

# Modernity: a non-European conceptualization

## ABSTRACT

In the light of insights drawn from historical sociology and Parsons' theory of differentiation/modernization, an attempt is made to conceptualize modernity in such a way as to avoid both eurocentrism and the total rejection of the concept by those who view it as an ideological means for the further advancement of western cultural imperialism.

**KEYWORDS:** Late modernity; eurocentrism; differentiation; value generalization; globalization

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the sociological literature, the concepts of modernity and modernization have often been criticized for their emphatically eurocentric nature. Whether one looks at such obvious instances as Parsonian neo-evolutionism and its applications to the study of third-world development, or at more sophisticated uses of the term in, for instance, the works of Giddens or Stuart Hall – all of them, according to the critics, manifest a strong tendency to view non-western developmental trajectories (past, present and future) as imitations of a western-specific pattern of development.

In the case of the Parsonian-oriented sociology of modernization, for example, the by now famous ideal-typical construction of tradition/modernity places western societies at the modernity end of the continuum, with third-world countries moving more or less rapidly up the evolutionary ladder via the diffusion of western values, technology, and capital.<sup>1</sup> As for Giddens (1985), who does attempt to avoid any conceptualization tainted by evolutionist and/or functionalist thinking, he too views capitalism as a major component of modernity (together with industrialism, and centralized means of violence and surveillance). This results in a situation where the non-capitalist developmental paths followed for more than half a century by the Soviet Union and other countries must be considered as non-modern. Stuart Hall, although he differs from Giddens by viewing

contemporary western societies as postmodern rather than late modern, again sees capitalism as a fundamental dimension of modernity, and argues that pre-1989 Eastern European societies constitute exceptions.<sup>2</sup> Finally, if one looks at purely cultural definitions of modernity, these tend to emphasize values and/or orientations that are not necessarily specific to the modern world (e.g. belief in human progress, viewing the social world as ambiguous, evanescent, precarious, etc.)<sup>3</sup>.

In the anti-eurocentric camp the situation is even more disappointing. While its followers correctly point out the deficiencies inherent in viewing the development of humankind in terms of western-specific institutional features, when they move from critique to constructive proposals, what they have to offer is still less acceptable than what prevails in the sociological market at present. By adopting extreme forms of cultural relativism, these theorists fail to differentiate features of advanced modern societies that are specifically western (e.g. certain forms of individualism) from those which, although fully institutionalized in the West, have a more universal character. For instance, such institutional features as markets, bureaucracy, or a universalistic legal system – although they have been fully institutionalized in Western Europe – are to be found, in less developed forms, in several other civilizations. Talcott Parsons calls such features *evolutionary universals*, and considers them as institutional breakthroughs that (whether independently invented or borrowed) are necessary but not sufficient preconditions for societies to move to higher levels of complexity and adaptive capacity.<sup>4</sup>

Failing to differentiate specifically western from universal features of modernity, the anti-eurocentric advocates end up with total *moral relativism* (e.g. it is impossible to criticize non-western cultural practices that violate basic human rights, since the notion of human rights is a western invention); *cognitive relativism* (e.g. western science has no *cognitive* superiority over non-western modes of thought);<sup>5</sup> and ‘*thirdworld-centrism*’, (e.g. it is impossible to effectively criticize western capitalism or colonialism by using ‘western’ social-science concepts, etc.)<sup>6</sup>.

Given the above unsatisfactory situation, the problem is to find a middle position between the obvious eurocentrism of prevailing descriptions of modernity/modernization and the ultra-relativistic thirdworldist proposals that critics of eurocentrism have to offer us. More specifically, a non-eurocentric, non-relativistic conceptualization of modernity should be able:

- (a) to accommodate forms of development where the capitalist mode of production is either strongly peripheralized (e.g. the Soviet Union, present-day North Korea, and Cuba); or, without being peripheral within the economy, its logic is clearly subordinated to logics emanating from non-economic institutional spheres such as the religious (Iran) or the politico-military (Nigeria, Zaire);
- (b) to do the above while simultaneously showing clearly what is distinctive about modernity, what distinguishes for instance modern societies

(like the USA, the Soviet Union, or Iran) from pre-modern or non-modern complex, differentiated societies (such as Hellenistic Egypt, Ancient Rome, the Chinese or Islamic empires).

When (a) and (b) are met, one can argue that western modernity is simply one modernity among others. Although historically the first to appear and currently dominant, it is neither unique nor will it necessarily continue to be dominant in the century to come.

## 2. MODERNITY: MOBILIZATION/INCORPORATION INTO THE CENTRE

By adapting the by now well-accepted social-structural rather than cultural definition, we can regard modernity as the type of social arrangements that became dominant in Western Europe after the English Industrial and the French Revolutions. These arrangements entailed unprecedented social mobilization that weakened people's ties with their local, self-contained communities and brought them much closer to the 'centre', i.e. integrated/incorporated them into the much wider political, economic, social, and cultural arenas which, in part at least, constitute what we call the nation-state.<sup>7</sup>

The nation-state is historically unique in the sense that, compared to all pre-industrial states, it achieved (to use Mann's terminology) unprecedented 'infrastructural' powers. It succeeded in penetrating the periphery and bringing its population into centralized bureaucratic mechanisms, to a degree that was simply unthinkable in any pre-industrial social formations. In fact, pre-industrial states, however despotic, were both minute and extremely weak by comparison (in terms of size and resource-mobilization capacity) with the nation-state (Mann 1986).

Given the seventeenth-century scientific revolution and the subsequent development of formidable technologies not only in the economic but also in the administrative, military, and cultural fields, the nation-state managed to mobilize human and non-human resources to such an extent that segmental localism was dramatically weakened (Gellner 1994) as subjects were transformed into citizens, as people gradually shifted their loyalties and orientations from the local, traditional communities to the 'imagined community' of the nation-state (Anderson 1991).

## 3. MODERNITY: INSTITUTIONAL DIFFERENTIATION

If one changes from a social- to a system-integration perspective, to use Lockwood's (1964) fundamental distinction, that is, from an agency to a systemic/institutional approach,<sup>8</sup> a second notion that can help us conceptualize modernity in a non-eurocentric manner is that of institutional differentiation.

As Parsons, Habermas, and Luhmann among others have convincingly demonstrated, modern societies have surpassed all earlier levels of structural-functional differentiation. Pre-industrial, *ancien régime* societies, despite their transcendence of the type of segmentalism such as found in tribal social formations, never achieved the separation and autonomization of institutional spheres that one sees in modernity.<sup>9</sup>

By placing the concept of structural-functional differentiation at the centre of his neo-evolutionist theory of change, Talcott Parsons (1966, 1971, 1977) has done more than any other theorist to provide a theoretically sophisticated framework for the study of this fundamental process. As Habermas, whose theory of communicative action is profoundly influenced by Parsons, puts it

No theory of society can be taken seriously today if it does not at least situate itself with respect to Parsons . . . among the productive theorists of society no one else has equalled Parsons' intensity and persistence in conducting a dialogue with the classics and connecting up his own theory to them. (Habermas 1987: 199–200)

I would add to this that Parsons has provided not only substantive theory, but a set of conceptual tools (Generalities II in Althusserian terminology) whose rigor and systematicity have been approached (by Giddens 1984, for instance) but not surpassed (Mouzelis 1995: Part II). It is precisely for this reason that, after a long period of neglect and/or superficial dismissal, there are several attempts to reassess or constructively restructure Parsonian theory – particularly its functionalist and evolutionist dimensions. This is done not only by Habermas, Munch, and Luhmann, but also by such theorists as Alexander (1985, 1988), Alexander and Colomy (1990), Colomy (1990), and Lechner (1990), or even by Parsonians of an older generation such as Eisenstadt (Eisenstadt et al. 1990) and Smelser (1985).

This does not, of course, mean that there are no fundamental flaws in Parsons' ambitious project. Following Lockwood (1964, 1992), I think that the major weakness of Parsonian theory lies in its overemphasis of system and its underemphasis of social integration – in the sense that agency (particularly collective agency) either disappears or is portrayed passively as a product of systemic processes of functionalist-structural differentiation (Mouzelis 1995: 15 ff). It is precisely for this reason that I find the attempts by Habermas and Luhmann to appropriate Parsons' differentiation theory unhelpful. Both of them, instead of redressing the balance, have uncritically accepted the system-integration overemphasis that underlies all of Parsons' work.<sup>10</sup>

As to post-Parsonian evolutionists, like Alexander and Colomy, they have tried to redress the balance by injecting into Parsonian theory notions such as interests and class conflict in a rather *ad hoc* manner – without showing, that is, how the 'imported elements affect the major features of Parsonian functionalism/evolutionism (see Mouzelis 1995: 81–7). I have tried elsewhere to show how one can, in theoretically coherent

manner, bring Parsonian theory closer together with historically-oriented Marxist sociology (Mouzelis 1995: 86–99). Here I can do no more than simply state that it is crucial to combine such fundamental Parsonian notions as the differentiation of the societal system into four subsystems (AGIL), or that of evolutionary universals, with insights derived from a more Marxist-influenced historical sociology like that of Bendix, Moore, or Mann.

Parsons' late work identifies four major components of evolutionary development: differentiation, adaptive upgrading, inclusion, and value generalization:

- (i) *Differentiation* is 'the division of a unit or structure in a social system into two or more units or structures that differ in their characteristics and functional significance for the system' (Parsons 1971: 26).
- (ii) These units operate in a more 'efficient', *adaptively upgraded* manner because 'a wider range of resources is made available to social units, so that their functioning can be freed from some of the restrictions of its [less differentiated] predecessors'.
- (iii) Once we have differentiation and adaptive upgrading, the problem of *including* the differentiated units in a larger whole becomes crucial.
- (iv) In order for the inclusion process to occur and be institutionalized, it 'must be complemented by *value generalization* if the various units in the society are to gain appropriate legitimation and modes of orientation for their new patterns of action. . . . When the network of socially structured situations becomes more complex, the value pattern itself must be couched at a higher level of generality in order to ensure social stability' (Parsons 1971: 27).

This, then, is how for Parsons society moves from particularistic to universalistic values and normative patterns. Now the difficulty with the above formulation is that differentiation, even when strongly institutionalized, does not always relate to the other three aspects of evolutionary development in the way Parsons implies. This becomes obvious if one considers that unit 'inclusion'<sup>11</sup> can take both *balanced and unbalanced* forms: the differentiated units may be integrated in a way in which the separate logic of each of them is respected; but they may also be included in a larger whole in an unbalanced manner so that the logic of one differentiated unit dominates that of another. Parsons could argue, of course, that in a case of unbalanced inclusion the process of differentiation has failed to be institutionalized and we have *regressive* de-differentiation. I think this would be misleading. There is surely a state of affairs between balanced differentiation/inclusion and de-differentiation/regression – for example the case where differentiation does stabilize, but where one differentiated unit dominates the others

without at the same time eliminating the social division of labour, i.e. without regression to segmental forms of social organization.

Let me give a concrete example. It can be argued that during the Thatcherite era the autonomous logic of the British higher-education system (which Parsons would place in the latency subsystem) was seriously undermined by the increased dominance of the managerial/market logic of the adaptation subsystem. Thus *cognitive rationality* (the value which, according to Parsons, should be dominant within the university) was weakened by such measures as the abolition of tenure, the adoption of managerial forms of 'quality control', the emphasis on 'market-relevant' applied courses, etc. (Mouzelis, forthcoming). But this state of affairs cannot abolish the differentiation between the educational and the economic subsystem. It does not bring the British system of higher education back to a situation where the educational function is embedded in, for instance, the religious and/or kinship institutions. To use Durkheimian terminology, this is not a case of regression (in evolutionary terms) from *organ* to *segment*. The social division of labour is maintained, society continues to be organized on the basis of specialized organs rather than less specialized segments. It is simply that 'inclusion' of the differentiated parts is achieved in an unbalanced manner: the logic of one subsystem peripheralizes that of another.<sup>12</sup>

#### 4. FORMAL AND SUBSTANTIVE DIFFERENTIATION

Another way of clarifying this crucial point is to distinguish analytically between formal and substantive differentiation. In the first we have the emergence and institutionalization of specialized units (roles, institutions, organizations). In the second the process is taken a step further in that the newly formed units achieve a high degree of autonomy: they are 'included' in the societal whole in a balanced, *multilogical* manner. This means that formal differentiation refers to the problem of the institutional *separation* of the parts, whereas substantive differentiation refers to the problem of the *autonomy* of the differentiated parts.

To revert to our earlier example, the undermining of university autonomy should be conceptualized not as a return to segmentalism (because when segmentalism prevails the problem of balanced/unbalanced inclusion, i.e. the problem of the relative autonomy of differentiated units, cannot even be raised)<sup>13</sup> but as a shift from balanced to unbalanced inclusion: the basic social division of labour is maintained, but the managerial ethos, in monologic fashion, 'colonizes' the academic one.

#### *Value Generalization*

If, therefore, during the process of structural-functional differentiation inclusion can be both balanced and unbalanced, then value generalization

becomes necessary only in the case of balanced inclusion. In the unbalanced case, differentiation can be institutionalized in a *particularistic* fashion: by imposing the 'less generalized' values/logic of one differentiated unit on that of another. Taking the obvious example of Japanese modernization, it can be argued that here overall integration/inclusion has been achieved not by 'value generalization', but by the ingenious adaptation of particularistic, patriarchal values which, to an important extent, have imposed themselves on all subsystems, including the economic one.<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, it can be argued that even in Western European modernization, 'inclusion' has not been as balanced as Parsons implies. Both in the nineteenth century and in the post-1974 period, the dominance of liberal capitalism has meant that the economic logic of productivity has seriously undermined the autonomy of solidaristic values in the integration subsystem, and those of 'commitment' in the latency subsystem. To use another terminology: if Habermas is correct in arguing that in late capitalism the *system* (i.e. Parsons' adaptation and goal-achievement subsystems) has colonized the *lifeworld*, then value generalization in the sense Parsons uses the term has not occurred. I would point out that to achieve balanced inclusion (i.e. to move from formal to substantive differentiation) is extremely difficult and rare in all modernizing trajectories, including the western one. With reference to the latter, it is only during the brief transition from liberal to social-democratic capitalism (which reached its most developed form in the western social democracies in the early postwar period) that one could see a *timid* development of multilogic, 'balanced' modernization.<sup>15</sup>

### *Adaptive Upgrading*

This brings us to the fourth and last dimension of Parsons' evolutionary development. If differentiation is not necessarily linked with value generalization, neither is the latter with adaptive upgrading. To take Asian capitalism again, if by adaptive upgrading we mean the generation of resources which enable a society to avoid the typical bottlenecks of late development, then the relatively authoritarian development of the South Korean and Taiwanese type are obvious cases where 'unbalanced inclusion' (which prevents value generalization) is not at all incompatible with adaptive upgrading.

This being so, Parsons' (1964) idea that liberal-democratic forms of government constitute an evolutionary universal, that they are a precondition for a society to achieve higher levels of adaptive capacity, is not always true. Particularly in respect of late developers it can be said that if, in the present global environment, the shift from a command to a market economy is a precondition for higher adaptive capacity, this does not automatically apply to the political subsystem as well. So if political democratization, in more or less superficial form, is spreading to peripheral and semi-peripheral capitalist countries nowadays, as M. Mann 1986 has argued,

this may have to do less with its structural unavoidability in conditions of late modernity than with the conjuncturely explained defeat of the Axis powers and the rise of American hegemony after World War II.

In other words, concerning *late developers*, quasi-authoritarian forms of government, in so far as they 'deliver the goods' (high economic growth and the spread of its fruits to the bottom of the social pyramid), may be more 'adaptive' in the present global environment than liberal-democratic forms of governance, which combine chronic economic bottlenecks with growing inequalities and the socio-economic peripheralization of the less advantaged classes.<sup>16</sup> In brief, adaptive upgrading and political democratization do not necessarily go hand in hand in the present world order.

One can argue, of course, that authoritarianism creates its own bottlenecks, and that in the long term it is not as 'adaptive' as western democracies. This may be true of quasi-totalitarian regimes like the Chinese one which, I think, is bound to 'open up' politically once capitalist growth dramatically increases the middle-class strata. But the type of relatively mild authoritarianism that one finds in Japan, for instance, seems to me eminently adaptive in an inter-state system where increasingly the global game requires highly agile state actors enjoying relative 'insulation' from class and other interests.

Finally, it should also be pointed out that differentiation in general, whether balanced or unbalanced, democratic or authoritarian, is not invariably linked, as Parsons suggested, with adaptive upgrading. As Hobsbawm (1968) has argued when comparing nineteenth-century England and Germany, it was England's advanced 'differentiation' in a certain direction that made it difficult for her to reorganize her industrial system when new technologies appeared; whereas the less differentiated German economy was better able to incorporate the new technologies, and so could outpace England. This type of 'leap-frog' development cannot be accounted for by attempts to establish one-to-one linkages between differentiation and adaptive capacity.

In summary, a close look at Parsons' four dimensions of evolutionary development shows that they can vary independently of each other. Not only is differentiation not necessarily linked with adaptive upgrading but, by distinguishing between balanced and unbalanced inclusion, one can see also that value generalization does not always follow on from processes of inclusion.

##### 5. MODERNITY: A NON-EUROCENTRIC CONCEPTUALIZATION

In the light of the above and starting with a very general definition, modernity entails the destruction of traditional localisms and an unprecedented process of social mobilization as the people in their majority are brought in the national centre. Needless to say, this mobilizing, 'bringing-in' process can take both autonomous and heteronomous forms. In the first case



economic, political, social, and cultural rights are spread downwards, in the second they are not.

From a more functionalist-systemic point of view, modernity can be defined in terms of unprecedented levels of structural-functional differentiation, as functions previously embedded in all-inclusive, multifunctional segmental units are performed by more specialized units (roles, institutions, organizations). This growing division of labour entails both monologic and polylogic forms of inclusion. In the former, the logic of one differentiated subsystem imposes its dominance on the other subsystems. In the polylogic case there is a balance of logic between the differentiated parts, and it is only here that moving from formal to substantive forms of social differentiation becomes possible.

As I see it, it is the combination of unprecedented levels of (a) mobilization/incorporation into the centre, and (b) structural-functional differentiation, as these two processes developed in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe, which constitute 'modernity' – a state of affairs unique in human history. These unique levels of mobilization and differentiation could not have been achieved without the seventeenth-century scientific revolution that led to a kind of knowledge based, as Gellner (Hall and Jarvie 1995) has correctly argued, on both transcultural and non-moral criteria of validation. Such knowledge was not only *cognitively* superior to all other kinds of knowledge, but its systematic application in the various spheres of production created the powerful technologies (economic, political, social, cultural) that made possible the process of large-scale mobilization and institutional differentiation discussed above.

To be more concrete, on the political level the military and administrative technologies that developed spectacularly in *ancien régime* Europe (due mainly to geopolitical struggles between absolutist states – Mann 1995) constitute the key for understanding the destruction of political localism and the spectacular concentration at the top of the means of taxation, jurisdiction, surveillance and violence. The nation-state, as the prototypical institutional embodiment of political modernity, would have been impossible without the development of the macro-technologies of political power which, from different perspectives, both Weber and Foucault have explored in considerable depth.

Similar processes can be identified on the economic level. On the way from economic localism to the creation of relatively homogenous, national economic arenas, the economic technologies that we associate with the Industrial Revolution played an equally crucial role. So for instance in the English cotton industry, the development of machinery which, at a certain point of technological development, could no longer be accommodated within the domestic putting-out system of production, led to the dominance of the factory system, to the marked differentiation between economic and kinship institutional spheres (Smelser 1959), and to a marked separation of the direct producers from the means of production – that is, it led to the concentration of the means of production at the top. This process, which

is closely linked with the commodification of labour, can be seen not only in capitalist modernization, but also in non-capitalist cases – whenever, that is, the motor force for the creation of national economic spaces and the separation of the direct producer from his/her means of production was not the market but centralized state planning.

In the cultural sphere, the shift from local to national level was facilitated by the development of cultural technologies that made possible mass literacy and education. This, as Gellner (1983) has shown, was closely linked with the development of nationalist ideologies as people began to shift their loyalties and orientations from the local community to the national centre, and as modes of legitimation shifted from the royal/divine to the popular/secular (Bendix 1978).

In the social domain finally, the gradual transfer of major responsibility for the care of the weak and the economically destitute from the kinship unit and local community to the centrally organized welfare state was made possible by the development of administrative and surveillance techniques that, once more, led to the creation of broader, national arenas of care, health, and population management.<sup>17</sup>

### *Modernity and the West*

It is quite true that modernity as described above first appeared in Western Europe. But it is also true that:

- (a) Key institutional elements of this process can be found, in less developed form, in several pre-industrial, non-European civilizations.
- (b) It is not at all certain that the breakthrough or take-off could only have happened in the West. It has been argued equally convincingly, I think, that the 'great transformation' could have happened at more or less the same time in other civilizations with preconditions as favourable as those in Europe. McNeil (1963, 1995) for instance has argued that as early as the eleventh century a variety of inventions in transport and communication in Eurasia led to the development of an international economic network, of an 'ecumenical exchange system'. If China was initially more advanced than Europe, subsequently its centralized government was less able than the more decentralized, 'disorganized' European political system to promote industrial capitalism. According to McNeil, if the European political system was more centralized/organized (and therefore created obstacles to the capitalist breakthrough).

Japan's feudal chaos might have served instead as the seedbed of industria. And if not Japan, the Malay pirates were waiting in the wings – and still others might have followed. Clearly the possibility was there. Agraria had become systematically unstable. Sooner or later the likelihood that some people would discover the

extravagant rewards of unleashing an unrestrained industria seems to me as near certain as anything in human affairs is ever likely to be. (1995: 574)

If one accepts the above reasoning, one can argue that the explanation why the breakthrough happened in Western Europe has less to do with 'unique' cultural elements (such as the Protestant work ethic), and more with the combination/timing of elements that were not unique and could be found in several other complex civilizations during the pre-breakthrough period.

- (c) Irrespective of what position one takes on the 'uniqueness of the West' issue, it is a fact that not all, but only certain elements of western modernity have a transcultural character today. These, regardless of where they were first fully institutionalized, constitute what Parsons has called evolutionary universals. No society can advance or even survive in the present world without acquiring the broad economic, political, cultural, and social modern features discussed above.

If this is seriously taken into account, it becomes quite obvious that late-developing countries trying to 'catch up' with the West are not merely imitating *western-specific* institutional features. They are also trying, more or less successfully, to adopt some transcultural, universal features that happened to be *fully* institutionalized for the first time in Western Europe. To be more specific, in the same way as efforts to catch up with English industrialization by European late-comers like France and Germany did not entail the 'anglicization' of these countries, so today non-western 'late-late' comers<sup>18</sup> can industrialize without necessarily becoming fully westernized. In other words, if we distinguish western-specific (e.g. the Protestant work ethic) from evolutionary-universal features of modernity (e.g. the nation-state), then it is possible to see westernization not as modernity *tout court*, but as simply one type of modernity.

- (d) If one unravels Parsons' conceptualization of evolutionary development, it becomes quite clear that differentiation, inclusion, adaptive upgrading, and value generalization do not constitute a system the elements of which vary always in the same direction. In fact, the inclusion/integration of the differentiated parts is able to take a variety of institutional forms – only one of which was actually realized in the West. It is in this sense that western modernity is neither unique nor necessarily bound to prevail in the long term.

## 6. VARIANTS OF MODERNITY

Let us now examine the varied institutional forms that modernity has taken. If the articulation of a certain type of mobilization/incorporation with high levels of formal differentiation is what all modernities have in common, one

way of accounting in theoretically coherent manner for its variant forms is to concentrate on the relationship between the differentiated institutional spheres (in Parsonian language the adaptation, goal achievement, integration, latency scheme – AGIL for short).

In western modernity, the development of liberal capitalism and the separation of the economic from the political sphere led to a situation where (with the partial exception of the 1945–1974 period) the logic of the market prevailed over the logic of the non-formalistic democracy in the political sphere, over the logic of solidarity in the social sphere, and over the logic of motivation-producing cultural autonomy in the latency sphere. This dominance was more accentuated in the Anglo-Saxon variant and less so in the so-called Rhine and/or Scandinavian models of capitalism (Albert 1995, Hutton 1995).

If we now move from economic (A) to political (G) dominance, socialist modernization provides the most striking example of a situation where state/party logic penetrates and abolishes, in quasi-totalitarian fashion, the distinctive rationalities of the adaptation, integration, and latency subsystems. I would go further and argue that an attenuated variant of this kind of modernity is found in most late-developing countries which, although nominally capitalist, are dominated by an anti-developmental state that systematically subordinates the logic of all other spheres to the clientelistic and/or populist logic of political domination (Mouzelis 1994). (Several African kleptocratic states provide extreme examples of this type of dominance.)

Modernization processes where differentiation is marked by 'latency' dominance are arguably exemplified by Iran. Here the fundamentalist logic that is derived from neo-traditionalist constructions of High Islam scripturalism systematically subordinates any considerations of democratic representation, economic productivity or competition, and secular welfarism in the political, economic, and social spheres respectively. In this case, if not the L-subsystem alone, a specific combination/articulation of the religious and the political clearly differentiates such a formation both from state/secular and market-dominated societies.

This brings me to the obvious point that many modernizing trajectories cannot be neatly fitted into any of the above ideal-typical categories. For instance, the modernization of Japan and her South-East Asian followers shows a pattern of mobilization/differentiation where the political values of democratic representation and pluralism (i.e. the values of liberal democracy) are systematically subordinated to culturally-shaped solidaristic values (L and I) and those of productivity/competitiveness (A). Asian capitalism manifests an attempt to combine market competition with state-induced co-operation between both state and capital as well as, more horizontally, between different types of capital. This co-operation, as many commentators have pointed out, is based on cultural values which, in comparison to western modernity, are less individualistic and more patriarchal-solidaristic in character (Eisenstadt 1995, Woodiwiss forthcoming).

On the level of substantive differentiation, therefore, Japanese modernity portrays a set of features that effectively combine the economic values of productivity/competitiveness (A) with the values of cultural autonomy and solidarity (I and L), at the expense of effective democratic representation and political pluralism (G). As already mentioned, this type of articulation of the four differentiated subsystems seems to provide a formula for successful 'adaptive upgrading' in late-developing countries. It is seen in more or less accentuated form in several South-East Asian countries trying (with varying degrees of success) to follow the Japanese pattern of modernization. The spectacular success of this model is quite obvious if one compares it with that followed by the majority of late-developing nation-states where the dominance of an anti-developmental state systematically sacrifices the values of productivity and wealth-creation, as well as those of cultural autonomy and social solidarity, on the altar of a profoundly corrupt, kleptocratic system of political domination.

Taking into account certain other features of Japanese modernity that sharply distinguish it from the Anglo-Saxon variant – such as concern for long-term growth and development rather than immediate profit maximization, horizontal co-operation between branches of industry, selective and flexible state support for growth industries, more emphasis on training and development of human resources and less on 'downsizing', reluctance to let the market set the level of unemployment, etc. (Berger and Dore 1996) – it is highly possible that in the next century quasi-authoritarian Asian capitalism may prevail over its more liberal Anglo-Saxon competitor. It is true, of course, that at the present time some 'Asian tigers' (of the first and particularly the second generation) are experiencing severe socio-economic difficulties related to their mode of development (Bello and Rosenfeld 1992). But I think that these difficulties will not lead to permanent breakdown or regression, or to the type of underdevelopment to be seen in Africa and Latin America. It is more plausible to consider them as transitional difficulties rather than as irreversible failures (see Weiss 1997).

This prognosis becomes particularly plausible in view of the at present rather spectacular development of Chinese modernization – a modernization combining foreign capital-led economic development with rigid political controls. As has frequently been argued, it is highly likely that, as Chinese capitalism develops further, there will be both internal and external pressures for the opening up of the political system. Such an opening up might lead to a Taiwanese or Japanese style of authoritarian modernity, with weak liberal-democratic political institutions providing some degree of political pluralism and democratic representation. On the other hand, the possibility cannot be excluded that, in the long term, Chinese modernity might combine effective capitalist development with political forms that continue to remain strongly authoritarian–totalitarian.

However, regardless of which modernizing route China follows – perhaps with even lower rates of economic growth than now – there is no doubt that in the decades to come a more developed China will, with her demographic

weight, drastically change the global capitalist landscape. This brings us to a brief consideration of the linkages between the notion of modernity and globalization.

## 7. HIGH MODERNITY AND GLOBALIZATION

So far the modernity concept has been analysed in terms of fundamental transformations on the nation-state level. To what extent is this analysis relevant in a world where globalization processes articulate with the regional–local in ways that by-pass the nation-state level?

It goes beyond the scope of this paper to examine the globalization phenomenon in depth. For the purposes of this analysis it suffices to point out that the 'hyperglobalization' thesis, which predicts the rapid irrelevance and decline of the nation-state (Julius 1990, Albrow 1996) is profoundly misleading. Although I do not agree with the opposite view that there is nothing particularly novel in the present transformation of the world economy (Hirst and Thompson 1996), I do think that the role of the nation-state in the emerging new world order will definitely change, but that it will not diminish in importance.

This seems to me quite obvious when looking at the strongly interventionist nature of the state in the rapidly rising Pacific Rim economies, and at the fact that developmentally-oriented national governments constitute – via collaboration/antagonism/control – serious participants in the games played by multinational or transnational companies.

Moreover, not only are nation-states still the basic building blocks of the world order but, if one focuses on the global level, processes of mobilization/incorporation and differentiation can be discerned that are quite similar to those that occurred earlier on the nation-state level. If the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century mobilizations incorporated large chunks of the population in the broader economic, political, social, and cultural arenas of the nation-state, today's 'bringing-in' is simply taking the process a step further by creating global economic, political, and socio-cultural arenas where growing numbers of people are passive or active participants. Moreover, if the original shift from segmental localism to the construction of national arenas became possible due to the industrial and surveillance technologies of the early modern era, it can be argued that the shift from national to global arenas is becoming possible due to the new information technologies of late modernity. In both cases the advent of new technologies draws people into broader spaces, while the control of the 'means of construction' (Mouzelis 1990: ch. 3) of such spaces is increasingly concentrated at the top.

With regard to the present-day resurgence of localism/regionalism (of a non-segmental form), we could say that similar phenomena of centralization/decentralization obtained during the period of early, nation-state based modernity. In the same way as the dominance of the nation-state,

i.e. the creation of national arenas, created all kinds of local resistance, reactions, or revolts on the part of those who had a stake in the status quo of the pre-nation state, so today's creation of global arenas generates fundamentalist reactions of a nationalistic and/or religious kind by those who see their interests threatened by the globalization processes. I am not saying that there are no important differences between the creation of national and global arenas, but in structural terms the global–local dialectic of late modernity does resemble the local–national dialectic of early modernity.

It is precisely for this reason that I prefer to agree with Giddens (1990) rather than the poststructuralists in calling the present situation late or high modern instead of postmodern. In this I base myself on the fact that globalization brings us a step closer to the logic of mobilization/incorporation which the advent of the nation-state and the inclusion of the population in broader economic, political, social, and cultural arenas had initiated.

Let me briefly pursue further the local–national and local–global homology. I would posit that, similarly to how, on the level of substantive differentiation, early western modernity was marked by A-dominance, so global differentiation in a world where the USA is still hegemonic is also characterized by a neo-liberal logic that systematically subordinates world solidarity and ecological concerns to the imperatives of the market.

However, as I have already mentioned, Japanese modernity and the rising Chinese variant may come to present a serious challenge to the present, western-led, neo-liberal world order. If an Asian-led new economic hegemony is established, it could result in a global order where concerns about global solidarity might prevail over those of individualism and competition, and where the currently proliferating inequalities of neo-liberal globalization might be attenuated. A systematic examination of such an eventuality goes beyond the scope of the present study. What I would like to point out, however, is that the prevailing neo-liberal world order leads neither to Fukuyama's 'end of history', nor necessarily to the indefinite perpetuation of its present dominance. Once again: not only is western modernity not unique, but its present dominance could be quite precarious.

Finally, the type of balanced inclusion of the four differentiated subsystems that Parsons thought to be characterizing western modernity has not and may never come about. It presupposes a situation where the values of productivity/competitiveness in the economic sphere interrelate without *subordinating* the values of substantive democracy in the political sphere, as well as the values of solidarity in the social sphere, and the values of commitment and autonomy in the cultural sphere. Now this type of multilogical or rather tetralogical modernization is not completely utopian. It has been approximated in some Western European social democracies during the third quarter of this century (1945–1974) by the development of such institutions as the welfare state, by collaboration between capital-labour and the state, by Keynesian full-employment policies, etc. But today such policies no longer seem to work.

The challenge for those interested in multilogic forms of modernization is to devise new means for achieving the goals of balancing capitalist productivity, political democracy, social solidarity, and cultural autonomy. Whether this is a feasible project and, if so, whether it will be more easily approximated via the route of western or Japanese modernity, those are problems well worth pondering during the present *fin-de-siècle*.

## 8. CONCLUSION

Let me summarize the main points of my argument.

1. It is possible to conceptualize modernity in such a way as to avoid both eurocentrism and the type of ultra-relativistic, third-worldist interpretation of the term that views it merely as an ideological means for the further advancement of western cultural imperialism.

2. Modernity refers to a type of social organization which, from a social-integration point of view, is characterized by an unprecedented level of social mobilization/incorporation into the centre; and, from the point of view of system integration, by an equally unprecedented level of institutional differentiation. This type of mobilization and differentiation leads to the destruction of segmental localism and to the creation of broader, highly differentiated economic, political, social, and cultural arenas (following the Parsonian AGIL terminology) within which the practices of individuated subjects are constituted/regulated by such institutional complexes as the nation state (G), national markets and/or national planning agencies (A), national systems of welfare and population surveillance/management (I), mass literacy and nationalist ideologies (L).

3. Although these structural features were initially fully institutionalized in Western Europe (after the seventeenth-century scientific revolution had led to the creation of powerful economic, political, social, and cultural technologies that profoundly transformed *ancien régime* European societies), they constitute evolutionary universals: no society can survive today without adopting such institutional forms as the nation state, mass literacy, etc.

4. The above does not lead to the conclusion that modernity equals westernization because:

- (a) important elements of modern institutions existed (in less developed form) in several non-western civilizations;
- (b) the type of revolutions (scientific, industrial, democratic) that 'modernized Europe' could possibly have happened first in other parts of the 'developed' pre-industrial world;
- (c) if modernization or development in the non-western world entails a process of 'catching up' with or borrowing from the West, some of the key features borrowed are not western-specific but have a transcultural, evolutionary-universal character.



5. One way of dealing in a theoretically coherent manner with the great variety of existing and virtual modernities is to distinguish between formal differentiation (the passage from 'segments' to 'organs') and substantive differentiation (the problem of the balanced or imbalanced relations between differentiated parts/organs). From the latter perspective it has been argued that the type of 'balanced' inclusion of the differentiated parts that Parsons saw in western modernization (i.e. an inclusion entailing a situation where the economic logic of productivity, the political logic of democracy, the social logic of solidarity, and the cultural logic of commitment/autonomy co-exist without one of them dominating the others) has never been achieved in the West or anywhere else. What we see today are types of modernity where the logic/values of one (or more) institutional subsystem(s) prevail and 'colonize' the other institutional spheres.

6. The most serious attempts to move from monologic/imbalanced to polylogic/balanced forms of modernity occurred in the post-war West European social democracies before the 1974 economic crisis. To what extent these or other societies will be able to find post-Keynesian means with the help of which they can overcome the present impasse and thus further advance their polylogic prospects remains an open question; so does the problem of whether the globally dominant Anglo-Saxon modernity will maintain its hegemony in the coming century.

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#### NOTES

1. For an early critique focusing on the eurocentric character of modernization studies in the so-called third world see Hoogvelt 1978.

2. See Hall and Grieben (eds) 1992, Introduction.

3. For instance those who, influenced by Simmel's urban sociology and stressing the fleeting and transient character of modern life, do not seem to realize that one finds similar features in several ancient, cosmopolitan urban centres (e.g. Ptolemaic Alexandria).

4. Although one can disagree with Parsons' specific list of evolutionary universals, I think that the basic concept is a sound one and extremely useful for understanding processes of modernization in the contemporary world (Parsons 1964).

5. For a powerful critique of these positions see Gellner 1992, pp. 55ff.

6. The rapidly growing list of post-colonial studies, greatly influenced by Edward Said's *Orientalism*, provides numerous examples of this type of extreme anti-eurocentrism. See for instance Williams and Chrisman (eds) 1993.

7. For an early formulation of modernity along such lines see Bendix 1969 and Nettle 1967.

8. See Lockwood 1964, also Mouzelis 1974 and 1997.

9. As Marx and many others have pointed out, in the oriental-despotic type of societies social differentiation and an advanced division of labour were limited to the centre-top; the base-periphery consisted of highly self-contained,

segmentally organized communities (Marx 1964).

10. For a critique of Habermas' work along such lines see Mouzelis (1992).

11. Here 'units' or system 'parts' do not refer to actors but to institutional complexes.

12. Actual dedifferentiation would consist of, for example, the kind of 'feudalizing' tendency that is seen in declining patrimonial empires (Weber 1978, pp. 231 ff).

13. For the concept of segmentalism and its relation to modernity see Gellner 1994.

14. On the concept of patriarchalism and its relation to S.-E. Asian capitalism see Eisenstadt 1995, and Woodiwiss forthcoming.

15. 'Timid' in the sense that social-democratic statism managed to achieve a high degree of solidarity, but at the price of weakening various aspects of civil society (Cohen and Arato 1992). Also, in so far as in even a successful social democracy economic capital can more or less automatically acquire cultural or symbolic capital, to use Bourdieu's terminology (e.g. via mass-media control), there are profound imbalances in western capitalist societies between economic values and values derived from the political, social, and cultural spheres.

16. See Wade 1990, and Appelbaum and Henderson (eds) 1992.

17. See Foucault's concept of bio-power in Gordon (ed) 1980.

18. For a discussion of the 'late-late' term see Hirschman 1970.

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