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Modernization Theory, Underdevelopment and Multiple Modernities

Notwithstanding Marx's hopes for a post-capitalist future, both he and Weber could be said to share a pessimism about capitalist modernity. For Weber, it was an 'iron cage', while for Marx, in the absence of radical transformation, it involved the reproduction of exploitation and class domination. This pessimism was replaced in post-war US scholarship by a strong belief in the possibilities, as opposed to inherent limitations, of industrial capitalist society. As Jeffrey Alexander suggests, the present was no longer viewed 'as a way station to an alternative social order, but, rather, as more or less the only possible system there ever could be' (1995: 16). However, it had proven to be reformable in ways not imagined by Weber. This was not to suggest that there were no contemporary alternatives, but rather that post-war US society represented, to (mostly, white) US sociologists, the pinnacle of human achievement – a modern, democratic, industrial capitalist society which appeared to guarantee economic growth and prosperity for (most of) its citizens. It was a system that had contributed to the defeat of fascism in Europe and, in the process, had replaced a war-weakened Europe as the 'lead society' of modernization, as suggested by Talcott Parsons (1971) among many others. At the same time, however, it was confronted for dominance on the world stage, by the simultaneous rise of the Soviet Union, which had also contributed to the defeat of fascism in Europe. It similarly sought to guarantee economic growth and decent living standards for its citizens, but this time organized around a political programme of industrial Communism.

The Cold War hostilities between the US and the Soviet Union were manifest also in the development of academic theories to account for their similarities and differences. It could not be denied that the Soviet Union had modernized on a par with the US and now presented countries, which were believed to be in the process of modernization, with an alternative to the path taken by the US. In the dominant US literature, Soviet modernization was presented as a deviant form that came about as a consequence of ‘a disease of the transition’, where the disease was identified as Communism and state intervention (Rostow 1960: 163). Nonetheless, it was seen to be potentially appealing to those ‘aspiring societies of the world’, who were yet to modernize, and scholars such as Rostow urged the US and the West more generally to ‘mobilise their ample resources to do the jobs that must be done’ to ensure the victory of the ‘democratic north’ (1960: 164, 104–5, 167). To this end, modernization theory developed as a way of presenting the elements of reform-oriented modernization within democratic Western countries and, therefore, providing a model of the ‘correct’ way to modernize for other countries. In this chapter, I will set out the key features of this model, its critique in underdevelopment and dependency theory, before addressing the revival of modernization theory in accounts of multiple modernities (albeit with the orientation to reform and amelioration considerably muted).

I

Drawing on the experience of Western modernization, scholars such as Lerner (1958), Levy (1965) and Rostow (1960) sketched out a model of modernization that they believed ought to have global applicability. At the conceptual level, Levy argued that the patterns of relatively modernized societies demonstrated a universal tendency to affect all other social contexts ‘whose participants have come in contact with them’ (1965: 30). In the process, he continued, ‘the previous indigenous patterns always change; and they always

change in the direction of the some of the patterns of the relatively modernized society' (1965: 30). Substantively, the sorts of elements of modernized society under discussion included the processes of rural–urban migration, growing population density, increasing literacy, mass media, free markets and the organization of democratic political participation (Lerner 1958). The model developed from an examination of modernized (Western) countries was then used to study other societies and determine the extent of their approximation to (Western) modernization. It could also be used, as Shah (2011) suggests, to provide the information needed by the US to intervene more effectively in those countries it deemed to be at risk of succumbing to Soviet influence. Beyond its contribution to geopolitics, however, modernization theory also, more generally, normalized a particular trajectory of development and established a global frame within which all societies could be placed.

While modernization theory was presented as a conceptual framework against which empirical investigations of countries could be compared and assessed, a regular feature was the similarity of Western processes with the framework and the deviation of other countries from it. Almond and Coleman's (1960) classic study, for example, examines the politics of developing areas and discusses the extent to which the countries under comparison align with or deviate from the conceptual framework. In their conclusion, they discuss the possibilities of different routes to modernization and distinguish between 'normal' forms influenced by 'ideals of democracy, equality, and the social welfare state' and 'deviant' ones influenced by 'the modernizing authoritarianism of Atatürk or of Soviet Communism' (1960: 552). As Bernstein (1971) commented, it was hardly surprising that, within the framework of this model, Western countries most closely approximated it. After all, the model was itself derived from a study of Western experience.

Almond and Coleman (1960) recognize, in general terms, the impact of modern European colonialism in determining the different political systems of developing countries. However, they have very little

to say on colonization as such and the way in which it has historically had an impact upon the possibilities *for* development. Moreover, there is no recognition of postcolonial effects with consequences beyond the immediate presence of a colonial power. For example, their classificatory scheme allows for a category of ‘terminal colonial democracy’, a form that terminates precisely with independence. Even where racial segregation as a consequence of colonialism is acknowledged, as in South Africa or Southern Rhodesia (when they were writing), the ‘European’ institutions are those of ‘an essentially modern political system’ (1960: 574) and are not themselves deformed by their colonial constitution. In contrast to other forms of authoritarianism, such as fascism and Bolshevism, colonialism, then, is presented in largely neutral terms.

The absence of a proper address of the consequences of colonialism within the modernization paradigm is evident also in the failure to address the structures of racism consequent to enslavement and segregation that constitute the modern society of the US against which the developing areas are being assessed.¹ This had consequences not only for the way in which ‘underdevelopment’ was understood, but also for the representation of the US itself, the society regarded as the lead society of modernization. As I have already commented, the issue of racial inequality was increasingly seen as significant in terms of the perception of US democracy abroad. For example, in his Introduction to *The Negro American* – a book edited with Kenneth Clark and with a Foreword by the then President Lyndon B. Johnson – Talcott Parsons wrote of ‘the world-wide symbolic significance of the American color problem’ (1967: xxiii). Beyond the symbolic significance, however, there was also an unacknowledged epistemological significance.²

¹ This, despite the extensive scholarship by, mostly African American, social scientists addressing the implications of ‘the peculiar institution’ within modern US politics and society (see, for example, DuBois 1935; Myrdal 1944; Ellison 1973 [1944]; Frazier 1947; Cox 1970 [1948]; Parsons and Clark 1967).

² This is also evident when Parsons returns to the issues in his ‘theory of the societal community’ left uncompleted at his death in 1979 and finally published in 2007 as *American Society*. The issues of ethnicity are issues of ‘*Gemeinschaft*’, that is, social integration and the symbolic realm not structural features of the political and economic

While authoritarianism is perceived as a form of 'pathological' modernity and measured against the 'normal' form of Western modernity, colonialism and enslavement as forms of authoritarianism intrinsic to that 'normal' form are not addressed. Parsons concurred with his co-editor Kenneth Clark in his argument that 'the very definition of a *category* of citizens as inherently inferior is an anomaly ... basically incompatible with our social principles and organization' (1967: xxv). He further argued that the type of modern society that 'we have been developing has for *both* moral and structural reasons *no* legitimate place for such a category' (1967: xxv). If racial inequality had no structural 'legitimacy', however, the problem was to understand how it had a structural place. Segregation and discrimination were structural features of US society and this society was to be interpreted through a theory of modernization which was intended to provide the means of structural analysis. It is significant to note that the 20-year anniversary of Myrdal's (1944) *An American Dilemma* was the occasion of the edited collection, and yet this was the first time that Parsons had addressed the topic of race. Moreover, this late address of race coincided with his writing of *Societies: Evolutionary and Comparative Perspectives* (1966) and *The System of Modern Societies* (1971), neither of which sought to address the structural lacunae that Parsons implicitly acknowledged (with no references to race or chattel slavery in either volume and thus no consideration of their structural relationship to modernity). Apparently, the 'normal' processes of modernity would eliminate a problem that was nonetheless coterminous with modernity and unexplained in its categories.

Within modernization theory, the contemporary global was understood empirically as a contested space in which the newly decolonized

system. He notes a shift in usage from 'Negro' to 'Black' and increasing references to 'Afro-Americans', which he believes creates a parallel and symmetry both with other ethnically identified groups – such as Chinese and Japanese Americans – but also with what he calls the 'indigenous American white population' (2007: 327). As should be clear, this elides the very processes by which a population is represented as indigenous and also the different processes associated with experiences of forced and voluntary migration.

countries had a choice, as they saw it, between following the model provided by the US or that provided by the Soviet Union. So while modernization theory recognized the global empirically as the site of different experiences and processes, it advocated a model which would involve all countries converging to its established framework. Differences that remained were identified in terms of variance from the model and were regarded as deviant or as demonstrating a failure of transition. Differences were not deemed to be significant in their own terms. In the same way, connections between countries and broader processes were recognized, but there was an attempt to subsume these connections to a model that was deemed to have global applicability; that is, while connections were recognized as empirically significant, they were not deemed to have any explanatory value – the model substituted for explanation. The model ultimately served to organize endogenous explanations of varieties of development and instituted a common linear teleology across those different, autonomous traditions and trajectories – a teleology to which all were, eventually, to converge. In this way, while modernization theory sought to engage with the social and political realities of other parts of the world, it did so by subsuming what was learnt to a pre-existing framework. As Tipps astutely identifies, '[f]ar from being a universally applicable schema for the study of the historical development of human societies, the nature of modernization theory reflects a particular phase in the development of a single society, that of the United States' (1973: 211).

Critiques of modernization theory were prevalent at the time both within US sociology, such as in the work of Henry Bernstein (1971), Dean Tipps (1973) and Alejandro Portes (1976), and in the emerging field of development studies. These critiques were oriented around the following themes. First, there was disquiet at 'the self-confidence of ethnocentric achievement', that was perceived to be a legacy of 'earlier notions of social evolution and Darwinism', and was at the heart of modernization theory (Mazrui 1968: 82). The belief was not simply that the West had achieved modernity, but that the move from tradition to modernity was a universal imperative and all societies

would (eventually) undergo this transition. As a consequence, the universalization of what were understood to be Western values and institutions was accompanied by a relative disregard of the 'not-yet' modern societies under consideration; they were, after all, in the process of being superseded. Within modernization theory, then, these 'relatively modernizing' societies simply provided data which were to be 'gathered, sorted, and interpreted' against the stable categories and conceptual frameworks derived from the Western experience (Tipps 1973: 207). Alongside the normative critiques of modernization theory's ethnocentrism, there was also concern about the empirical validity of its categories.

The critiques of modernization theory rested on its problematic separation of tradition from the modern, its understanding of tradition as simply being that which was not modern, and its failure to address the impact of external factors in processes of modernization. As a number of anthropologists, for example, pointed out, the presentation of tradition within modernization theory was often as a 'hypothetical antithesis to "modernity"' and rarely rested upon empirical research (Tipps 1973: 212). Traditional societies were posited as stagnant, static, unchanging entities that required intervention to enable them to undertake an effective transition to modernity. As Wolf argues, by equating such societies with a lack of development, modernization theory denied them any significant history and 'blocked effective understanding of relationships among them' (1997 [1982]: 13). It failed to acknowledge that these societies had histories prior to European contact, had varieties of social formations that could not simply be lumped en masse under the heading 'traditional' and that European engagement through 'war, conquest, and colonial domination' (Tipps 1973: 212) needed to be taken into account in any attempt to address the nature and forms of social and political change within those countries. This latter point was one that was picked up by theorists who preferred to work with the terms development, underdevelopment or dependency instead of modernization. In doing this, they sought to address the limitations

of modernization theory by looking explicitly at the way in which the emergence of capitalism had enabled development in the West at the same time as creating 'underdevelopment' and 'dependency' in the previously colonized countries and what were seen as 'weaker' nations.

II

Standard development studies correlated well with modernization theory given the similarity of their concerns with social progress and the possibilities of policy intervention to facilitate such processes. In this context, development was generally understood as a process, whereas underdevelopment, as Bernstein argues, was often 'conceived only in a static fashion as a *state*' (1976: 25) to be overcome by development. This naturalized the idea of underdevelopment as the inherent condition of traditional societies and inhibited the analysis of underdevelopment as a condition that had been actively *produced* in those countries. Underdevelopment theory and dependency theory emerged as ways of contesting such representations of traditional societies within standard sociological explanations of the processes of social change. In particular, these theories sought to link development to the emergence of capitalism and, in the process, to link underdevelopment and dependency to these same processes. As Leys succinctly outlines, the conditions prevailing within, what are regarded as 'underdeveloped' or 'less developed' countries, 'are not due to the persistence of an "original" (*undeveloped* or "*untouched*") state of affairs, but are the results of the same world-historical process in which the "First World" ("*developed market economies*") became "*developed*" (1977: 92; see also Frank 1970). This world-historical process, in most accounts, was identified as 'capital seeking profits' (Leys 1977: 92). In this way, the international economy was seen to be a more productive starting point for understanding development and underdevelopment

than any of the dominant, internalist concepts of standard sociology.³ It was also an approach that, instead of blaming the countries that failed to conform to the expected model (and being labelled as deviant or pathological), looked to reconstruct theories and models on the basis of empirical evidence and historical analysis (Bernstein 1976: 22). In so doing, pathologies internal to standard accounts of modernity itself were also identified.

Dependency theory was a particular formulation within these broader debates initially articulated by a group of Latin American sociologists, including Fernando Cardoso (1972), Aníbal Quijano (1971) and Theotonio Dos Santos (1970), and popularized in the Western academy by their colleague and fellow protagonist, Andre Gunder Frank (1970). The field was constructed through a mutual engagement with the question of 'the development of Latin American capitalism' and offered a variety of explanations for the particular situation of Latin American countries with respect to 'the capitalism of the centre' (Palma 1978: 898). The common element between the approaches gathered under the '*dependentista*' rubric was, according to Palma, their concern 'to analyse Latin American societies through a "comprehensive social science", which stresses the socio-political nature of the economic relations of production' (1978: 911). This meant that development and underdevelopment were understood, not as autonomous, separate stages mapping onto the modern-tradition dualism of modernization theory, but as structurally interrelated and co-produced by the emergence and spread of capitalism across the world. As Dos Santos argued, dependence is 'a situation in which the economy of certain countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subjected' and which enables us 'to see the internal situation of these countries as part of world economy' (1970: 231). Similarly, the rapid industrial growth of the West was to be understood in terms of 'the conditioning

³ The latter is something that subsequently came to be described as methodological nationalism (see Chernilo 2007; Fine 2007), although, once again, it is worth noting that those making that accusation do not do so to draw attention to colonialism and empire.

of a “periphery” from which an economic surplus is extracted and necessary raw materials secured’ (Portes 1976: 74; Wallerstein 1974a).

The introduction of the concept of ‘dependence’ helped to illuminate particular aspects of the broader debate, but also raised a number of additional problems. It was positive and productive in the sense of recognizing underdevelopment not as a stage of ‘backwardness’ or tradition, but rather as intrinsic to capitalist modernity and ‘a necessary consequence of its evolution’ (Portes 1976: 74). It also pointed to the necessity of examining the specificities of relationships between international corporations and the nature of their engagement with underdeveloped countries. On the downside, Lall, for example, suggested that dependence, as a descriptive category, said little about the nature of the economy as a whole or the condition of economic processes; and, as an analytic category, it was impossible to define. This was because, as he argued, ‘in terms of static characteristics it is analytically impossible to draw a clear line between dependent and non-dependent economies’, and in terms of the dynamics of dependence there was little agreement on what these might be (1975: 807). Lall therefore questioned the utility of bringing together all ‘different types and stages of the capitalist development process ... under *one* category of dependence’ (1975: 806). Being less developed could not be regarded as directly equivalent to being dependent. While ‘dependence’ was a useful corrective, pointing to the importance of relationships between societies deemed to be developed or underdeveloped, it, in turn, was believed to have subsumed all analysis to the meta-theoretical framework of capitalism. In this way, it seemed to deny the importance of local conditions or histories which might also provide useful resources for analysing differences between national societies.

As has been discussed, capitalism, or the international capitalist system, predominated as the frame of reference for the explanation of development, underdevelopment and dependency. While there was occasional mention of colonialism in this context, this was often in terms of Lenin’s theory of imperialism (as a derived consequence of

capitalist development) and debates related to that, rather than the historical existence and significance of colonial relations (see Alavi 1964; Hobson 1954 [1902]). Even where theorists such as Samir Amin (1973 [1971]) explicitly addressed the broader historical context of colonialism, the present economic situation and its ideological interpretation was, nonetheless, paramount in his analyses. His attention was more focused on the organization of economic relations in the capitalist system, and the possibilities for socialism, even as he addressed the histories that facilitated (or obstructed) these. Much of Amin's (1973 [1971]) early work, for example, addressed the implications of colonial exploitation for the creation of economic underdevelopment in West Africa. He examined the history of economic relations instituted by colonial powers to assess the ways in which parts of Africa were transformed from being 'virtually outside the world market, into that of a true underdeveloped economy: dominated by and integrated into the world market' (1973: xiv). The work was one of political economy, structured around the historical stages of colonial and then capitalist development, in order to understand present economic structures.

While Amin was one of the few initially to take a longer view, in the main, as Lall argues, the concept of dependence was 'essentially directed at the postcolonial era when direct forms of colonial subjugation had ended and new forms of "imperialism", which ensure dependence rather than open domination, had supervened' (1975: 800). Underdevelopment and dependency theorists were largely writing in the context of the emergence of newly decolonized nation states where the political domination of colonial powers had been overcome, but particular institutions, especially those associated with the economy, remained firmly in place. The concern here was to distinguish contemporary dependency from historical colonialism and to identify the economic structures and processes that enabled new forms of old patterns of domination to continue. In the Latin American context, dependency theory was further developed as a critique of the national bourgeoisie which was seen to be accumulating wealth for itself while impoverishing the rest of the population and came about in

the wake of the success of the Cuban Revolution as demonstrating an alternative (non-capitalist) path of development (Grosfoguel 2000). In this context, the urgent need was for new economic policies that met the needs of the new inclusive political communities. For this reason, the radical variants of development studies were largely articulated by left-wing economists and Marxist sociologists.⁴

Many of the debates centred on particular interpretations of Marxism and on identifying the ways in which lesser developed countries were understood to be inserted into the international capitalist system and the ways in which they could find (possibly autonomous) routes to socialism. For some scholars, lesser developed countries had to become fully developed capitalist countries, fully integrated in the world capitalist system, before they could move to socialism; for others, there was the possibility of socialism via autonomous national development. Others further identified underdevelopment not as a consequence of being invaded by foreign capital, but of being starved of it (Emmanuel 1974). As Booth suggests, by the 1980s, the development debate had reached an impasse with the majority of exchanges being 'between different poles of opinion within Marxism' (1985: 773). Instead of rigorous empirical work designed to understand how and why economic structures and processes worked in particular ways, Booth (1985) argues that much work in this area was more committed to demonstrating the necessity of those structures to capitalism than to understanding them in their own terms. Further, while underdevelopment theory had emerged '*as a criticism of bourgeois development theory*', it had nonetheless remained within its dominant theoretical framework (of addressing the 'problem' of underdevelopment and/or dependence) and this limited the extent to which it could offer a truly radical alternative (Leys 1977: 94). There

⁴ The sensibilities of the economists were somewhat different from those now characteristic of the profession whereby concern with the practical problems of real world economies, especially those outside the West, has been displaced by the subsequent codification of a professional orthodoxy around neoclassical axioms (see Fourcade 2009; Yonay 1998; for discussion, see Holmwood 2013).

was a sense, as Leys argues, that the real gains of the work being done in this area, that is, 'the detailed analyses of the institutions and structures of underdevelopment' were 'being appropriated more by the ideologists of international capital than the workers and peasants of the Third World' (1977: 96).

An alternative came in the work of scholars such as Walter Rodney (1972) and Frantz Fanon (1963). While they were also provoked to write as a consequence of being concerned with the contemporary economic situation in Africa, their analyses of the historical emergence of underdevelopment and dependency were underpinned by broader social and political commitments. Both Fanon (1963) and Rodney (1972) articulated, much more forcefully than Amin and others, the idea of colonialism as the central aspect in the creation and maintenance of underdevelopment in Africa (and elsewhere) and, at the same time, as integral to the emergence and development of capitalism in Europe and the US. Fanon, for example, argued that the opulence of Europe 'has been founded on slavery, it has been nourished with the blood of slaves and it comes directly from the soil and from the subsoil of that underdeveloped world' (1963: 96). Similarly, Rodney extensively detailed the ways in which colonialism was not simply a system of exploitation, but was one which also appropriated and repatriated to the 'mother-country' the profits generated through the 'surplus produced by African labour out of African resources' (1972: 162). Both scholars further explicitly argued for the necessity of revolutionary struggle against colonial domination, as well as capitalism, as the way out of the current situation of dependency and underdevelopment. They were writing not so much to participate in the scholarly debates around the best ways forward for development studies or the correctness of any particular position within the Marxist debates on the international capitalist system, but rather, as Babu (1972) writes in the postscript to Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, to arouse mass action by the people. Fanon and Rodney were exceptional in their time in their address of the colonial histories of recently

decolonized and decolonizing countries in the wider debates on development and underdevelopment. Their continuing influence on scholars within the traditions of postcolonialism and decoloniality will be discussed subsequently.

The impasse within the scholarly debates on development, underdevelopment and dependency was resolved in two quite different ways. One was an attempt to retain the Marxist frame through the articulation of a world systems theory that now saw dependence simply as an attribute of a particular historical and geographical period (which will be addressed in the following chapter); and the other was a rehabilitation of Weberian modernization theory through the paradigm of multiple modernities. If modernization theory reflected the post-war optimism and influence of the US upon the world stage, and underdevelopment theory reflected the debates and struggles of those in the process of decolonization and establishing new nations, then the re-emergence of modernization theory in the 1990s was strongly correlated to the unexpected fall of Communism in Europe, which seemed to confirm some of the expectations of modernization theory that had been challenged by dependency theorists. It is to this latter development that this chapter now turns.

III

The ambition for the creation of a single world market after the break-up of the Soviet-dominated economic bloc erased the Cold War bipolarity that had existed both politically and in theoretical discussions concerning the best way forward in 'bourgeois' development studies and its radical alternatives in underdevelopment and dependency theories. The many critiques of modernization theory could not simply be ignored, but it was believed that the West had 'won' and that the success of liberal capitalist democracy signalled a possible 'end of history'. As Fukuyama noted, the majority of countries

that had 'succeeded in achieving a high level of economic development have in fact come to look increasingly similar, rather than less' (1992: 133). While countries could take a variety of routes 'to get to the end of history,' he suggested that 'there are few versions of modernity other than the capitalist liberal-democratic one that look like they are going concerns' (1992: 133). This reaffirmation of modernization theory, however, was not completely uncritical. Fukuyama argued that the economic focus of modernization theory was limited and needed to be supplemented with an explicitly cultural argument about the desirability of modernity and 'the struggle for recognition as a major driver of history' (1992: 205). While there had previously been a viable alternative model of political and economic organization, as embodied in the Soviet Union, there was now believed to be a growing consensus around the claims of liberal capitalist democracy as the only rational and desirable model of governance. Even for Fukuyama, however, the question emerged that, if this was the case, then why was it just a universal *model*, and not universally in *existence* across all societies in the world.

It was in the attempt to explain both the seeming triumph of liberal capitalism and the continuing diversity and heterogeneity of existing societies that led to the reformulation of modernization theory as multiple modernities. Key to this reformulation was Shmuel Eisenstadt (1974, 2000a), earlier one of the main theorists of modernization, together with a core group of European historical-sociologists such as Arnason (2000, 2003) and Wittrock (1998), as well as critical interlocutors such as Göle (2000), Dirlik (2003) and Kaya (2004).⁵

In developing this new paradigm, it was believed that two main fallacies needed to be addressed. The first, in relation to modernization theory, was that there was only one form of modernization, one that approximated the experience of the West. The second, in relation to

⁵ See the two special issues of *Daedalus*: 'Early Modernities,' *Daedalus* 127 (1998) and 'Multiple Modernities,' *Daedalus* 129 (2000). For further details on the sociological debates on modernization and the shift to multiple modernities, see Chapter 3 of my *Rethinking Modernity: Postcolonialism and the Sociological Imagination* (Bhambra 2000).

critiques made by theorists of underdevelopment and dependency, that looking from the West to the East was not necessarily a form of Orientalism or Eurocentrism. While it was accepted that the particular historical trajectories of societies beyond the West needed to be taken into consideration in discussing developments within modernity, modernity was nonetheless believed to be a European phenomenon in its origins. Therefore, the developing modernities of other places could be compared to the dominant form of European modernity, but there was no expectation that these other modernities would converge with the patterns of Europe. The focus here was on the acceptability of divergent paths and of the diversity of modern societies. This acceptance of diversity was believed to inoculate multiple modernities against charges of ethnocentrism or the inappropriate privileging of particular histories over other ones. The challenge faced by the multiple modernities paradigm was to acknowledge the diversity of types of modernity, without falling into a form of relativism, at the same time as arguing for liberal European modernity as the dominant version, without suggesting a form of triumphalism. I suggest it fails on both counts.

The key innovation made by theorists of multiple modernities was to include, as Fukuyama had before them, a cultural dimension to the standard economic understandings of modernization (although this failing could hardly be directed at most sociologists of modernization). They argued that modernity needed to be understood in terms of its institutional constellations, as embodied in the market and polity, as well as in its cultural configurations, that is, in its values and its orientations to autonomy and domination, and so forth. By splitting understandings of modernity in this way, theorists were able to argue for an institutional commonality (of state and market), which enabled all forms of modernity to be understood as such (and thus denied relativism), as well as enabling cultural variety in terms of the particular inflections of that institutional frame in different socio-political conditions (thus, apparently, denying Euro-triumphalism). What is also significant to note, however, is that European modernity

is not understood as split in this way. Rather, it is seen as the originary form of modernity and is presented as the unique combination of the institutional and cultural forms. It is this combined cultural-institutional form that is then further culturally inflected through its interaction with other societies to create *multiple* modernities. Theorists of multiple modernities sidestep the issue of historical interconnections in the context of the emergence of European modernity – those connections argued for by theorists of underdevelopment and of dependency – and only regard as significant those connections that brought European modernity to other societies. Although, of course, they do not address the actual historical processes of colonialism, enslavement and dispossession; rather these are euphemized under terms such as European contact or mere diffusion.

In this way, theorists of multiple modernities assert the necessary priority of the West in the construction of a comparative sociology of multiple modernities and end up privileging the same understanding of modern societies as earlier modernization theorists (and as Francis Fukuyama). Although they seek to dissociate themselves from Eurocentrism, they do this at the same time as embracing its core assumptions, namely, 'the Enlightenment assumptions of the centrality of a Eurocentred type of modernity' (Eisenstadt and Schluchter 1998: 5). The triumphalism may no longer be explicitly normative, in that there is a muted 'acceptance' of diverse forms of modernity; it is, however, still embodied within the analytical framework in use. By maintaining a general framework within which varieties of modernity are to be located – and identifying the varieties with culture, and the experience of Europe with the derivation of the general framework itself – theorists of multiple modernities have, in effect, neutralized any challenge that a consideration of other histories could have posed. Thus, theorists of multiple modernities seek to contain challenges to the dominant theoretical framework of sociology by not allowing 'difference' to *make a difference* to what are seen as the original categories of modernity.

Theorists of multiple modernities, in their attempt to rehabilitate modernization theory, then, merely reinforced the deficiencies of

that sociological paradigm and introduced further problems; some of which could have been resolved if they had taken seriously the work of earlier scholars within the area of underdevelopment and dependency theory. One of the reasons why they may not have addressed the literature in this area is because their focus was on the Soviet Union and the countries of what had been the Eastern bloc. Eisenstadt, for example, distinguishes the Soviet and Communist societies from those of the Third World and suggests that the Communist societies 'were not simply backward and underdeveloped, aspiring to become modern'; rather, they should be understood as 'modern or modernizing societies' which were now seeking to catch up with the more developed West (1992: 33). It is evident from such a formulation that there is a distinct hierarchy underpinning Eisenstadt's conceptualization of modernity that places Third World countries as backward, Communist societies as modern or modernizing, and Western European and North American societies as developed. Alongside this belief in the advanced character of Western societies, however, there is also unease about whether the turbulence evident in Eastern Europe is confined to the specific problems of 'Communist modernity' or whether it also 'bears witness to some of the problems and tensions inherent in modernity itself' (Eisenstadt 1992: 35; for discussion see Ray 1997). If the latter, this turbulence would be of even greater significance as it would point to 'the potential fragility of the whole project of modernity' (Eisenstadt 1992: 35); if the former, then it could be regarded as opening up 'new terrains of struggle *for* modernity' (Ray 1997: 547).

This concern about the nature and future of modernity is explicit in the writings published in the immediate aftermath of the revolutions in Eastern Europe reflecting uncertainty as to the direction of change they indicated. By the very end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, this concern had dissipated and multiple modernities could be confidently articulated as a paradigm reflecting the ideological and political success of Western modernity. This was notwithstanding that the period since the 1980s was also associated with widening social and economic inequalities and challenges to the

'mixed economies' and welfare regimes that earlier modernization theorists had seen as stable characteristics of a late modernity with the capacity for reform. Even while lip-service was now paid to 'different' forms of being modern, there was a confidence that this difference was not a difference that mattered as the legacy of the great historical and cultural project of modernity, as Wagner (2001) puts it, was now secure even in its revanchist neo-liberal form. While both modernization theory and the radical critiques of underdevelopment theory were concerned with the choice posed between different versions of the modern, with multiple modernities that choice disappeared and was replaced by a differentiation, instead, between the modern and the anti-modern. In the process, colonialism and its associated structures of race are once again displaced from any understanding of that differentiation.