


The social sciences and the social movement were parallel inventions of the nineteenth century, sharing epistemological and historiographical premises consonant with the existing world order. Their central organizing concept was "development." Changes in the world system in recent years and prospectively in the years to come are leading to a sea change in which social science is called upon the rethink its epistemology, its historiography, and its links with the social movement.

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT OF DEVELOPMENT

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A case can be made for the assertion that the concept of development is not merely one of the central components of the ideology both of western civilization and of world social science but is in fact the central organizing concept around which all else is hinged.[1] I am not interested here, however, in the history of western civilization. I am interested, rather, in the history of social science—indeed, in the very notion that there is something called social science, or, to be more accurate, that there are various disciplines that collectively make up the social sciences. This idea is not, as any rapid glance at the historical evolution of the organization of universities will show us, self-evident. What today are called the humanities have long been studied. What today are called the natural sciences have a long history. The social sciences,

however, were invented and inserted into the curriculum only in the nineteenth century.

This is itself a remarkable fact, which is insufficiently observed and celebrated. For example, the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences,* published in 1968, does not even have an entry for "social science(s)" as such. (It is true that the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences,* published in 1937, opens with an essay entitled "What Are the Social Sciences?" But it is a very weak essay, of a chronologically descriptive, discursive nature.) This is no accident but in fact reflects the dominant ideology of world social science.

The invention of the social sciences required a particular extension of modern secularism. The natural sciences are based on the assumption that natural phenomena behave in predictable (or at least analyzable) ways and are therefore subject to intervention and manipulation. The struggle to establish the legitimacy of this perspective, as we all know, encountered the resistance of many religious authorities and of all those who believed that such a view would stimulate hubris and undermine social stability. We have little patience today for any who still preach such a backward form of resistance to scientific inquiry.

The social sciences basically make a parallel assertion: Social phenomena behave in predictable (or at least analyzable) ways and are therefore subject to intervention and manipulation. I do not for a moment suggest that this belief was unknown before the nineteenth century; that would be absurd. But I do suggest that such a perspective did not really have *droit de cité* before then.

The French Revolution in many ways crystallized the issues involved in this concept and served as an ideological turning point. By legitimating the concept of "the rights of man," the revolutionary process bequeathed us the legitimacy of deliberate social change, which no amount of conservative ideologizing since has been able to undo. (Note that conservatives are reduced these days to arguing that social interventions ought to be "cost-effective," a dramatic comedown if ever there was one.)

If social intervention is legitimate, it can be so only because what is is not perfect but is perfectible. It is, in the end, only some variant of the idea of progress that justifies the enormous social energy required by social science, the most complex of all forms

of knowledge. Otherwise, the whole exercise would be an esthetic game, in which case poetry or mathematics might be more appealing modes of activity. (And if what is is not perfect but is perfectible, we may be drawn to portray the alternatives as an antinomy of reified forces.) This is, of course, what did happen historically. In the wake of the French Revolution and all the ideological turmoil it generated, social commentators of human "development" began to make a distinction that was crucial for all subsequent analysis—the distinction of society and state.

In general, the state represented what was, and was not perfect, and society represented the force that was pushing toward the perfectibility of the state. At times, as we know, the imagery has been reversed. No matter! Without the distinction of society and state, social science as we know it would not have existed. But it is also true that, without the distinction of society and state, the social movement as we know it would not have existed; for both social science and the social movement have claimed to incarnate views about the underlying society against the pieties of officially stated analyses and policies.

Thus, the epistemological links between social science and the social movement are profound—which, to be sure, justifies the great suspicion that political conservatives have always shown toward the enterprise of social science.

Let us look more closely at the antinomy of society/state. An antinomy involves a permanent tension, a permanent misfit or contradiction, a permanent disequilibrium. In some sense, the intent of both social science and the social movement is to reduce this antinomy, whether by harmonization, by violence, or by some *Aufhebung* (transcendence) of the pair.

The question of course immediately arises, which society, which state? The difficulties involved in answering this query have been so enormous that the query itself has, for almost 200 years, been largely skirted. To skirt a query is not, however, to neglect to answer it. It is to answer it secretly, shamefully, by burying the answer in a largely unspoken premise.

The premise was that the state was those states that were "sovereign"—that is, those states that reciprocally recognized one another's legitimate existence within the framework and the norms of the interstate system. There were in addition aspirants to this

status, entities not yet existing whose existence was advocated by various national movements. And there were candidates for elimination, usually small-sized units which larger states wished to absorb and whose legitimacy was thereby put into question by some ideologues.

But generally speaking, everyone "knew" which the states were, and a large part of the enterprise of nineteenth-century (and indeed twentieth-century) history has constituted essentially a reading back into the past of a continuing history for such "states."

If "society" was to remain in permanent tension with the "state," and if the states were particular, geographically bounded, juridically defined entities (which, however, had histories), then it seemed to follow that each state was a society or had a society, and each society had a state. Or, at least, it seemed to follow that this is how it ought to be. Nationalism is the name we give to such an analytical credo in the realm of politics and culture.

This thrust toward parallelism of boundaries of society and state had immense hidden implications for the epistemology of social science as it in fact historically evolved, for it determined the basic unit of analysis within which almost all of social science has been written. This basic unit was the state—either a sovereign state or a politicocultural claimant to state status—within which social action was said to have occurred. The "society" of such a "state" was judged to be more or less cohesive, more or less "progressive" or "advanced." Each "society" had an "economy" that could be characterized and that had "home markets" and "foreign markets." Each "society" had a culture, but it also had "minorities" with "subcultures," and these minorities could be thought of as having accepted or resisted "assimilation."

It may seem that anthropology, at least, represented an exception. Anthropologists scorned the modern state and usually concentrated on some other entity—a tribe or a people. But in fact all the anthropologists were saying was that in what today we call the peripheral areas of the world economy, which were in the late nineteenth century largely dominated by colonial powers, the formal state was a thin social layer lying over the real political entities that were the so-called traditional political structures. The starting point for an anthropologist dealing with an acephalous society was the same as for a historian dealing with central Europe—a primordial

and largely fictive politicocultural entity that "governed" social life, within which the *real* society existed.

In this sense, both the anthropologists and the Germanic historians of the nineteenth century could be spurned by hard-nosed British empiricists as incorrigibly romantic. Much as I think the "romantics" were wrong, they seem to me less wildly off the mark than our hard-nosed and arrogant empiricists. In any case, the subsequent transformation of vocabulary indicates the "stateness" orientation that was always there. Central European *Völker* and Afro-Asian "peoples" who came to dominate a sovereign state thereby became "nations." Witness the Germans and the Burmese. Those who did not get to dominate a sovereign state became instead "ethnic groups," entities whose very existence has come to be defined in relation to one or more sovereign states. Poles are an "ethnic group" in the United States but a "nation" in Poland. Senegalese are an "ethnic group" almost everywhere in West Africa except Senegal.

Thus, the state came to provide the defining boundaries of the "society," and the "societies" were the entities that were comparable one to the other—in the famous billiard-ball analogy to individuals within all of human society. (In Kingsley Davis's *Human Society* [1948], a famous American textbook of the 1950s, the message is that each separate society follows a set of rules, which is that of "human society" as a generic category.) Societies were seen as collective entities going along parallel paths in the same direction. That is to say, it was societies that were "developing." Development (or, in older terminology, progress) was a measurable (or at least describable) characteristic of societies.

This use of societies as the basic units of social science had two clear consequences. It rendered plausible two fundamental options of the philosophy of social science that were widely adopted in the nineteenth century. I call these two options "universalization" and "sectorialization."

Universalization is the presumption that there exist universal laws applicable to all of human society—or, rather, all of human societies. The objective of social science is said to be the clear statement of these universal laws (in the form of falsifiable propositions). The limits to our ability to state these laws are the limits of our present ignorance. The enterprise of social science is the

search to reduce this ignorance. This is a realizable task. Once such laws, or a significant number of them, are stated, we shall collectively be able to deduce applications that can be used at the level of policy. That is, we shall be able to "intervene" effectively in the operation of these laws. The model is that of classical physics and its applications in technology and engineering.

Of course, one can state or discover "universal" laws about any phenomenon *at a certain level of abstraction.* The intellectual question is whether the level at which these laws can be stated has any point of contact with the level at which applications are desired. The proponents of universalization never seriously debated whether such a conjuncture of levels was theoretically probable. Recognizing gaps in current ability to make these applications, the proponents merely insisted that these gaps could be bridged in some near future by the earnest application of scientific intelligence.

There were, to be sure, some who emphatically denied the existence of such laws. But these "particularizers" tended to go to the opposite extreme. They expounded a so-called idiographic, as opposed to a nomothetic, view of social science. They argued that no generalizations at all were feasible, since everything was unique, and only empathetic understanding was possible. Or in a slightly less restrictive version, it was argued that only very low level generalizations were feasible. A great deal of huffing and puffing between the two schools of thought occurred. But in fact they shared not merely the central unit of analysis but also the presumed parallelism of all "societies"—in one case because they were all alike, in the other because they were all different.

What both schools excluded, and what was largely absent from mainstream work, was the possibility that a middle way existed, that a significant level of generalization (the analysis of structures) was not only possible but essential, but that this level was below the arena of "all societies" and, rather, at the level of what I would term "historical systems."[2]

The effective exclusion of this methodological middle way was quite consonant with the other philosophical option of modern social science, which may be called "sectorialization." Sectorialization is the presumption that the social sciences are divided into a number of separate disciplines, each of which comprises an

intellectually defensible distinct focus of discourse. Over the past 125 years, we have collectively more or less settled on the following categories of disciplines: history, anthropology, economics, political science, and sociology. With some reservations one might add geography. You will recognize here the names of academic departments in most universities and the names of national and international scholarly associations. Of course, there were/are other candidates for the status of "discipline"—for example, demography, criminology, urban planning—but by and large these other candidates have not found widespread support.

The reason is simple. The five agreed-on disciplines reflect the assumptions of nineteenth-century liberal thought. Civilized life was organized in three analytically (and politically) separate domains—the economy, the political arena, and what was neither the one nor the other (which received the label of "social"). Thus we have three nomothetic disciplines: economics, political science, and sociology. History was reserved to the largely idiographic account of each separate society.

Anthropology was given the domain of the noncivilized. (If a society was exotic but in some sense was thought to be "civilized" —that is, if it had a literature and a major religion—then it was consigned to "Orientalism," a kind of bastard combination of history and philology.) Anthropologists had a hard job deciding whether they wanted to be nomothetic analysts of grand historical sequences or idiographic recorders of "prehistorical" structures. Since they tended to do a bit of everything, their domain was safe only as long as their "peoples" were colonized and ignored. With the political rise of the Third World after the Second World War, everyone else began to impinge on the anthropologists' domain, and hence for survival the anthropologists returned the favor, with the emergence of such new concerns as "urban anthropology."

Before we can do an "archeology of knowledge," we should see clearly the "architecture of knowledge." The rooms were "societies." The designs were "universalizing" and "sectorializing." The ideology was that of British hegemony in the world system. As of 1850, the British dominated the world economy and the interstate system virtually without challenge. They were the most efficient producers of the most high-profit products. They were the leading commercial power and largely imposed an ideology of free trade on the world, securing this doctrine by their naval pow-

er. The gold standard was in effect a sterling standard, and the banks of London centralized a great proportion of world finance. Of this period, the so-called golden age of capitalism, it has been said that "between 1846 and 1873 the self-regulating market idealized by Adam Smith and David Ricardo came nearer to being realized than ever before or since" (Dillard, 1962:282).

It was natural, then, that Great Britain should set the tone not only in world science but in the newly emerging social sciences. French social thought was no counterbalance. It was basically on the same wavelength as the British, as is attested, for example, by the correspondence between John Stuart Mill and Auguste Comte. One might even make the case that Saint-Simon expressed the spirit of nineteenth-century capitalist entrepreneurs even better than Smith or Ricardo.

The most profound legacy left us by this group of thinkers is their reading of modern history. The questions they felt called on to explain were (1) Britain's "lead" over France, (2) Britain and France's "lead" over Germany and Italy, and (3) the West's "lead" over the East. The basic answer to question one was "the industrial revolution," to question two "the bourgeois revolution," and to question three the institutionalization of individual freedom.

The three questions and the three answers are really one catechism that justified, indeed glorified, monumental and growing inequalities in the world system as a whole. The moral implicitly preached was that the leader merited the lead because he had somehow shown his devotion earlier and more intensely to human freedom. The laggard had but to catch up. And the social scientist had but to pose the question incessantly: What explains that a particular laggard has been and still remains behind?

There were some who refused to play this game—the schools of resistance, as I think of them: the proponents of historical economics in Germany, later the *Annales* school of French historiography (see Wallerstein, 1978), and from the beginning (but outside the universities), Marxism. What these resistants shared was rejection of both the universalizing and the sectorializing postulates of modern social science. But these movements were weak in numbers, largely separated from each other, and ultimately ineffective on a world scale in limiting the spread of the dominant ideology.

Their ineffectiveness came in part from their dispersion but

in part from a fundamental error in judgment. Although all the movements of resistance rejected the epistemology of the dominant social science, they failed to challenge the historiography. They accepted without too much thought the industrial revolution in England at the turn of the nineteenth century and the French Revolution as the two watershed events of the modern world. They thereby accepted the premise that the construction of a capitalist world economy itself represented progress and in this way implicitly accepted the whole underlying theory of stages of development for each separate society. By surrendering the historiographic domain, they fatally undermined their resistance in the epistemological realm.

The consequences of this contradictory stance of the schools of resistance became clear during the period after 1945. At that time, the United States had become the new hegemonic power, replacing a long-since-displaced Great Britain. Despite the enormous geographical expansion of world social science, American social science played an even more dominant role during the period 1945-1967 than had British during the period 1850-1873.

The counterpoint to American hegemony was at one level the Soviet Union and its "bloc" of states, which were in acute politicomilitary controversy with the United States. But it was also, at a perhaps deeper and more long-range level, the rise of the national liberation movements throughout the peripheral areas of the world economy. The Bandung Conference was made possible by the conjunction of three forces: the strength of social and national movements in the periphery, the political and ideological forces incarnated in the Soviet bloc, and the needs of American capitalists to eliminate the monopolistic access that western Europeans held to certain economic zones. Thus American hegemony and the rise of the Third World were linked in both symbiotic and antagonistic fashion.

This contradictory link was reflected in the ideology of social science. On the one hand, there was a renewed triumph of scientism, of a pervasive and often specious quantification of research, in terms of which the newly discovered research arenas of the peripheral countries were simply one more source of data. On the other hand, the complexities of the study of these areas pushed toward the building of area studies on an "interdisciplinary" basis —a timid questioning of sectorialization, so timid that the very

name reinforced the legitimacy of the historic "disciplinary" distinctions. These two thrusts were reconciled in the invention of a new vocabulary to restate nineteenth-century verities: the vocabulary of "development"—economic, social, political—subsequently subsumed under the heading of modernization theory.

At the level of ideology, the world of official Marxism turned out to pose no real opposition to modernization theory, even though it was derived from an ideology of resistance. The official Marxists simply insisted on some minor alterations of wording. For society, substitute social formation. For Rostow's stages, substitute Stalin's. For Britain or the United States as the model, substitute the Soviet Union. But the analysis was the same: The states were entities that "developed," and "development" meant the further mechanization, commodification, and contractualization of social activities. Stalinist bureaucrats and western experts competed for which one could be the most efficacious Saint-Simonian. (On the role of the Saint-Simonian element in the Marxist tradition, see Meldolesi, 1982.)

As we know, the frenetic certainties of the 1950s began to come apart in the 1960s. The United States, France, and other western countries began to find their power undermined by the growing militance and successes of the movements of the Third World, without and within. The problems of the real world became the problems, both social and intellectual, of its ideological centers, the universities. The explosions of 1968 (and thereabouts) were the result.

It is fashionable these days to downplay the importance of these rebellions of the mid to late 1960s on the grounds that the student rebels of that period have since largely become either reintegrated into or expelled from the social fabric and that the successor student generations are quiescent. What good, it is asked, did the New Left really serve? The answer is very simple. It was the meteoric flames of this rebellion that were primarily responsible for burning away the tissue that maintained Establishment liberalism as the unquestioned ideology of U.S. universities in particular and of western universities in general. It is not that the Establishment was destroyed. But since then it has been unable to exclude competing views as illegitimate, and this has permitted the 1970s to be a time of much intellectual fertility.

The explosions in western universities were matched by the

destruction of the sclerotic world of official Marxism. The death of Stalin, Khrushchev's report, the Sino-Soviet split, the triumphs and then the failures of the Cultural Revolution have all resulted in what Lefebvre (1980) has called "Marxism exploded." Here too we should not be misled. The fact that there are today a thousand Marxisms amid a situation in which more and more people claim to be Marxist does not mean that orthodox Marxism (whatever that is) has disappeared as a major ideological force. It simply no longer has a monopoly in its corner.

The disappearance of both *consensuses*—the liberal and the Marxist—is not independent of the changing geopolitics of the world. With the demise not of American power but of American hegemony, which I would date to 1967, there has been a steady movement toward a restructuring of the alliances in the interstate system. I have argued elsewhere (Wallerstein, 1980b, 1982) that the de facto Washington-Peking-Tokyo axis that developed in the 1970s will be matched in the 1980s by a de facto Paris-Bonn-Moscow axis. Whatever the reasons for this regrouping (in my opinion, they are largely economic), it is clear that it makes no ideological sense, certainly not in terms of the ideological lines of the 1950s.

This geopolitical shift, itself linked to the ideological-cum-political explosions in both the western and the socialist countries, has begun to open up, for the first time since the 1850s, both the epistemological and the historiographical premises of social science.

In terms of epistemology, we are seeing a serious challenge to both universalization and sectorialization and an attempt to explore the methodology of holistic research (see Bach, 1982; Hopkins, 1982), the implementation of that "middle way" that had been excluded by the nomothetic/idiographic pseudo debate of the nineteenth century. For the first time, the imagery of the route of scientific advance is being inverted. Instead of the assumption that knowledge proceeds from the particular toward ever more abstract truths, some wish to argue that it proceeds from the simple abstractions toward ever more complex interpretations of empirical—that is, historical—reality.

This epistemological challenge has been made before, as already noted, but it is being made more systematically and solidly today. What is really new, however, is the historiographical chal-

lenge. Once our unit of analysis shifts from the society-state to that of economic worlds, the entire reification of states, of nations, of classes, of ethnic groups, even of households falls away (see Wallerstein, 1980c). They cease to be primordial entities, Platonic ideas, whose real nature we must somehow intuit or deduce. They become constantly evolving structures resulting from the continuing development of long-term, large-scale historical systems.

In such a context, the British industrial revolution of 1760–1830 or the French Revolution does not disappear; but it may be seen in better perspective. There will be an end to the incredible formulation of intellectual problems in the form "Why did not Germany have a bourgeois revolution?"; "Can the Kenya bourgeoisie develop an autonomous capitalist state?"; "Is there a peasantry in Brazil (or Peru or . . .)?"

We are living in the maelstrom of a gigantic intellectual sea change, one that mirrors the world transition from capitalism to something else (most probably socialism). This social transition may take another 100–150 years to complete. The accompanying ideological shift will take less time, however, probably only another 20 years or so. This ideological shift is itself both one of the outcomes and one of the tools of this process of global transition.

It follows that the intellectual tasks before us are important ones, that our intellectual responsibilities are moral responsibilities. First of all, we must (all of us) rewrite modern history—not merely the history that scholars read but the history that is infused into us in our elementary education and that structures the very categories of our thinking.

We must learn how to think both holistically and dialectically. I emphasize the words *learn how,* for much of what has claimed in the past to be holistic and dialectical was merely all-encompassing, sloppy, and unduly motivated by the needs of propaganda. In fact, a holistic, dialectical methodology is infinitely more complex than the probabilistic quasi-experimental one that is so widespread today. We have scarcely begun to explore how it can be done seriously. Most of us are more frightened by its difficulties than by those of linear algebra.

We must then use this methodology to invent (I deliberately use the strong word *invent*) new data bases. The ones we use

now (or 98 percent of them) are the results of collecting for 150–200 years data about states. The very word *statistics* is derived, and not fortuitously, from the word *state*. We do not have serious data about the capitalist world economy (not to speak of other and prior world systems). No doubt there are manifold intrinsic and extrinsic problems in the manufacture of such data. But the methodological ingenuities of the last 30 years that have opened up for quantitative research fields such as medieval history, once thought entirely recalcitrant to the application of hard data, give reason to hope that enough energy applied with enough intelligence might bring us to the point 30 years from now that we have at least as much hard data on the functioning of the modern world system as a system as we have today on the functioning of the various states.

We must use these new data to theorize anew, but hesitantly. Too much damage has been done in the past by premature jumping into the saddle and creating reified constructs that block further work. It is better for the time being to have fudgy concepts that are too malleable than to have clearly defined ones that turn out to be poorly chosen and thereby serve as new procrustean beds.

Finally, I am convinced that neither using a new methodology nor theorizing will be possible except in conjunction with praxis. True, it is the function of intellectuals to reflect in ways that those at the heart of politics cannot, for want of time and distance. But it is through action that unexpected social truths (not only about the present and the future but about the past as well) are revealed, and these truths are not visible (at least not at first) except to those whose very activities are the source of the discoveries. The intellectual who cuts himself or herself off from political life cuts himself or herself off from the possibility of truly perceptive social analysis—indeed, cuts himself or herself off from truth.

The epistemological links between social science and the social movement were there from the inception of both. This link cannot be cut without destroying both. No doubt there are dangers to both in this close tie, but those dangers pale by comparison with the dangers of surgical separation. That is what was tried in the late nineteenth century, and it would not be too strong to

assert that the many horrors of the twentieth were, if not caused by, then abetted by this putative separation.

The likelihood is that this long-standing alliance between social science and the social movement will take on a new direction and a new vigor during the next twenty years. Neither social science nor the social movement will be able to emerge from the culs-de-sac in which both presently are, without a transformation of the other. This, of course, makes the change doubly difficult. Each is being called on not only to question (and reject) long-standing premises but to recognize its dependence on the other's progress for its own progress. There is no guarantee that these fundamental hand-in-hand changes will occur, but it is likely.

Notes

1. "Of all metaphors in western thought on mankind and culture, the oldest, most powerful and encompassing is the metaphor of growth" (Nisbet, 1969:7). (Nisbet uses *growth* and *development* interchangeably for this discussion.) To be sure, the point of Nisbet's book is summed up in the title of the last section, "The Irrelevance of Metaphor," but his insistence on the "priority of fixity" does not undo his observation on intellectual history. Indeed, his book is a *cri de coeur* of someone who feels very much in a minority.

2. For a brief exposition of what is involved in this middle way, see Wallerstein (1980a). It is not at all the same as Merton's "theories of the middle range." Merton advocated "special theories applicable to limited ranges of data—theories, for example, of class dynamics, of conflicting group pressures, of the flow of power and the exercise of interpersonal influence" (1957:9). This refers to the *scope* of the data, but Merton's objective is to develop "universal" theories of the middle range, not theories that are valid only for given historical systems.

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