the importance of locating ... the distinctive point where additional resources can provide greatest leverage', the article displays the kind of over-confidence in controlled social change that marked the hubris of postwar modernization thought. When Lipset claims the lesson of the second great transition as the failure of the 'middle way' between capitalism and socialism,¹⁷⁶ he is no doubt correct in an important sense, but the formulation runs the danger of reinforcing the tendentious, either/or dichotomies of earlier thinking in a manner that could justify not only narrow self-congratulation but unjustified optimism about imminent social change. Jeffrey Sachs and other *simpliste* expositors of the 'big bang' approach to transition seem to be advocating a rerun of Rostow's earlier 'take-off' theory. Like that earlier species of modernization idea, this new monetarist modernism

¹⁷¹ A. Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Cambridge 1990; *Modernity and Self-Identity*, Cambridge 1991; *The Transformation of Intimacy*, Cambridge 1992.

¹⁷² A. Giddens, 'Living in a Post-Traditional Society', in A. Giddens and S. Lash, *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, Cambridge 1994. Cf. U. Beck, 'The Reinvention of Politics: Towards a Theory of Reflexive Modernization', in U. Beck, A. Giddens, and S. Lash, *Reflexive Modernization*, Cambridge 1994, p. 1, and S. Lash, 'Reflexivity and its Doubles: Structure, Aesthetics, Community', in *ibid.*

¹⁷³ See K. Müller, 'Modernizing Eastern Europe'.

¹⁷⁴ J. Habermas, 'What Does Socialism Mean Today?', *NLR* 183 (October/November 1990), p. 4.

¹⁷⁵ A. Inkeles, 'Transitions to Democracy', *Society*, vol. 28, no. 4, 1991.

¹⁷⁶ S. M. Lipset, 'The Death of the Third Way'.

throws concerns of social solidarity and citizenship utterly to the winds, let alone any sense of historical specificity.¹⁷⁷

Giddens's enthusiastic return to the theory of modernity provides the most elaborate case in point. Despite the qualifying adjectives he employs to differentiate his new approach from the theories he once rejected-- he speaks at different points of 'high', 'late', and 'reflexive' modernity-- his model rests upon the same simplified set of binary oppositions as did earlier modernization theory in its most banal forms. In his most recent formulation, for example, Giddens insists upon a clear-cut and decisive polarity between traditional and modern life.¹⁷⁸ 'Traditional order,' he claims, rests upon 'formulaic notions of truth' which conflate 'moral and emotional' elements, and upon 'ritual practices', organized by 'guardians' with unchallengeable power. These beliefs and practices, he declares, create a 'status'-based, 'insider/outsider' society. By contrast, in the period of 'reflexive modernity' everything is different. Ritual is displaced by 'real' and 'pragmatic' action, formulaic ideas by 'propositional' ones, guardians by 'sceptical' 'experts', and status by 'competence'. From this familiar conceptual binarism there follows the equally familiar empirical conclusion; tradition, Giddens discovers, has been completely 'evacuated' from the contemporary phase of social life. To provide some distance from postwar theory, Giddens suggests that these earlier versions were naive; they had not realized that their own period, which they took to be thoroughly modern, actually remained firmly rooted in the past 'for most of its history, modernity has rebuilt tradition as it has dissolved'.¹⁷⁹ What Giddens has done, of course, is to historicize the present by invoking the alternatives of modernization theory in an even more radical and arbitrary way.

Indeed, Giddens's renewal of the traditional/modern divide is much more reductive than the complex and nuanced, if ultimately contradictory arguments that emerged from within classical modernization theory in its terminal phase, arguments about which he seems completely unaware. Nor does Giddens appear to have learned anything from the debates that so successfully persuaded post-modernization intellectuals to abandon the historically arbitrary, Western-centered, and theoretically tendentious approach to tradition he now takes up. Only by ignoring the implications of the linguistic turn, for example, can he conceive modernity in such an individualistic and pragmatic way.¹⁸⁰ Finally, Giddens's version of neo-modernism is impoverished in an ideological and moral sense. The problem is not simply that he fails to provide a compelling alternative vision of social life--a failure rooted in the forced-choice nature of the binary categories themselves--but that his arguments give credence to the 'end of ideology' argument in a new way. In the face of the changes wrought by reflexive modernization, Giddens suggests, the very

¹⁷⁷ See A. Leijonhufvud, *The Nature of the Depression in the Former Soviet Union*, unpublished ms, Department of Economics, UCLA, 1993; and the perceptive comments by K. Müller, 'From Post-Communism to Post-Modernity?'

¹⁷⁸ A. Giddens, 'Living in Post-Industrial Society', pp. 63-5, 79, 84, 104-5.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 36; cf. U. Beck, 'The Reinvention of Politics', p. 2.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. S. Lash's similar criticism, in 'Reflexivity and its Doubles'.

difference between reformism and conservatism has become passé.¹⁸¹ Contemporary empirical developments demonstrate not only that politics must go beyond the traditional alternatives of capitalism and socialism but beyond the very notions of 'Left' and 'Right'. Such is the intellectual amnesia that the new historical disjuncture has produced and upon which its continued misunderstanding depends.

The Dangers of Linearity

While many of recent social-scientific formulations of market and democracy avoid such egregious distortions of the kind I have just described, the universalism of their categories, the heroism of their *Zeitgeist*, and the dichotomous strictures of their codes make the underlying problems difficult to avoid. Theories of market transition, even in the careful hands of a scholar as conscientious as Victor Nee, sometimes suggest a linearity and rationality that historical experience belies. Civil-society theory, despite the extraordinary self-consciousness of philosophers like Cohen and Walzer, seems unable to theorize empirically the demonic, anti-civil forces of cultural life that it normatively proscribes.¹⁸²

If there is to be a new and more successful effort at constructing a social theory about the fundamentally shared structures of contemporary societies,¹⁸³ it will have to avoid these regressive tendencies, which resurrect modernization ideas in their most simplistic forms. Institutional structures like democracy, law, and market are functional requisites if certain social competencies are to be achieved and certain resources to be acquired; they are not, however, either historical inevitabilities or linear outcomes, nor are they social panaceas for the problems of non-economic subsystems or groups.¹⁸⁴ Social and cultural differentiation may be an ideal-typical pattern that can be analytically reconstructed over time; however, whether or not any particular differentiation occurs—market, state, law, or science—depends on the normative aspirations,¹⁸⁵ strategic position, history and powers of particular social groups. No matter how socially progressive in itself, moreover, differentiation displaces as much as it resolves, and can create social upheaval on an enormous scale. Social systems may well be pluralistic and the causes of change multidimensional; at any given time and in any given place, however, a particular subsystem and the group that directs it—economic, political, scientific, or religious—may successfully dominate and submerge the others in its name. Globalization is, indeed, a dialectic of indigenization and cosmopolitanism, but cultural and political asymmetries remain between more and less developed regions, even if they are not inherent

¹⁸¹ A. Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, Cambridge 1994.

¹⁸² Cf. J.C. Alexander, 'The Return to Civil Society', *Contemporary Sociology*, 1994; P. Sztompka, 'The Intangibles and Imponderables of the Transition to Democracy', *Studies in Comparative Communism*, vol. 34, 1991.

¹⁸³ P. Sztompka, *The Sociology of Social Change*, Oxford 1993, pp. 136–41.

¹⁸⁴ See e.g., D. Rueschmeyer, 'The Development of Civil Society after Authoritarian Rule', unpublished ms., Dept of Sociology, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, 1993.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. P. Sztompka, 'The Intangibles ...'

contradictions of some imperialistic fact. While the analytic concept of civil society must by all means be recovered from the heroic age of democratic revolutions, it should be de-idealized so that 'anti-civil society'—the countervailing processes of decivilization, polarization, and violence—can be seen also as typically 'modern' results. Finally, these new theories must be pushed to maintain a decentred, self-conscious reflexivity about their ideological dimensions even while they continue in their efforts to create a new explanatory scientific theory. For only if they become aware of themselves as moral constructions—as codes and as narratives—will they be able to avoid the totalizing conceit that gave early modernizing theory such a bad name. In this sense, 'neo-' must incorporate the linguistic turn associated with 'post-' modern theory, even while it challenges its ideological and more broadly theoretical thrust.

In one of his last and most profound theoretical meditations, François Bourricaud suggested that 'one way of defining modernity is the way in which we define solidarity'. The notion of modernity can be defended, Bourricaud believed, if, rather than 'identify[ing] solidarity with equivalence', we understand that the "general spirit" is both universal and particular'. Within a group, a generalizing spirit 'is universal, since it regulates the intercourse among members of the group'. Yet, if one thinks of the relations between nations, this spirit 'is also particular, since it helps distinguish one group from all others'. In this way, it might be said that 'the "general spirit of a nation" assures the solidarity of individuals, without necessarily abolishing all their differences, and even establishing the full legitimacy of some of them'. What of the concept of universalism? Perhaps, Bourricaud suggested, 'modern societies are characterized less by what they have in common or by their structure with regard to well-defined universal exigencies, than by the fact of their involvement in the issue of universalization' as such.¹⁸⁶

Perhaps it is wise to acknowledge that it is a renewed sense of involvement in the project of universalism, rather than some lipid sense of its concrete forms, that marks the character of the new age in which we live. Beneath this new layer of the social topsoil, moreover, lie the tangled roots and richly marbled subsoil of earlier intellectual generations, whose ideologies and theories have not ceased to be alive. The struggles between these interlocutors can be intimidating and confusing, not only because of the intrinsic difficulty of their message but because each presents itself not as form but as essence, not as the only language in which the world makes sense but as the only real sense of the world. Each of these worlds does make sense, but only in a historically bounded way. Recently, a new social world has come into being. We must try to make sense of it. For the task of intellectuals is not only to explain the world; they must interpret it as well.

¹⁸⁶ F. Bourricaud, '"Universal Reference" and the Process of Modernization', in Eisenstadt, ed., *Patterns of Modernity* Vol. 1, pp. 19–21. Emphasis added.