

Modernity? Postmodernity?

Not yet Modern? Varieties of Modernity?

Introduction

Are we now postmodern, rather than modern, or still premodern in some respects? Are there stages to modernity, so that we are now in high or late modernity (Giddens 1991), reflexive or second modernity (Beck 1992) or liquid modernity (Bauman 2000)? Are there multiple modernities, with quite different principles of modernity (Huntington 1998; Eisenstadt 2002)? Or varieties of modernity, sharing key features but with different paths of development (Hall and Soskice 2001; Schmidt 2006, 2007)?

The answers to these questions depend on the definition of modernity, whether complex inequalities are brought into focus, and whether different types of modernity can be distinguished. The definition of modernity used here draws on the classics, from Marx and Weber to Durkheim and Simmel, inflecting them with contemporary social theory. Bringing complex inequalities, and especially gender, into focus challenges conventional accounts of modernity. Rather than a singular modernity, varieties of modernity are identified.

It is necessary to reconsider the definition of modernity, to rebuild from its classic origins, and to address forms of inequalities that the classics did not fully consider. Five components of modernity are considered: free wage labour; the state monopoly of legitimate violence; rationalization; individuation; democracy and human rights.

Modernity or postmodernity?

Is the concept of postmodernity more appropriate than that of modernity for the twenty-first century (Lyotard 1974; Harvey 1989; Kumar 2005)? Does postmodernity imply that knowledge is so situated and contextualized by particular social groups that no general social theory is possible? Does the inclusion of multiple complex inequalities and cultural diversity mean that the concept of modernity should be rejected as too simplistic and replaced by that of postmodernity? Does recognition of the divergent values and preferences of particular social groups and cultures challenge the vision of a universal conception of modernity (Taylor et al. 1994; Calhoun 1995; Felski 1995; Bhabra 2007; Schmidt 2007)?

Is it appropriate to link modernity with progress, or is the 'Enlightenment' confidence in the possibility of progress misplaced (Lyotard 1984)? Modernity is accused of bringing the Holocaust (Bauman 1989), the destabilization of the environment, high levels of inequality, and the threat of nuclear annihilation. Is it better to reject any link between modernity and progress, and prefer instead an ethical position of distance from such a commitment, articulated as post-modern ambivalence (Bauman 1991)?

However, it was rare that classic social theorists simply equated modernity with progress. They were almost always ambivalent, aware of the negative as well as positive potential of any changes. The double-edged nature of modernity, providing both freedom and also new forms of disciplinary constraint, runs deep in much classic sociological theory (Wagner 1994). For example, Marx saw increased poverty before revolution and socialism, with free wage labour providing both freedom from personal bondage as well as increased discipline, while Weber saw rationality as not only the development of the human capacity for knowledge but also as an iron cage of bureaucracy which narrowed the human range of action. The conceptualization of progress is highly contested and should not be equated with modernity; but classical social theory did not make this mistake.

The recognition of multiple forms of inequalities and differences has been absorbed into postmodernist criticism of modernist analysis. There are potentially many different baselines against which to measure equality. But it does not follow that postmodernism is the best answer to this analytic challenge. The multiplicity of inequalities is not new to a global era, indeed in Simmel's work individuation resulting from diverse webs of affiliations was central to his understanding of modernity. The standards against which inequality and progress are measured are contested, but that is not the same as abandoning such a project as if there were incommensurability.

The challenges posed to social theory and to the simpler forms of modernization theory need to be answered, but there are other ways. One is to re-work the concepts of modernity, moving beyond a false singularity, recognizing the still existing premodern, and theorizing the varieties of modernity. The challenge to the simpler concepts of social system needs to be addressed; the conceptual tools needed to do this can be drawn from complexity theory, as will be shown later.

Late, second or liquid modernity?

Also going beyond modernity is a series of writers who think we have reached not postmodernism, but a late stage in the development of modernity – late or high modernity (Giddens 1991), reflexive or

second modernity (Beck 1992, 2002) and liquid modernity (Bauman 2000). These writers have introduced issues of choice and reflexivity, intimacy and family, into the analysis of modernity.

According to Giddens and Beck, we are now more reflexive, more able to knowingly make the decisions that shape our lives. Rather than fixed traditional patterns, there is choice. This analysis is led from an interpretation of the changes in intimacy (Giddens 1992) and the family (Beck 1992, 2002), which are positioned more centrally to social changes than has been common in social theory. Giddens and Beck are right to name intimacy and the family as areas of significant social change, but their analysis of this abandons the approach that they have used for other social relations, neglecting much of the considerable social science work on gender relations that explains these changes in the same way as changes in any other set of social relations. Their move into the language of choice and reflexivity leaves behind much of the heritage of social theory. This is a mistake. Bauman (2000) similarly focuses on change for individuals, but is less focused on the family and intimacy, suggesting that in liquid modernity there is a change from solidly structured social relations to fluidly changing social relations. Bauman goes beyond Giddens and Beck in noting explicitly that the appearance of choice for individuals is not really choice in an unequal society. He is right to point out that choice is better addressed as a personal experience, a superficial appearance, rather than as a reduction in constraints.

All three, Giddens, Beck and Bauman, write as if there were a single modernity. There is no reference to differences between countries. In particular, there is no reference to the differences between the social democratic reorganization of gender and family relations and those in more neoliberal countries. Bauman writes as if all of modernity is becoming neoliberal. But there are differences, with the social democratic version of modernity different from that of neoliberalism. This book explores these differences rather than treating the West as if it were one.

Multiple modernities?

A further response to the challenge of diverse social forms and inequalities to the paradigm of modernity is that there are several forms of modernity, not just one. Much early work on modernization assumed that there was a single form of modernity, in which variations were minor and theoretically insignificant. The presumption of a singular form of modernity can be challenged without abandoning the concept of modernity. There are two ways of conceptualizing the

diversity of forms of modernity: multiple modernities (Huntington 1998; Eisenstadt 2000) and varieties of modernity (Schmidt 2006, 2007).

The concept of multiple modernities rejects the notion of a single path of modernity (Huntington 1998; Eisenstadt 2000), rather there are multiple alternative modernities each with its own distinct set of values and practices. Modernity is not the spread of Westernization during processes of globalization, but instead is autonomously developed in different locations around the world. The multiple modernities approach assumes a radical dissimilarity between the forms of modernity. These differences are seen to lie especially in the realms of culture and religion, with an incomparability of value systems between different cultures (Eisenstadt 2000) and different civilizations (Huntington 1998). These approaches aim to overcome a perceived ethnocentric bias in traditional analyses of modernity as emanating and derivative from Western social practices. However, in compensating for Western bias these authors postulate such radical discontinuities that they erode any common basis for the concept of modernity. This position articulates a relatively thin conceptualization of modernity, rooted in cultural values at the expense of economic, political and scientific processes where greater commonalities in trajectories of change might be found (Schmidt 2006). The theorists of multiple modernities rely rather too much on the cultural dimensions of different modernities, neglecting commonalities such as the development of science and market economies (Schmidt 2006). This poses the question of the precise definition of modernity – how should it be characterized and distinguished from premodernity?

Not yet modern?

Some of the social forms that have recently come to be interpreted as variously postmodern or aspects of multiple modernities are instead better conceptualized as not yet modern. This is made clear when complex inequalities are brought into focus.

Many of the classical sociologists, including Marx, Weber, Durkheim and Simmel, constructed dualisms of before and after modernization, the pre-modern and the modern. This dualism was centred on industrialization and its associated transformations in the organization of society. The transition to modernity was located variously with the development of the mode of production (Marx 1954); rationalization (Weber 1948, 1968); differentiation (Durkheim 1984); and the increased complexity of the web of social relations (Simmel 1955). Modernity involves free wage labour (Marx), the monopolization of legitimate violence by the state (Weber), rationalization (education, scientific

development and secularization) (Weber), individuation (Simmel), and democracy and human rights (Therborn).

In some important respects we are not yet modern, the project of modernity is not yet complete. This is because in several critical domains, for some sets of social relations other than class, the transition to modernity is not yet complete. When complex inequalities, especially gender, are brought into focus, no country is yet fully modern, but rather a mixture of premodern and modern elements. Where there is not yet free wage labour, as for example where there is domestic labour or forced labour, there is not yet modernity in the economy. When significant numbers of women are dependent housewives, there is not yet modernity. When the state does not have a monopoly of legitimate violence in a given territory, as when there is uncriminalized violence against women and ethnic and other minorities, then the state is not yet modern. No country as yet has free wage labour for all of women's work, the effective criminalization of gender-based and ethnic-based violence, and secularization, though many are in the process of transformations leading in these directions. The argument that modernity has been achieved or surpassed rests upon the false assumption that there is one dominant axis of social inequality. Taking complex inequalities seriously challenges the classic approach to modernity. The simultaneous existence of modern and premodern social forms in the same country challenges conventional forms of social system analysis.

Varieties of modernity

Classic social theory, from Marx to Durkheim to Simmel, was often centred on a single transition to industrialization and modernity. The debate on this issue has continued, both backward looking to these processes historically in the North and forward looking to these processes today in the South (Kerr et al. 1960; Lipset 1960), though with many refinements in the most recent texts (Inglehart 1997; Inglehart and Norris 2003). While the impact of modernization occurs across the whole range of social life (Wilensky 2002), from human development (Sen 1999) to citizenship (Marshall 1950), a key issue has been whether economic development leads to democracy. By contrast, a quite different sociological tradition has considered political events as key to the divergence between different paths of development (Esping-Andersen 1999), although it has not always been theorized using the concept of path dependency (Moore 1966; Skocpol 1979; Korpi 1983; Esping-Andersen 1990). In this perspective, the nature of industrial societies is critically shaped by political

processes especially involving states, which lead to different paths of development. Rather than one unfolding process of modernization, there are several paths to and through modernity. Indeed, it has been argued that there is no inevitability that economic development will necessarily lead to democracy, but rather that the form of political governance depends upon the balance of political, especially class-based, forces during industrialization (Moore 1966).

This type of approach is used in the 'varieties of capitalism' approach to differences in the organizational form of market economies (Hall and Soskice 2001; Yamamura and Streeck 2003). It is also implicit in analyses of the implications of different political events in the transition to industrialization, as in the work of Moore (1966) on the different implications of the balance of class forces during industrialization for outcomes of either democracy or dictatorship, and subsequent scholarship on the implications of states and revolutions for the nature of class society (Skocpol 1979), and class alliances at critical moments for the form of welfare state (Korpi 1983; Esping-Andersen 1990). Different routes through industrialization generate different balances of social forces that can lead to divergent outcomes – temporality and sequencing make a difference. These may be the alternatives of dictatorship or democracy (Moore 1966), or different forms of welfare state regime (Esping-Andersen 1990). Rather than one unfolding process of modernization, there is more than one path to and through modernity. In this perspective the nature of industrial societies is seen as critically shaped by non-economic processes, often political ones. The theorization of this range of forms was taken forward by analyses of path dependent rather than unilinear forms of development (Moore 1966; Mahoney 2000; Pierson 2000). The question of the significance of the distinctiveness and nature of the different varieties of modernity can then be addressed more clearly. This question is posed anew in the context of globalization, as to whether the differences between paths of development are eroded by global processes.

There is more than one way of identifying varieties of modernity. Within the varieties of capitalism school, Hall and Soskice (2001) distinguish between liberal market economies and coordinated market economies. Within the welfare state literature, Esping-Andersen (1990, 1999) makes a three-fold distinction between liberal, conservative corporatist, and social democratic forms of welfare state regimes. Within the gendered literature on welfare states, Lewis (1992) makes a distinction based on the extent to which men are the breadwinners and women are the main carers. These typologies are based on different institutional locations: industrial relations, welfare state, gender relations. A more comprehensive typology needs to integrate not only these three, but also violence.

Here, the major varieties of modernity are neoliberalism and social democracy. In addition some social relations are not yet modern, so there is a need to retain the distinction between modern and premodern.

Defining modernity

In order to proceed further in the analysis of modernity, postmodernity, premodernity, multiple modernities, and varieties of modernity it is necessary to more precisely delimit what is meant by modern in each of the main areas of social organization: economy, polity, violence, and civil society.

Free wage labour

The development of free wage labour is a key aspect of modernity. Transforming labour power into a commodity that is sold on the market is a critical part of the development of capitalism (Marx 1954). The commodification of labour power is a key component of the transition from a feudal to a capitalist mode of production. The relations of production between serf and lord in feudalism were more personal in nature, embedded in a web of obligations and power, than those between proletarian and bourgeoisie.

The transformation of labour power into the commodity form involved a double-edged process of both increased discipline and increased freedom (Wagner 1994). It required increased discipline in following the routines of mass labour in the factory, for example longer hours of work increased the relevance of time-keeping (Thompson 1963). It increased and polarized social and economic inequality. Yet it increased some forms of freedom by narrowing the bonds tying the worker to the governing class to those of the sale of their labour power, releasing them from the personal bonds of servitude under feudalism.

The reduction in personal bonds to an employer increases workers' potential for the development of political consciousness and action. Workers have the civil societal and political space to develop alternative ideas and form the associations that underpin the development of various forms of collective action. Marx saw the development of capitalism as progressive, partly in itself and the new forces of production that were unleashed, and partly because of its potential for the next transformation of social relations to socialism and communism. The link between capitalist economic development and political action postulated by Marx is widely supported by contemporary social science (Rueschemeyer et al. 1992). There have

been many nuances and subtle theoretical developments as to the nature of the link and the conditions under which it takes different forms (Gramsci 1971; Habermas 1989).

However, Marx restricted this analysis to class relations, leaving out of focus forms of inequality such as slavery and other forms of forced and non-marketised unfree labour together with the implications of the entry of women into free wage labour. Free wage labour is a hallmark of modernity, not only for class relations but also for gender relations and other complex social inequalities. Until labour is free wage labour, we are not yet modern.

State monopoly of legitimate violence

Weber's (1947) definition of the modern state is a body that has a monopoly over legitimate violence in a given territory. The modernization of the state is a process during which the state accrues this form of power to itself, concentrating decisions over its utilization in its increasingly centrally organized body, shifting away from the dispersal of this form of power among feuding barons and roving militias.

This definition of a modern state is widely adopted in contemporary social science (Giddens 1985). Indeed the development of states in Europe over the last thousand years can be described in terms of the de facto concentration of power, especially violence, in the state (Tilly 1990). This analysis runs parallel to Elias's (1994) theory of the civilizing process, in which there is a decreasing use of violence in civil society and a developing state monopoly as the civilizing process proceeds. Foucault (1997) goes further, suggesting that the use of brute force by the state is replaced by disciplining in the modern world.

However, the state does not have a monopoly over legitimate violence or all violence in the contemporary era. When complex inequalities, such as gender and ethnicity, are brought into focus it becomes clear that there are considerable amounts of violence over which the state neither has a monopoly nor seeks to have a monopoly. The existence of a considerable amount of gender-based violence, from domestic violence to rape (Krug et al. 2002), and ethnic-based violence, from racial harassment to ethnic cleansing (Mann 2005), which the state condones by failing to effectively criminalize it, contradicts the notion that contemporary states are modern. While the state does not have a monopoly of legitimate violence by its non-criminalization of significant amounts of gender-based and ethnic-based violence, the state is not yet modern.

Rationalization

Rationalization is key to Weber's (1948, 1968) conception of modernity. Through this process, traditional and charismatic forms of authority give way to rational, legal, and bureaucratic forms. There is a process of disenchantment; a turning away from religion to secularism, an increase in education and in scientific knowledge.

Education is the field in which the process of rationalization has occurred to the greatest extent around the world. The massive increase in educational institutions, the proportion of the population who are educated, and the length of time spent in education have been marked features of the last century. Increased education is a global phenomenon, even though there are significant differences in the content and amount between countries. The narrowing (and in some countries reversing) of the gender gap in education is a major reduction in one kind of complex inequality, though class and ethnic differences remain.

The development of scientific modes of knowledge production might be regarded as the best expression of the process of rationalization in the modern world, as the most quintessentially modern way of thinking, but there are caveats. The constant critique and rejection of previous forms of knowledge are hallmarks of scientific method and this involves challenges to existing scientific claims as well. It is a form of rationalization that takes a near global form (Schmidt 2006) and possesses enormous authority (Haraway 1997). The contemporary public questioning of science has been interpreted as a form of reflexive modernization (Beck 1992); it is not a simple rejection of rationalism, but rather the bringing to bear of a range of forms of knowledge on the output of institutions dedicated to scientific development (Wynne 1996).

The decline in religion associated with secularization has occurred in many developed countries, but not all (Bruce 1996; Norris and Inglehart 2004). While Europe has in general seen a decrease in religiosity, a decline in attendance at churches and an increase in secularism, this is not uniform (Gorski 2000). The USA by contrast, while developing an advanced economy and sophisticated institutions of education and science, has seen little fall in the religiosity of its population (Inglehart 1997). In some places there has been a shift in the content of beliefs away from traditional religions towards New Age spirituality rather than to conventional forms of secularism (Heelas and Woodhead et al. 2004). Further, the rise of various forms of fundamentalism within Christianity (especially in the USA), Islam, Hinduism and Judaism, likewise contradicts any simple rationalization thesis (Marty and Scott 1993). The tenacity of religious belief systems raises serious challenges to the notion that contemporary Western

countries are all modern, if secularism is taken as a key feature of modernity. Nevertheless, despite the exceptions, there has been a decline in religiosity in developed countries. The difference between the USA and the EU in their levels of and trends in religiosity constitutes a significant divergence in trajectories within the West.

Individuation

Increasing individuation was seen by Simmel (1955) as the key to modernity. Simmel's understanding of difference and inequality was not restricted to the great social cleavage of class. Rather, he envisaged modern social relations as highly complex and differentiated – instead of one dominant set of social relations there is a multiplicity. This gives rise to a highly individuated social order. However, this does not mean anarchic individualism. Instead there are complex webs of affiliation, with people connected to many others in myriad ways. Social life is conceived as a web of group affiliations.

Simmel differentiates between primitive and advanced thinking and forms of sociality. In the former the circumstances and affiliations due to family and kin are dominant, while in the second 'each individual establishes for himself contacts with persons who stand outside this original group-affiliation, but who are "related" to him by virtue of an actual similarity of talents, inclinations, activities, and so on. The association of persons because of external coexistence is more and more superseded by association in accordance with internal relationships' (Simmel 1955: 128). It becomes a matter of choice as to with whom one is affiliated. It becomes possible for intellectual and educational interests to bring together a new community. He suggests that while before the Renaissance social differentiation was based on either self-interest or emotion, afterwards intellectual and rational interests came to be the more common basis of groups. Higher, more modern, forms of association are those based on rationality rather than simple external characteristics. The modern person belongs to many groups (as compared with earlier times), this being a hallmark of culture. These groups include family, occupation, citizenship, social class, clubs, and many more. The more groups with which a modern person is affiliated, the more individuated this person becomes, because few if any other people are likely to have the same patterns of affiliation. The more groups of which a person is a member, the more attributes they possess. This gives rise to uncertainty rather than to the security of the previous mode. Conflicts between those groups of which an individual is a member encourage that individual both to make adjustments and also to become assertive.

While Simmel sees individuation as a general characteristic of modernity, some have seen this as restricted to Western modernity, while other modernities place the state, community, and family above the individual, though this is perhaps most usually seen as the instrumentalization of culture to defend political authoritarianism (Thompson 2000; Barr 2002).

Simmel (1955, 1984) notes that women are in the process of becoming modern, just reaching the point of experiencing the crossroads of affiliations at which individuality begins. The analysis of individuation is developed in the work of Giddens (1992) and Beck (2002), including the development of reflexive biographies as a consequence of changes in the economy and family, with implications for gender relations. But individuation for women is not yet complete.

Democracy and human rights

Democracy is not included in the classical texts of social theory; as since it was not fully developed at the time that they were writing, it is unsurprising that it was not regarded as a marker of modernity. But in the twenty-first century, when democratic practices are widespread and the aspiration to democracy near-universal, democracy is widely regarded as a hallmark of modernity. A significant part of modernization studies empirically investigated the links between economic development and social and political development, often finding a close association (Kerr et al. 1960; Lipset 1960; Inglehart 1997; Inglehart and Norris 2003; Norris and Inglehart 2004) although sometimes it was seen to be mediated by other factors such as the level of inequality (Bollen and Jackson 1995; Muller 1995a, 1995b) and the direction of the causality from economic to political has been challenged (Ersson and Lane 1996; Leftwich 1996, 2000).

However, the definition of what counts as democracy is highly contested, in particular the relationship between procedural practices and the representational outcome for social inequalities (Held 1995; Phillips 1995; Markoff 1996; Potter et al. 1997; Pitkin 2004). The conventional approach focuses on formal procedures, especially voting, rather than the outcome, such as the proportionate presence of social groups in parliament. Since the presence of women in parliaments makes a difference to the policy outcome (Thomas 1991; Norris 1996a; Wängnerud 2000), the conventional definition of democracy is in need of revision to include their parliamentary (or congressional) presence.

Human rights are likewise not included in the classical texts of social theory as markers of modernity for similar reasons, though they are noted in many texts on political philosophy from the eighteenth century onwards (Paine 1984 [1791]; Wollstonecraft

1992 [1790]). Human rights became a marker of modernity in the period after the Second World War, in the European rejection of the Holocaust and nationalist militarism that had overridden the interests of individuals in the name of the purity of ethnic-nationalhood (Therborn 1996). These are encoded in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a fundamental principle of all civilized nations (UN 1948). The interpretation of human rights is highly contested. Are they merely specific to Western countries with their individualistic ethos, or have they become hybridized so as to include Asian and other cultures that are traditionally less individualistic (Woodiwiss 1998)? Is their early formulation gendered, not universal (Nussbaum 2000)? Do they become inclusive of gender inequality insofar as they include sexual and reproductive rights and the right to be free from gender-based violence (Peters and Wolper 1995)? Today, democracy and human rights are markers of modernity, albeit that their meaning remains highly contested.

Globalization

Introduction

What is globalization? Are the distinctiveness of local social arrangements and the capacities of nation-states to act democratically being eroded? Is the world being homogenized into a single US-led modernity? Or are some political institutions resilient to these pressures? How does making multiple complex inequalities visible change the analysis?

The conceptualization of globalization demands an engagement with the changing implications of spatiality and temporality, with space-time compression, an increased rate of flows of people, objects and symbols around the world, and the non-linearity of these processes. It requires re-thinking the concept of society, its boundedness and processes of formation, and the relationships between social systems in the world. Definitions of globalization are diverse and often encompass many different social processes. Globalization has been identified and conflated variously with internationalization, universalization, Westernization, supraterritoriality (Scholte 2000), Americanization, and neoliberalism. In particular, 'globalization' has often been treated as if it were effectively the same as the expansion of capitalist markets (Crouch and Streeck 1997). The conflation of globalization and capitalism is unhelpful