# MODERNIZATION AS SPECTACLE IN AFRICA

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# 2 Modernization Theory and the Figure of Blindness
## *Filial Reflections*

### Andrew Apter

For David E. Apter. *In memoriam.*

Every poem is a misinterpretation of a parent poem.

—Harold Bloom

However negative it may sound, deconstruction implies the possibility of rebuilding.

—Paul de Man

How DOES ONE read a text, or an oeuvre? How does one reread modernization theory? In my own case the answers to these questions are linked by Freud's family romance and "the anxiety of influence" (Bloom 1973), which together guarantee a radical misreading of an intellectual father-figure who was also my father. David E. Apter (1924–2010), a modernization theorist of the 1960s, worked in the Gold Coast and Uganda in the 1950s before turning to issues of comparative development. His Africanist case studies of institutional transfer (1955) and of bureaucratic nationalism (1961) represent two of the four developmental trajectories that he formalized and systematized in *The Politics of Modernization* (1965). This latter text, translated into several languages (Japanese, Spanish, Indonesian, and Mandarin), represents a period of high modernism in American social science, an expansive moment in U.S. liberal empire associated with the wave of decolonization that swept across the postwar globe, and which was particularly associated with "development" in Africa. Motivated by the optimism of postcolonial possibilities in the 1960s, this moment was also shaped by the polarizing pressures of the Cold War (Bandung notwithstanding) and the predicaments these created for emerging new nations.[1]

Viewed today through the bifocal lenses of historical hindsight and cultural critique, *The Politics of Modernization*—like modernization theory writ large—remains a monument to its time: grand in its vision, hegemonic in its claims, resolutely statist with its faith in expert knowledge and bureaucratic rationality, tragic in its underestimation of the rise of military regimes, and dazzling in its elaboration and refinement of Parsonian functionalism. In returning to this text—one that occupied my early childhood as an unintelligible and all-consuming patriarchal vocation—my goal is not to defend it in any literal-minded sense, or "on its own terms." Such a defense would not be difficult to make. For example, one could commend the text's multilinear modernizing trajectories in the face of prevailing unilinear pathways (e.g., Rostow 1960); its exposition of a dynamic rather than static notion of tradition, including varieties of re-traditionalization; its diagnosis of military regimes as weak and unstable, given their coercion-information curves; its prescient prediction of the presidential monarch (before Bokassa, Mobutu, and Amin declared themselves presidents-for-life); its emphasis on youth culture as a potent mobilizing force; its sensitivity to the mythic dimensions of modernizing ideologies, drawing on Sorel and Freud; and its full recognition of socialist regimes as modernizing agents, unusual within the genre. But such a defense is in fact a diminution of the text, an underestimation of its broader place and significance within the field.

Rather I wish to return to those forms of blindness it shared with the genre at large, not to debunk a style of theory, which, like any strong fashion statement, is easily caricatured in retrospect, but to excavate its epistemological history (back to Kant) and recuperate a radical reversal within its Rousseauian myth of origins. By focusing on the insight buried deeply within its blindness, I invoke two literary critics whose innovative work helped inaugurate the "linguistic turn" in social theory, and who transform my filial perspective from a psychoanalytical liability to an intuitive advantage. First there is Harold Bloom, whose *Anxiety of Influence* (1973) reveals how every major modern poet misreads "his" father-figure according to a hermeneutics of misprision; second there is Paul de Man, whose groundbreaking essay "The Rhetoric of Blindness" (1983 [1971]) exemplifies the method of deconstructive criticism, showing how every philosophical-literary insight requires figural and rhetorical reversals that undermine its claims, as evidenced by Derrida's reading of Rousseau's *Essai sur l'origine des langues*. I will not engage these texts in great depth, save only to frame the related problems of *genealogy* and of *origins* in *The Politics of Modernization* and the genre to which it belongs.

## Genealogies of Misprision

As a narrative genre, modernization theory reinscribes the grand discourses of European empire as they developed in the nineteenth century—those of civilizing savages, saving souls, cultivating wilds, or healing the sick, within the ratifying pseudoscience of Victorian evolutionism.[2] The oppositions that structured these heroic discourses are by now well-documented, whether in the explicit ideological negations of not-civilized, not-human, not-rational, not-moral, not-healthy, not-white, and (with Hegel's coup-de-grâce) not even historical, representing the condition of savagery as one of absence or lack, or in the positive redemptive pathways leading toward civilization, affirming Europe's "higher" virtues and values through the holy alliance of missionary and colonizer. It takes no great leap of the imagination to see modernization theory as a secular variation of this grand imperial theme, drawing implicitly on those associated sociological distinctions between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, mechanical and organic solidarity, status and contract, that reinforced the picture.[3] Nor do we need Harold Bloom at this point to apprehend the larger politics of narrative revision at work: in *disavowing* imperial ideology and its associated forms of colonial overrule, modernization theory reproduced its dominant discourse. In its Parsonian incarnations, modernization theory embraced self-determining nation-states as they moved away from ascribed roles and primordial affiliations toward national integration, industrialization, rational planning, democratic rule, functional differentiation, role specification, innovation, and meritocracy—essentially moving from tradition to modernity.

What Bloom does encourage us to find are the genealogies within this genealogy, in this case a genealogy of social theorists who stood on the shoulders of their predecessors while—if Bloom's theory of misprision is correct—kicking their feet out from under them. As Bloom (1973, 5) explains in a nutshell, "Poetic history, in this book's argument, is held to be indistinguishable from poetic influence, since strong poets make that history by misreading one another, so as to clear imaginative space for themselves." One may question my substitution of social theorists for strong poets, who, for the most part, engage language with radically divergent sensibilities. Unlike the vulgar pretensions of Monsieur Jourdain in Molière's *Le petit gentihomme*, there is no danger of social theorists suddenly learning that they have been "speaking" poetry all of their lives! Yet it is precisely a poetics of social theory and social science that illuminates—through rhetorical analysis—its dominant tropes and displacements, whether of the "material bedrock" of productive relations, the collective "effervescence" of social solidarity, or the hypostatized "actors" and self-professed "robustness" of rational choice theory, the latter of which belies more than a little anxiety about its scientific "potency" within the academy. More concretely, strong theorists, like strong poets, have strong personalities, with ego-driven intellects that seek breakthroughs, shift paradigms, and establish interpretive terrains. The fact that I grew up in such a passionate intellectual home environment, heard Bloom's DeVane lectures as a high school student, and came of professional age at the University of Chicago, where my most senior colleagues routinely called me "David"—nominally merging me

with the legendary father who had co-founded the Committee for the Compara-tive Study of New Nations with Edward Shils in the late 1950s—together provided me with specialized training in the anxiety of influence, in its textual, psychoan-alytic, and institutional modalities.

Autobiographical self-indulgence aside, I will not pursue modernization the-ory's genealogy of misprision with the depth and span that it deserves, but invoke Bloom's central insight to bring one form of blindness (my own misreading) to bear on another—the enduring legacy of Weberian rationalization—and so iden-tify the birth of modernization theory with a critical epistemological rupture and reversal. The genealogy I sketch combines academic mentorship with textual filia-tion (as Bloom says, all poems only exist in other poems), blending literal and fig-ural relationships that trace back to a founding father-text.

Working backward, we begin with David Apter, son of Marion Levy Jr. The filial relation is somewhat skewed, in that Marion was only five years older than my father in chronological time yet served as his dissertation advisor at Princeton. Moreover, my father and Marion were friends—*compadres* in the language of *com-pradrazgo* when Marion became my sister's godfather (whatever that meant be-tween secular Jews!). But intellectually, Marion was mentor and teacher. His two-semester seminar on historical sociology used Talcott Parsons' *The Structure of Social Action* (1949 [1937]) as a basic text that deeply influenced my father's think-ing. So did Marion's own *The Structure of Society* (1952), a book that sought to re-fine Parsonian structural-functionalism with a near-viral proliferation of concepts and categories that laid out the logic of requisite analysis and distinguished (use-fully) between analytic and concrete structures. That some of this artillery ap-peared in my father's first monograph (Apter 1955, see esp. 325–34), less in his sec-ond (Apter 1961), and more again in *The Politics of Modernization,* hardly captures the complex relations of apprenticeship and intertextuality that developed between them. In what might seem like a routine clerical task, my father typed all 541 pages of *The Structure of Society* in final draft, a book that was curiously published in typescript rather than the metal-cast "foundry" or linotype of the day.[4] In this the book bears the imprint not of my father's thinking but of his manual labor, a la-bor that no doubt influenced his thinking—a way of "working through" the text and being subjugated by it (as amanuensis) captured by registers of mutual rec-ognition and implication. If in 1952 David Apter was thanked for his assistance in the preface of *The Structure of Society,* a larval "ephebe" emerging from the pool, by 1965 he could dedicate *The Politics of Modernization* "To Marion J. Levy, Jr."[5]

Although Levy would later publish two massive volumes on modernization applying the categories of *The Structure of Society* to international relations (Levy 1966), the former work remained his theoretical centerpiece, characterizing his own vexed relationship as an intellectual "son" of Talcott Parsons, who had served as Levy's dissertation advisor. Like many of the tomes at that time within the genre,

this was the product of a seminar (three seminars, actually—two at Princeton in 1951 following one at Harvard in 1947, when Levy was still a graduate student in the Department of Social Relations). This was also during the postwar boom of a new social science, with seminars, committees, and workshops funded by the Carnegie Corporation and Ford Foundation, bringing together the best and the brightest—sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, political scientists, as well as the odd biologist, mathematician, or epistemologist—to form interdisciplinary research teams collaborating on theoretical systems and conceptual schemes. These sem-inars formed "circles," typically of young men around a mentor (Parsons at Har-vard, Levy at Princeton, Shils at Chicago) producing vanguard texts and dense networks of scholars sustained by charismatic relations of reciprocal recognition.[6] Levy's intellectual identity was clearly forged within the Parsonian crucible at Har-vard, as his acknowledgment of the "private seminar held at Harvard in the sum-mer of 1947" implies, for it was there that "the definition of the concept of society and the list of functional requisites that form the bases for the present work were produced" (Levy 1952, xiv). And it is here, in his text, that Levy's relationship to his precursor begins to swerve,[7] clearing the ground for an autonomous vision that paradoxically purports to be more faithful to the father than the father was to himself.

First, there is the ambivalent debt. After locating his text within a theoreti-cal genealogy of Durkheim, Pareto, Weber, and Veblen—virtually recapitulating the major figures explicated in *The Structure of Social Action*—Levy foregrounds his teacher for particular attention:

> A special indebtedness is owed, however, to Talcott Parsons. The work grew out of concerns stimulated and encouraged by him and by his work. This work was not done in consultation with him, and it has taken many turns with which I am sure he would not agree. He is certainly not to blame for its shortcomings. Still its indebtedness to him will be obvious enough to the reader, particularly with regard to the distinction of the uses of concepts and theories, the concern with systems of phenomena, and the interrelationship of different aspects of social phenomena. (Levy 1952, xiv)

In this text, and in the "private" Harvard seminar, Parsons figures as the *absent* father, neither consulted during the writing process nor physically present among his neophytes in the summer of 1947.[8] The text's "many turns" deviate from the master, for which he cannot be "blamed," and in effect revise the master plan with even greater methodological rigor. Levy regarded his "requisite analysis" as a nec-essary corrective to Parsons' functional imperatives, and "the analytic aspects of relationship structures" as an improvement on Parsons' pattern variables. In fact, Levy felt that Parsons betrayed his own principles by failing to refine their meth-odological implications, a task that his student assumed for himself. For this hu-bris, Levy was effectively banished from the Parsonian circle, as evidenced by his

conspicuous absence from *Toward a General Theory of Action* (1951)—an impor-
tant volume co-edited by Talcott Parsons and Edward Shils to assess the current
state of sociological theory.[9] Levy acknowledged this volume while effectively ne-
gating it in *The Structure of Society*, noting that "the final published version of [*To-
ward a General Theory of Action*] has been under preparation at the same time as
the present one, and hence use of its findings has not been made here" (Levy 1952,
19n16). Thus Levy cleared the ground for his own succession, and for his growing
circle of acolytes at Princeton.

It is tempting, following Pierre Bourdieu, to pursue the microsociology of
these postwar circles as contestations within an emerging field of intellectual
capital, converting ideas, resources, debts, and obligations into centers of "excel-
lence" materialized by texts. But my aim here is more limited, emphasizing rela-
tions of textual filiation in the reckoning of an intellectual genealogy. In explor-
ing Parsons' filial relationship to Weber, the textual connections are complicated
by Weber's prodigious output and the sheer scope of his ideas, ranging from *Die
Protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* (*The Protestant Ethic and the
Spirit of Capitalism*) (1904/5)—which so resonated with Parsons' Calvinist back-
ground and New England family history—to the methodological essays and sub-
stantive studies in economic, religious, and political sociology. Parsons (1980, 38)
recounts how Weber "served, in a very real sense, as my teacher," despite the fact
that he died five years before Parsons arrived (in the fall of 1925) to study in Hei-
delberg. Absent the father figure himself, Parsons studied with Max's brother
Alfred Weber, attended the "sociological teas" hosted by Max's widow Marianne
Weber, thereby entering the "Weber circle" which "was the main center of Heidel-
berg academic society at that time"[10] (40), and prepared four examination fields,
including a minor in Kant with Karl Jaspers. I mention this Kantian focus be-
cause it illuminates the analytical register of Parsons' revisionary relationship to
Weber.

There is no question that *The Protestant Ethic* was the catalyst of Parsons'
Weberian conversion. It was the first of Weber's works that he read, "straight
through . . . as if it were a detective story" (1980, 39), inspiring his dissertation
topic on the concept of capitalism in German social science literature. And it was
the first of Weber's works that Parsons translated, appearing in 1930 for Anglo-
American readers, followed much later, in 1947, by Part I of *Wirtschaft und Gesell-
schaft* as *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*.[11] But however much
it engaged the young Parsons, *The Protestant Ethic* was a stepping-stone toward
more fundamental issues of theory and method raised by its use of the ideal type.
Parsons' discussion of this important text and its place within Weber's broader
religious typology in chapters 14 and 15 of *The Structure of Social Action* segues
into a sustained methodological engagement with the strengths and limitations

of the ideal type and its associated forms of causal inference and explanation. In
chapters 16 and 17, Parsons revises Weber to prepare the ground for his own more
generalized analytical theory.

The depth of Parsons' understanding of Weber is based on his extraordinary
training in Heidelberg, where he read Weber extensively, studied with Weber's
students and contemporaries, and familiarized himself with those debates and
polemics concerning the logic of the cultural sciences that Weber had directly en-
gaged. Parsons (1949, 481) frames the initial problematic in terms of a profound
Kantian dualism pervading German methodological thought: on the one hand
between the "objective" realm of a rule-governed, causally connected, natural and
physical world susceptible to scientific analysis; and "that of freedom, of ideas, of
*Geist*" on the other, associated with the human and social world. At issue for Kant
was the subjective factor governing these radically separated realms: minimal in
the world of pure reason and scientific determination,[12] maximal in the world of
practical reason where the subject is free to think itself *qua* noumena, or "thing-in-
itself," beyond the world of objective determination and thus free as a moral and
social agent. The implication for German methodology was something of an im-
passe between natural science and historicism, giving rise to varieties of "partic-
ularism" and "intuitionism" that banished general laws and explanatory concepts,
from the sociocultural sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*). For Weber, the problem
concerned the place of subjective motivations, intentions, and valuations in the
frames of reference of both analysts (so-called "value relevance") and sociohis-
torical actors (*Verstehen*). The more hermeneutical or idiographic approaches to
history and social action grounded in the interpretation of subjective meanings
could never achieve the nomothetic status of the natural sciences and their gen-
eral laws.

For Parsons, Weber's methodological achievement was to bring the socio-
cultural sciences, infused by *Verstehen*, within the fold of general explanatory con-
cepts and causal analysis. Working within the human sciences, Weber organized
the manifold complexity of historical reality into "unified conceptual patterns"
(1949, 603) or ideal types that brought out the order, clarity, and logical relations
governing "historical individuals" and their causal pathways. His methodological
failure, for Parsons, was that he didn't push this generalizing logic into a unified
theoretical system.

Parsons drew heavily on the work of Alexander von Schelting (1934) in devel-
oping a critique of the ideal type, a "not altogether satisfactory" analytical device
that blends "two quite heterogeneous categories of generalizing and individualiz-
ing concepts" that need to be rigorously distinguished. The individualizing con-
cepts of Weber's ideal types refer to those "concrete historical individuals" such
as feudal society, bourgeois capitalism, the Indian caste system, or Chinese pat-

rimonial bureaucracy that are abstracted into essential dimensions and characteristic features as objects of causal analysis and historical explanation. Nor are such individualizing typifications limited to corporate structures and institutional complexes; they apply equally to religious ideas such as Calvinistic theology or the Brahmanic philosophy of karma. Such "slippage" between institutional and ideological spheres is in fact methodologically justified by Weber himself within the broader epistemological context of *value-relevance*.

In Parsons' work, by contrast, the problem was that of general theory construction. As an abstraction, the individualizing ideal type remained potentially ad hoc and trapped in analytical amber, frozen, as it were, by its "mosaic atomism" (Parsons 1949, 610), unable to make the leap from morphology to general dynamics (with codependent variables). That the "generalizing" function of the ideal type could lead the way forward is a theme that Parsons draws from von Schelting, with specific reference to rationality and causality. First, the very idea of rational action, derived from neoclassical economics, constitutes a generalizing ideal type in that the maximization of means-ends relations establishes the starting point of meaningful behavior. Such a generalizing dimension thus informs any ideal-typical characterization of a concrete historical individual. Secondly, any causal explanation of an individualized ideal type requires the hypothetical consideration of its necessary conditions—what must have been in place for X to emerge. Thus "a general ideal type" for Parsons (605) is a hypothetical construction of conditions or events that generate "a typical course of action, or form of relationship." That such generalizing functions of the ideal type were lost on Weber, who shifted the burden of causal explanation onto separate considerations of objective possibility and adequate explanation, explains, for Parsons, what Weber himself could never see—that "an ideal type . . . is always a generalized unit of a social system" (619).[13]

Thus would Parsons "complete" the Weberian project, systematizing the general analytics of ideal types and their principles of classification into an action-oriented theory of society sui generis (Parsons and Shils 1951; Parsons 1952)—a direction Weber explicitly disavowed from the standpoint of cultural hermeneutics. For Weber (1949, 105), general concepts are necessary but always subject to revision because "in the cultural sciences concept-construction depends on the setting of the problem, and the latter varies with the content of culture itself." This position involves more than mere scientific sobriety—a judicious appreciation of the complexity of reality and a wariness of premature generalization—but informs a different epistemological understanding of social theory itself. In his critique of the Historical School, which sought "a 'completed' and *hence* deductive science," Weber reframes the very means-ends relationship between theoretical concepts and historical reality. In a revealing Kantian invocation, theory serves history rather than the other way around:

If one perceives the implications of the fundamental ideas of modern epistemology which ultimately derives from Kant; namely, that concepts are primarily analytical instruments for intellectual mastery of empirical data and can be only that, the fact that precise genetic concepts are necessarily ideal types will not cause him to desist from constructing them. *The relationship between concept and historical research is reversed for those who appreciate this;* the goal of the Historical School appears as logically impossible, the concepts are not ends in themselves but are means to the end of understanding phenomena which are significant from concrete individual viewpoints. (106; emphasis added)

In effect, Parsons' revisionary "completion" of Weber swings back to the position of the Historical School, reversing Weber's prior reversal to endorse a deductive commitment to social theory. Unlike Levy's "completion" of Parsons, which works within the same "scientific" paradigm, Parsons completes Weber through antithesis, reinverting the very means-ends relationship between theory and sociohistorical reality. Here we see Bloom's revisionary ratio of *tessera* at work, whereby "a poet antithetically 'completes' his precursor" by radically revaluing the terms of the parent-poem (Bloom 1973, 14). Here too we see Weber's profound commitment to Kant.

Is it fair to skip generations, as it were, past Weber's neo-Kantian influences (Rudolph Stammler, Wilhelm Windelband, Ernest Troeltsch, and most notably Heinrich Rickert) to the founding father himself? Is it fair to claim Weber's "filial" relationship to Kant? Such genealogical "telescoping" is of course an established anthropological truism—the further back we go, the more generations "collapse"—and in our case we are emphasizing texts and paradigms over persons. Weber's engagement with Kant is beyond dispute in his methodological essays, and, as Brand (1979, 8) points out, by the fact that Weber's first philosophy professor was Kuno Fischer, an established Kantian whom Weber considered "brilliant."[14] Beyond "world view" and general epistemological orientation, however, I would argue that Weber's debt to Kant is more directly connected to the ideal type, with specific reference to causal explanation and historical interpretation. Against the grain of most Weber scholarship that relates his concerns with free will and causality—autonomy and heteronymy—to the moral philosophy of Kant's second *Critique* (of practical reason), I suggest that we return to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1973 [1781]), and reinterpret Weber's ideal type as a restoration of the subjective deduction—in his case, as "pure concepts" of historical understanding.[15]

Let us recall the Kantian divide between natural and cultural sciences, and Parsons' claim that Weber began to bridge the gap but ultimately fell short of a generalizing synthesis. We can certainly read this in Weber up to a point. In "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy," Weber's seminal methodological essay inaugurating the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Socialpolitik's* new editorial philosophy and leadership (of Max Weber, Werner Sombart, and Edgar Jaffé),

the problem of objectivity poses something of a paradox. How can the fundamentally *subjective foundations* of cultural and historical understanding give rise to an objective form of knowledge? How is objective knowledge of social reality possible? Like Kant's world of experience, the sociohistorical manifold must be "conditioned" by a prior framework in order to be "synthesized" and apprehended. Causal understanding, in particular, is never simply ascertained from facts, but belongs to the prior segmentation of the infinitely complex sociohistorical continuum:

> How is the *causal explanation* of an *individual* fact possible—since a *description* of even the smallest slice of reality can never be exhaustive? The number and type of causes which have influenced any given event are always infinite and there is nothing in the things themselves to set some of them apart as alone meriting attention. . . . Order is brought into this chaos only on the condition that in every case only a *part* of a concrete reality is interesting and *significant* to us, because only it is related to the *cultural values* with which we approach reality. Only certain sides of the infinitely complex concrete phenomenon, namely those to which we attribute a general *cultural significance*—are therefore worthwhile knowing. They alone are objects of causal explanation. (Weber 1949, 78; emphasis original)

What Weber so clearly establishes here are the conditions of sociohistorical object-construction through operations of logical selection and abstraction that, in revised Kantian terms, are located within a *cultural* a priori.[16] Transcendental because they are necessary, they are nonetheless fluid rather than fixed because of the subjective character of their determination, motivated by (historically specific) cultural values and interests, from *"particular points of view"* (81; emphasis original). "Objectivity" in the social sciences begins, then, with the construction of sociohistorical objects and the imputation of causal relationships. From its subjective points of entry, social science approaches objective knowledge through the development and deployment of ideal types, those analytical constructs that accentuate the distinctive attributes of ideologies, institutions, and developmental sequences to establish their causal conditions and scientific significance. As with Kant's separation of concept and object, Weber rigorously distinguishes between ideal type and historical reality. Ideal types are conceptual "utopias" precisely because they do not actually exist in the world but are used to render the world intelligible. They are fictions, heuristic devices that must not be hypostatized into the naturalizing fallacies of social science dogmas (whether the psychological reductionism of "free market" economics or the metaphysical determinism of historical materialism). And it is precisely to avoid such naturalistic fallacies that Weber remonstrates against those pseudosocial sciences professing general laws and axioms that would assimilate the cultural to the natural sciences.

Let us now shift perspectives and view the problem of objectivity from the other side of the Kantian divide. If for Parsons, Weber's cultural hermeneutics

fell short of a fully scientific sociology—a diatribe developed further in his introduction to *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (Parsons 1947)—what of the transcendental conditions of natural science as the proper domain of objective knowledge? As we read Weber on Kant and the core epistemology of his first *Critique* (of pure reason), we glimpse a radical assimilation of science itself to the evaluative ideas of cultural interests, one that reframes "the naturalistic viewpoint" in historical and cultural terms. At the end of his "objectivity" essay, Weber (1949, 110; emphasis original) reminds us that "the *objective* validity of all empirical knowledge rests exclusively upon the ordering of the given reality according to categories which are subjective in a specific sense, namely, in that they present the *presuppositions* of our knowledge and are based on the presupposition of the *value* of those *truths* which empirical knowledge alone is able give us. . . . It should be remembered that the belief in the value of scientific truth is the product of certain cultures and is not a product of man's original nature." Presumably Weber is still talking about social science, but the slippage between the cultural and natural sciences, and "the hair-line which separates science from faith," remains ambiguous. We could read this passage as a resurrected subjective deduction of Kant's pure concepts of understanding, relocating the grounds of scientific objectivity within a prior cultural framework of evaluative ideas. From this perspective, transcendental synthesis is always culturally mediated.

Evidence for this more radical assimilation appears in "Science as a Vocation," where Weber (1958) likens Kant's epistemology to a form of rational theology:

> All theology represents an intellectual rationalization of the possession of sacred values. No science is absolutely free from presuppositions, and no science can prove its fundamental value to the man who rejects these presuppositions. Every theology, however, adds a few specific presuppositions for its work and thus for the justification of its existence. Their meaning and scope vary. Every theology, including for instance Hinduist theology, presupposes that the world must have a meaning, and the question is how to interpret this meaning so that it is intellectually conceivable.
>
> It is the same as with Kant's epistemology. He took for his point of departure the presupposition: "Scientific truth exists and it is valid," and then asked: "Under which presuppositions of thought is truth possible and meaningful?" (Weber 1958, 153–54)

As Barker (1980, 226) points out, Kant is here "relativized" as another theology in which "the objectivist component of his categorical system swallows itself up." Indeed, Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is positioned *beyond* reason to locate the conditions of its valid employment, and in this sense the transcendental domain retains the whiff of an evaluative theology. To be sure, Weber was not alone in revising Kant, but took his place within an impressive range of neo-Kantians who tampered with the foundations of his architectonic. But what is so striking in

Weber's particular revisionary strategy is how he "absorbs" or assimilates Kant's epistemology to his own more evaluative a priori framework.[17]

Ultimately the case against "science" remains moot because of Weber's un-yielding commitment to causality, not in the form of abstract laws but as necessary conditions of concrete cultural phenomena illuminated by ideal types. In this, Weber remains a Kantian, first by locating causal relations within the a priori framework of analytical concepts, and secondly by defining causal relations in the transcendental terms of the following form: what are the conditions necessary for the possibility of X? This latter formulation illuminates the entire tradition of "structural" social science that followed from Weber, whether in Parsons' functional imperatives, Levy's structural requisites, or the more general typologies and trajectories of modernization theory. But it is with the former Kantian characteristic of causality, the critical separation of concept from object—of analytical construct from apprehended "reality"—that I would like to identify the birth of modernization theory, inaugurating a principled critique of positivism and empiricism within a specific tradition of critical sociology. It was the turning point or epistemological rupture that Kant himself called his Copernican revolution in response to David Hume (Kant 1973, 22, 25a).

We need go no further back in our genealogical search for the founding father of modernization theory, since Kant's critical awakening from his "dogmatic slumber" (Kant 1976, 8) established a radical reversal of "things" and "representations" to restore causal necessity to objective experience. As Kant showed contra Hume, if all of our knowledge begins with experience, it does not follow that it arises out of experience, but rather that it derives from a priori concepts and judgments that render experience possible. The resurrection of causality from Hume's empiricist critique demoted the empirical world of things to a secondary or derivative epistemological status in relation to prior concepts and laws. And within this reversal of concept and object, I will argue, lies an important insight in modernization theory's blindness, one that faithfully devolved through lines of misprision even as it was deeply buried or overlooked for generations. Before developing this argument further, however, I will try to relate modernization theory's eponymous ancestor to a different yet complementary kind of philosophical origin associated with Rousseau's "Essay on the Origin of Languages."[18]

## The Language of Origins

The "birth" of modernization theory as rupture with the given object, a "Copernican" reversal of sign and referent, cause and effect, "language" and "world," mirrors very nicely the reversal of speech and writing developed in Derrida's reading of Rousseau (Derrida 1976, 165–268). The implications of this latter reversal for redressing the blindness of modernization theory concern less the chains of genealogical transmission discussed above than the disruption of that prelapsar-

ian plenitude—what Derrida calls "presence present to itself"—associated with the origin of language in a mythic state of nature that persists like a palimpsest within models of traditional society. We can gloss this as the *mythos* of modernization theory and break it down into three linguistic "stages": signaling, associated with pure expression and subsistence; negation, associated with displacement and alienation; and supplementation, associated with writing and surplus production.

For Rousseau, the first significant expressions, motivated by the passions, were both gestural and vocal, articulating not objects or things but fears and desires in the "signaling" mode of spontaneous outcry.[19] Here, in the state of nature, at the very beginnings of human sociation, we find a "natural" and relatively unmediated form of expression, one limited by the immediacy of space and time to the proximate situations of selves and others. In some ways this natural proto-language works like poetry and music, connoting feelings and emotions with little or no denotational value, thus "le premier langage dut être figuré" (Rousseau 1824, 424).[20] The referential properties of language will emerge, but in its earliest stages, the world, indeed consciousness, is not yet divided into words and things. Mankind in this natural state inhabits the fullness of the moment within a continuous present tense, a world in which need is satisfied by subsistence, onomatopoeia resonates with nature, and pure expression involves "the unmediated presence of the self to its own voice" (De Man 1983, 114). Clearly such a mythic origin remains a hypothetical baseline of language evolution even for Rousseau, who was only too willing to draw valid conclusions from conjectural assumptions, and thus develop the idea of method in the social sciences. For this very reason, the myth of original symbolic and material plenitude survives within our models of social differentiation and evolution, whether conceived as a counterfactual point of departure or as "the original affluent society" (Sahlins 1972).

Whatever its status as mythic origin, however, the natural condition of proto-linguistic plenitude is broken by the emergence of language proper, with its more complex semantic and syntactic functions based on the power of negation. For only through negation can the fateful transition from "natural" signals to "conventional" signs take place, differentiating sounds from the particular things and classes of objects that they "re-present." A sign can only represent a thing which it is not, but for which it stands. A self becomes a grammatical subject in relation to objects, actions, and others whom he or she is not. We need not engage the specific sequences of substantives, particles, and adjectives in Rousseau's theory to appreciate the critical power of negation in setting language and the world apart by the *social* institution of linguistic conventions. As spoken language develops and emerges, the "natural" relation between meaning and expression in the original outcry is displaced by the social relation between words and things, just as the denotatum is severed from the sign. Man is thus "alienated" from the condi-

tion of natural plenitude when transformed into a grammatical and social subject, disconnecting from the state of nature while becoming linguistically interpolated as a socially organized and mediated being.

If we shift to the Second Discourse, we see that negation serves as the precondition of civil society, of private property and thus of inequality. In the famous opening of Part 2:

> The first person who, having enclosed a plot of land, took it into his head to say *this is mine* and found people simple enough to believe him, was the true founder of civil society. What crimes, wars, murders, what miseries and horrors would the human race have been spared, had someone pulled up the stakes or filled in the ditch and cried out to his fellow men: "Do not listen to this imposter. You are lost if you forget that the fruits of the earth belong to all and the earth to no one!" (Rousseau 1987, 60)

In this mythic charter of "primitive communism," the alienation of man and land co-occurs through the speech act of physical enclosure, in which "this" plot of land is not "that," in which "mine" is not "yours," and in which the property of negation creates the value of property. From such a logically primitive starting point develops a chain reaction of alienating social forms, from pride, vanity, shame, and envy to violence, cruelty, and the exploitation of labor. Rousseau's critique of civilization, prefiguring Marx's critique of capitalism, is thus intrinsically grounded in a theory of language and its discriminating capabilities.

With writing comes a more "advanced" stage of alienation from natural discourse in Rousseau, one associated with the triumph of reason over passion, but also the "enervation" of spoken language as its emotive base is rationalized. Writing for Rousseau is thus secondary to speech, the written sign of a verbal sign, thus twice removed from pure expression, a graphic doubling of verbal articulation. Such a parasitic notion of writing as that which "feeds" off a prior spoken code valorizes the spoken over the written word, which "is nothing but a *supplement* of speech" (Derrida 1976, 295; emphasis original), fixing it with graphic exactitude while paradoxically transforming it with "an additive substitution" (270). We need not engage Rousseau's discussion of pictorial, ideographic, and phonetic scripts to appreciate the general hierarchy toward "higher" civilizations which the sequence reflects, a movement that refines language as it simultaneously muzzles the popular voice. The excess and surplus of supplementary writing, like the excessive surplus of civilized society, set the stage for a reappropriation of *la volonté générale*, a political project for *The Social Contract* that corresponds linguistically to the recuperation of an original voice. The problem for Derrida—foregrounded by De Man—is that any such return to an original source is always already supplementary, predicated on an infinite chain of displacements and substitutions (*mise en abyme*):

> Whenever Rousseau designates the moment of unity that exists at the beginning of things, when desire coincides with enjoyment, the self and the other are united in the maternal warmth of their common origin, and consciousness speaks with the voice of truth, Derrida's interpretation shows, without leaving the text, that what is thus designated as a moment of presence always has to posit another, prior moment and so implicitly loses its privileged status as a point of origin. Rousseau defines voice as the origin of written language, but his description of oral speech or of music can be shown to possess, from the start, all the elements of distance and negation that prevent written language from ever achieving a condition of unmediated presence. All attempts to trace writing back to a more original form of vocal utterance lead to the repetition of a disruptive process that alienated the written word from experience in the first place. (De Man 1983, 115)

Derrida thus assimilates original speech into the prior framework of *écriture*, of "writing" as semiosis or signification tout court, as the cause rather than the effect of unmediated presence. The birth of *écriture* as a deconstructive philosophical register that relegates speech to a secondary effect of semiotic differentiation, or of writing writ large, signals the rhetoric of blindness operative in all systems of representation. To be brief, Hume's object is to Kant's concept as Rousseau's speech is to Derrida's *écriture*: the thing-in-itself, the myth of full meaning, the primary plenitude which signified meanings "re-present," are effects of the signifying system itself, traces of figurative language.

We have followed two paths to the same destination where different forms of blindness converge. The first genealogical chain of transmission traced the blindness of misprision back to Kant's Copernican revolution, recuperating a critical reversal of concept and object within a "structural" genre of modernization theory. The second traced a chain of rhetorical displacements from writing to the "origin" of linguistic representation, effecting a critical reversal of signifier and signified within Rousseau's protolinguistic state of nature. From this philosophical topos of an absent presence, we can turn modernization theory on its head.

We seem to have traveled far from modernization theory, but we have reached its figural ground, its myth of origin: namely, "traditional society" or in another context what Jonsson (2001) has called "society degree zero." True to the genre, modernization theory posits a global shift from traditional societies through periods of colonization (when modernizing trends are put in place) into independent nation-states, where the stakes of modernization really count. Whatever their specific locations, traditional societies are precapitalist and in a Weberian sense prerational, following "conservative" peasant subsistence strategies, nonproductive logics of surplus extraction, mystifying forms of "traditional" authority, redistributive "extended" families, and nonscientific cultural worldviews, all of which hinder meritocratic mobility and "economic take-off."[21] But like the spoken ground

of written language, or the "givenness" of known objects, the original "primitive" or traditional society was never there "in the first place," but was produced by the ideological engines of colonization as part and parcel of the civilizing mission— a trace or effect of modernizing colonies, not preexisting conditions. The "traditional society" of modernization theory is always already mediated by colonial modernity's production of tradition, and here lies its compound blindness: (1) traditional society is misapprehended as a precolonial condition rather than a colonial artifact (objectified by colonial exhibitions and the ratifying science of anthropology),[22] whereby the imprint of colonial culture and hegemony is largely neglected; and (2) colonialism is credited with the making of new elites and professionals by transcending tradition rather than actively producing it.

Nowhere is this logic of transcendence more clearly illustrated than in the treatment of primordial "tribal" affiliations that must be integrated into more rational nation-states. According to the standard modernization model, affective attachments to "tribe" reinforce ascribed roles and hinder the more rational discourse of democratic pluralism that allows achieved roles and equitable interest-articulation to emerge as the hallmark of postcolonial modernity. We now know that so-called "tribalism" is a consequence of colonial governance, and that it emerges when ethnicity becomes politicized as a source of political capital in the postcolonial state, and thus it cannot be said to predate the state as such.[23] And if national integration "solves" the problem of tribalism within the emergent framework of legal-rational authority, the road or pathway from mythic origin to disenchanted destination describes a secondary mythic narrative loaded with ideological baggage, rearticulating "la mission civilisatrice" within the Weberian machinery of rationalization.

This compound blindness in modernization theory, however, touches upon a critical slippage between political institutions and their associated ideologies, and here is where I would like to return to my father's text. I have already noted that the concept of traditional society developed in *The Politics of Modernization* began to break free from its mythic conventions by recasting them in functional terms. In chapter 3, "The Analysis of Tradition," traditional societies are already flexible, innovative, cosmopolitan, stratified, multiethnic, etc., and are furthermore refashioned to provide cognitive closure in rapidly changing situations. Moreover their significance begins to shift, less as a starting point for diachronic trajectories and more as rhetorical material for structuring change in recognizable terms. Modernizing ideologies, whether neotraditional or radically utopian (or as in the Tanzanian case of *ujamaa*, both) operate like political religions, and are basically mythic in structure and function. "Myth is the social equivalent of metaphor," Apter (1965, 278) writes, whether grounded in visions of traditional village harmony or in "the myth of the proletarian general strike"

(279), because it builds solidarity around moral community. The deeper implications of this insight were set into motion but did not yet emerge. Throughout the book, the mythic core of modernizing ideologies still "functions" in relation to a material system, in strategic, affective, legitimating, mobilizing, and solidaristic capacities; that is, in relation to some other bedrock reality—including the state—that in some sense "precedes" ideology even if shaped and transformed by it. If myth becomes central to modernization, it still remains hidden within the theory itself.

It is this slippage between the institutional bases of power and the symbolic foundations of authority, between the system as such and its ideological representation, that provides a dialectical opening into modernization theory's blindness, one that resurrects Kant's Copernican revolution and (following Derrida) reverses Rousseau's natural history of discourse. I am not suggesting a collapse of all political regimes into purely occult forms of mystification, since authority types, systems of political representation, class formation, and social stratification, if abstractions, are also real and variable. But the language with which we engage these abstractions belongs, in part, to the systems in which we operate, and remains—as my father later argued in a hefty book manuscript (Apter n.d.) that he never published—part of the problem. This reflexive and indeed deconstructive dimension was beginning to emerge from *The Politics of Modernization* and eventually led to phenomenological studies of political protest (Apter and Sawa 1984) and revolution (Apter and Saich 1994), and to a discourse theory of political violence (Apter 1997, 2010). But that is another story, another set of texts.

## Notes

1. For a remarkable study of modernization theory in both institutional and global contexts of American social science, see Gilman (2003).

2. See, e.g., Brantlinger (1986), Comaroff and Comaroff (1991, 86–125), and Stocking (1987).

3. See of course Tönnies (1957 [1887]), Durkheim (1984 [1893]), Maine (1861), and Morgan (1877).

4. Far from resenting what I incorrectly assumed was a passing form of academic domination, or, more dramatically, a developing master-slave dialectic, my father was quite grateful for the three hundred dollars Marion provided for the job—a significant sum in those days. But again, my reading is *necessarily* a misreading. As for the typeset, Levy (1952, vii) explains that "the tentative nature of this volume cannot be emphasized too strongly. It was in the effort to accent this that the decision was made to publish the material in its present format rather than in a letterpress edition."

5. My father's intellectual influences were hardly defined by Levy's mentorship, but also included the behavioralism of Heinz Eulau at Antioch College, the phenomenology of Harold Garfinkel (and the legacy of Alfred Schütz) at Princeton, a lifelong friendship with Clifford Geertz (from their Antioch days), and a formidable command of Marx and Marxist theory.

6. Gilman (2003) develops "microhistories" of Harvard's Department of Social Relations (DSR) under Parsons, the Social Science Research Council's Committee on Comparative Politics (CCP), and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Center for International Studies (CIS).

7. In this case Bloom's revisionary ratio of *clinamen* applies with near-perfection: "A poet swerves away from his precursor, by so reading his precursor's poem as to execute a *clinamen* in relation to it. This appears as a corrective movement in his own poem, which implies that the precursor poem went accurately up to a certain point, but then should have swerved, precisely in the direction that the new poem moves" (Bloom 1973, 14).

8. Those listed are David Aberle, Albert Cohen, Arthur Davis, Francis Sutton, and Levy himself (Levy 1952, xiv).

9. This account of Levy's exile from the Parsonian circle at Harvard comes from David Apter, personal communication, 21 August 2009.

10. The circle included Georg Simmel, Ferdinand Tönnies, Werner Somart, and Alexander von Schelting.

11. *Die Protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* first appeared as two installments in the Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Socialpolitik, 1904 bis 1905. (20. Bd., Heft 1, S. 1–54; 21. Bd., Heft 1, S. 1–110). Parsons' translation of *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, however, was highly mediated and intertextual, with the first two of its four chapters based on a prior (but freely revised) translation by A. M. Henderson, and chapters 1–3 reappearing in Weber (1978, 3–301). Parsons (1980, 42) furthermore recalls that his revision of Henderson's chapter 1 was "greatly helped by a mimeographed draft translation which had been worked out by Edward Shils and Alexander von Schelting." Such levels of implication and revision between translators could be developed in a richer discussion of influence and intertextuality, but such concerns lie beyond the scope of the present essay.

12. Witness Kant's attempt to edit out the subjective deduction in the B edition of his *First Critique*.

13. Käsler (1988, 183) distinguishes the individualizing and generalizing ideal types in terms of "historical" and "sociological ideal types," the latter emerging in Weber's last phase of work pursuing a more universal historical sociology.

14. As Brand (1979, 11n7) further notes, "Weber's interest for [*sic*] Kant can also be gauged from his notes and underlinings in his own copy of Windelband's *Geschicte der Philosophie*, of which the first edition appeared in 1889 but of which Weber possessed the fourth edition of 1907."

15. My awareness of Weber's debt to Kant traces back to a dazzling lecture by Seyla Benhabib, which she presented in the 1970s while still a graduate student at Yale, called "The Philosophical Foundations of Weber's Methodology and Theory of Value"—specifically the section on Weber's epistemological foundations and the Kantian tradition. See also Benhabib (1981).

16. A perspective developed earlier by Herder and von Humboldt and later elaborated by Ernst Cassirer. See also Lash (2009) for a remarkably similar discussion of the *social* a priori in relation to Kant, Durkheim, Weber, Simmel, Marx, and even Parsons.

17. Here we witness Bloom's revisionary ratio of *daemonization* at work, whereby "the later poet opens himself to what he believes to be a power in the parent-poem that does not belong to the parent proper, but to a range of being just beyond that precursor. He does this, in

his poem, by so stationing its relation to the parent-poem as to generalize away the uniqueness of the earlier work" (Bloom 1973, 15). For Weber, Kant's epistemology itself becomes an ideal type of a rational theology.

18. My interest in Kant's critical method as the textual genesis of modernization theory stems from my 1978 Yale College honors thesis (philosophy), co-advised by Rulon Wells and Seyla Benhabib, entitled "Is the Subjective Deduction Indispensible to Kant's *First Critique?*" Riding the wave of deconstruction during this exciting time, I answered that it was the only deduction possible, after reducing a priori synthesis, recast as synthetic unity, to self-referring functions of metaphorical substitution. Perhaps the association of Kant's critical philosophy with the metaphysics of modernity/modernization is not so far-fetched?

19. This is not the place to delve into Rousseau's own writings on language with any rigor, including comparison with his linguistic rumination in "Discourse on the Origin of Inequality," (1987 [1755]), but to foreground Derrida's deconstruction of Rousseau's apparent position.

20. On this point De Man develops a meta-critique of Derrida's blindness, in his refusal to see the deconstructive strategy already at work in Rousseau's assertion of a "figural" baseline, but this level of argument lies beyond the scope of my concerns, and in any case appears overly contrived.

21. The notion of "take-off" belongs of course to stage three of Walt Rostow's "non-Communist manifesto" (Rostow 1960), and was rejected by more Parsonian theorists. I would argue, however, that its spirit, if not its letter, pervades the modernization genre more generally. See, e.g., Geertz's application of Rostow in *Peddlers and Princes* (1963).

22. For the colonial production of culture as an anthropological object-domain see Andrew Apter (1999a, 1999b, 2002).

23. The ideology of tribalism is particularly associated with Africa, where racial colorations in the western imagination meet local idioms of ethnic purity and pollution, but it extends implicitly to all figurations of "backwardness."

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