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Introduction and argument

Disparity and development

The transformation of human life through the application of science has been an uneven process, revolutionizing some societies and some aspects of human activity before others. From the outset we may distinguish the application of science to *health*, notably to public health and preventive medicine as well as to individual curative medicine; and to *production*, notably including agriculture as well as mining, construction, transport, manufacturing, etc., which we generally class together as 'industry'. Development, widely understood, refers to the whole process of transition, in which there has been a tendency in the past to over-emphasize the growth of modern industry (industrialization, the Industrial Revolution). As Ernest Gellner well said, the language of economic growth 'is misleading in as far as it suggests that what is at stake is something quantitative, a rate or speed or quantity of accumulation of goods. Ultimately, what is at stake is something qualitative – a transition between two fundamentally different forms of life.'[1]

Nonetheless, it is the transformation of production that has been associated with the wide and increasing disparity among rich and poor countries, and among rich and poor people in the world as a whole, that constitutes a central theme of this book. The disparities are especially stark within poor countries, where a few wealthy families can emulate the affluent life-styles of the well-to-do in rich countries, while the great majority live at or near a bare subsistence. But disparities have widened within rich countries too, for example the USA and Britain in the 1980s, with big increases in poverty and homelessness.[2] In the world as a whole, according to the United Nations Development Programme's estimates for 1988, the richest 20 per cent of the world's population received at least 140 times more than the poorest 20 per cent, and the disparity had increased sharply since 1960.[3]

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Such disparities are often discussed in terms such as ‘a divided world’ and ‘the ever-widening gap’, but these are misleading expressions. Ours is not a divided world; on the contrary, the world is one. Economic disparities have certainly been ‘ever-widening’, but some other disparities could better be described as ‘ever-narrowing’. Due notably to the application of science to public health and preventive medicine (rather than individual curative medicine), mortality rates in poor countries have converged on those in the West. So have fertility rates in major regions except Africa, and there has been convergence too in other aspects of development such as schooling and literacy.

Anthropologists of an earlier generation used to write monographs about societies which, if not strictly ‘untouched’, had been affected by outside influences to only a limited extent. In that golden age, social anthropologists could analyse a society as a unique form of human association with its own distinctive structure and culture to be explained mainly in its own terms. Now that is clearly no longer possible. The world has broken in. International politics and the world economic system have intruded into those ‘untouched societies’ in the form of institutions such as mines, factories, political parties, armies, and schools, that now have to be considered as integral parts of the whole which it is the business of the social scientist to study and comprehend. Yet the pre-existing diversity of cultures, and their continuing significance, has certainly not vanished overnight, as we are reminded every day when we open the newspaper and read of cultural diversity associated with nationalist, tribal, or ethnic conflicts the world over, not only in the ‘Third World’. While the heritage and perspectives of social anthropology are necessary for the study of ‘Third World’ societies they are not sufficient, and while there is certainly material for the consideration of the more specialized social sciences such as economics and political science these can lead to partial and misleading conclusions unless they are informed by a constant awareness of the whole whose parts they are studying. We need social anthropologists to ascertain, and to remind us of, what actually goes on at the ‘grass-roots’, and to indicate scepticism about official statistics and policies based on them. We need, too, the synoptic vision of the sociologist.

Units of analysis

For many purposes, the unit we have to consider is the *country*, that is, a defined geographical area with a human population and a *government*. Often, indeed, we have little choice in the matter, since it is the governments of countries that collect and publish statistics. Thus when we compare birth- and death-rates, GNP per capita, or school enrolments, the

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statistics we find in the appropriate sources are for units such as India, Kenya, and Brazil.

Governments collect and issue statistics because they wield legitimate power. They use that power also to issue currency, collect taxes, regulate banking, impose tariffs, borrow at home and abroad, and in countless other ways that affect the economic life carried on within their boundaries. So each country comes to have its own *economy*: a natural unit for analysis, even though no country's economy is isolated from the rest of the world and each is to a greater or less extent affected by what happens in the world economy as a whole.

Similarly, a government's policies about the national language, schooling, and the mass media of communication all affect its people's career prospects and cultural life, while its laws about marriage, inheritance, the care and custody of children, and such matters affect their family life. In certain respects, then, each country may come to have its own *society*. But the boundaries of country and society do not in general coincide. Many countries, especially in the Third World, are in a sense highly artificial, arbitrary creations whose boundaries might as well have been drawn along other lines on the map, and include societies with widely diverse languages and cultures, for example within Nigeria the Yoruba, Ibo, Hausa, and others. At the same time, some societies extend across the boundaries of more than one country, for example, the Samia, parted by an arbitrary boundary between Uganda and Kenya, or the overseas Chinese whose society extends into Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, and other countries.

Industrialization and development

Industrial countries have hitherto made lavish use of energy (though they may now be learning to use it a little less lavishly). Ever since the steam engine was invented, heat engines burning fossil fuels have put more power at the elbow of the inhabitants of the industrial countries than was previously available to them from their own muscles and those of other animals, and a limited use of wind and water power. In the 1990s there was a wide difference between the energy consumption of rich and poor countries: some thirtyfold, according to World Bank estimates for 1991.[4]

If energy represents the critical difference in terms of physics, then in terms of economics the concomitant difference is capital. Heat engines and the machines they drive represent capital investment on a vastly greater scale than the simple tools of a non-industrial economy. Those who control them tend to be highly rewarded (alike in public or private ownership), and as industrial capital comes to outweigh land as the

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principal source of wealth and power, so income disparities are enhanced. At the same time the use of machinery increases the productivity of labour; indeed, the very nature of work is transformed by the application of science, as it comes to be done by machines controlled and directed by human operators rather than being directly performed by their own muscles. So wages are potentially high, and in so far as trade union organization is permitted it can ensure that actual wages correspond to the productivity of labour. Indeed, in countries with a small capital-intensive industrial sector, workers in industry can represent a relatively highly paid and privileged minority, sometimes called an 'aristocracy of labour' (though that is a controversial term).

In the past history of the latter-day rich countries, industrialization entailed a process of capital formation, initially by forced saving and 'going short' out of low levels of income, later by saving and investing out of higher incomes to use power-driven machines to make more machines. In this process there was a shift of the labour force out of 'primary' production (agriculture and other 'extractive' occupations like fishing and mining) into 'secondary' industry including manufacturing. This has been followed in the later stages by a further shift, out of industry as it became more capital-intensive, into inescapably labour-intensive activities, 'tertiary' and 'quaternary', as diverse as retailing, education, social welfare services, and leisure. Industrialization has been only one aspect of development, albeit an important, even pace-setting part. The present-day affluent countries have indeed been through the rise *and fall* of industry, and services now dominate their economies, generating 58 per cent of their combined GNP in 1991, according to the World Bank[5] – which, significantly, dropped the term 'industrial' from its classification of countries in 1989 and substituted 'high-income'.

According to this view, the process of change which came to be known as industrial development or the industrial revolution started at different dates and proceeded at different rates. By common consent Britain was the first industrial country, followed by other western European countries, then Russia and Japan. The United States was a late starter, still a mainly agrarian nation of farm and small town until as late as 1900, but its industrial development was then very rapid and it quickly overtook the rest. In many other countries industrialization started late, or proceeded slowly, or both. The underlying assumption was that development was to be identified with industrialization, and measured by the growth of average income or GNP per head.

From this point of view the 'Third World' consisted of the late industrializing, the as yet little-industrialized countries, whose development could be expected to recapitulate that of those where the process had started earlier. Countries of this kind were first called 'underdeveloped' in

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a report to the United Nations in 1951. The word had not then acquired all its present associations, and as the report itself said, 'an adequate synonym would be "poor countries"'.[6] Later, when 'underdeveloped' came to be thought of as derogatory, they were called 'developing' – an instance of what Myrdal called diplomacy by terminology,[7] for while in some there was indeed rapid growth of GNP per head, in others that was a negligible or even a negative quantity.

Classical perspectives

It goes without saying that nineteenth-century sociological thought, like much nineteenth-century thought generally, was evolutionary. Thus Comte regarded it as one of the aims of sociology 'to discover through what fixed series of successive transformations the human race, starting from a state not superior to that of the societies of the great apes, gradually led to the point at which civilized Europe finds itself today' – that was in 1822. Social development was a product of intellectual development, which albeit somewhat unevenly had proceeded in three stages, culminating in positive (or as we would now say scientific) thought associated with industrial, peaceful social organization.[8]

Somewhat similarly, Herbert Spencer classified societies by the complexity of their organization, and into 'industrial' and 'militant' types. He did not mean by 'industrial' quite what we understand by the term today, and classed some simple and technologically primitive societies as industrial because they concentrated on peaceful production rather than war. Nevertheless he made it clear, by implication if not explicitly, that he regarded industrial societies as superior and more advanced from the evolutionary point of view, for he wrote of 'reversions' and 'partial reversions to the militant type of structure' in advanced contemporary societies including his own. Anything involving coercion or compulsion was 'militant', while 'industrial' societies were based on the voluntary co-operation of free individuals.[9]

Following Spencer, Maine concluded from his study of ancient law that 'the movement of the progressive societies has hitherto been a movement from Status to Contract';[10] and together with the British economists from Adam Smith onwards they laid the foundations for Durkheim's analysis of the division of labour, with its distinction between mechanical and organic solidarity. Mechanical solidarity characterized a society in which there was little division of labour and people were like-minded because they performed similar tasks, and the structure of such a society consisted of homologous segments like clans. Durkheim probably erred in underestimating the extent of individual differences in such societies, and overestimating the predominance of penal customary law in them.

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Organic solidarity was that of the complex society with a high degree of division of labour. Here the social structure consisted of interdependent associations, like industrial enterprises exchanging goods and services with one another. Occupational and other groups would tend to develop their own different sub-cultures, and such a society could no longer rely on common values as a source of solidarity. Durkheim differed from the British school in recognizing that self-interest mediated through free contract does not assure solidarity, since interest makes me today your friend, tomorrow your enemy. He accordingly rejected Spencer's extreme individualism, and looked rather to the rise of new sources of solidarity like professional ethics to maintain long-term non-contractual relations among individuals and groups; while ritual was another way in which groups engendered and maintained their solidarity and cohesion.[11]

Although Marx and Engels differed sharply from the liberal tradition of Comte, Spencer, and the British economists; based their approach on historical materialism; and saw class conflict as a main explanation of social change, they too like their contemporaries put their ideas into a grand perspective of the stages of development of human societies. Originally property took the form of tribal ownership and the social order was an extension of the family. Then the slavery that had always been latent in the family became the dominant institution of society, so that citizens and slaves were the two classes of the city-states of ancient Greece and Rome. The third stage of development was feudal, with peasant serfs instead of slaves as the subject class of producers. And it was obvious enough that what they characterized as the bourgeois capitalist society of their own time had emerged from feudal society when the labourer ceased to be a slave, serf or bondsman and became a free seller of labour power. To bring about that state of affairs, the industrial capitalists had to displace the feudal lords; and Marx wrote that 'The hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill, society with the industrial capitalist.'

When Marx became the correspondent of the *New York Daily Tribune* on Indian affairs, and became accordingly more aware of the civilizations of India and China, he saw Oriental society, based on the Asiatic mode of production, as a kind of alternative or by-pass to the Occidental stages of the city-states and feudalism. It was typified by a centrally controlled canalization and other public works, its urban trading class was weakly developed, and it was too centralized to be feudal, while in its social order the unifying function of the tribe was usurped by the despot and his ideological reflex the deity. Marx accordingly wrote in a summary way of the 'Asiatic, ancient, feudal, and modern bourgeois modes of production' as 'progressive epochs in the economic formation of society'.[12]

Among his many contributions to sociological theory, Max Weber, like Marx, grappled with the question of the rise of capitalism, but he rejected

Marx's historical materialism and the economic determinism which it entailed. While capitalism could be seen as a set of institutional arrangements including rational book-keeping, formally free labour, the separation of the household from the workplace, the separation of corporate business property from personal property (by means of limited liability), and the concept of citizenship, such a view saw only the bare bones. The whole structure had to be brought to life, and what inspired it and gave it direction Weber called the spirit of capitalism. This he identified with the Protestant ethic, whose rise he traced in the seventeenth century in the Calvinist sects and the Puritans in western Europe and America. The sense of a calling to be in the world but not of it, to lead a godly, righteous and sober life without withdrawing into a monastery, and to resist all the temptations of the world, provided the motivation for the distinctively Puritan virtues of thrift, honesty, sobriety, diligence in business and sheer hard work. With such virtues it was indeed hard not to succeed, yet if it were wrong to expend resources in personal consumption and frivolous display, what else to do with the profits but re-invest them in the business? The 'elective affinity' between the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism indicated that, so far from religion being a mere superstructure, affording ideological justification for the harsh necessities of the material economic base, the converse might be the case, and religion as an independent factor could play a part in initiating social and economic change.[13]

Tönnies contrasted the 'natural, organic' relations of the family, village, and small town (*Gemeinschaft*) with the 'artificial, isolated' condition of urban industrial society (*Gesellschaft*) in which the original and natural relations among human beings are excluded and all strive for their own advantage in a spirit of competition. Western Europe had passed from a union of *Gemeinschaft* whose prototype was the family, through an association of *Gemeinschaft* with corporations and fellowships of the arts and crafts and 'relations between master and servant, or better between master and disciple', to an association of *Gesellschaft* with the rise of the joint stock company and limited liability. A fourth stage was possibly represented by movements like consumers' co-operation and British guild socialism, a revival of *Gemeinschaft* in forms adapted to the prevailing *Gesellschaft* which might become the focus for 'the resuscitation of family life and other forms of *Gemeinschaft*'. No doubt his nostalgic analysis idealizes the harmony and integration of small-scale rural communities and overrates their advantage; but the notion of *Gesellschaft*, like Durkheim's organic solidarity, expresses the complex interdependence of modern industrial society while deploring its consequent impersonality.[14]

In his work on social development, Hobhouse tried to avoid value-judgements, sought to elaborate 'criteria of advance of a non-ethical

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character', and identified them as growth in scale, efficiency, mutuality, and freedom. His concept of 'efficiency' resembled Spencer's differentiation of the social structure, with co-ordination of the activities of different parts. Advance in one respect might not necessarily be accompanied by advance in others; thus a growth in the scale of social organization had often been achieved by means of repression and constraint, so that for instance the Greek city-states were smaller in scale than 'some of the great Empires of the middle culture', but enjoyed more freedom. Nevertheless, on the whole the four aspects of social development were so inter-related that there had been advance in all of them together in the history of humanity. Hobhouse's criteria of freedom and mutuality may well have expressed his position as a liberal social philosopher and not been quite as 'non-ethical' as he intended. His criteria of scale and efficiency, however, clearly converge on Durkheim's view of the division of labour.[15]

Among social anthropologists, however, Malinowski rejected evolutionary theories because they encouraged field-workers to look for 'living fossils', primitive customs carried over from earlier stages of social development (as in the work of L. H. Morgan), rather than regarding the institutions of non-western societies as having their function in meeting people's needs in those societies.[16]

The work of Talcott Parsons, the leading figure of US sociology in the 1950s and 1960s, was in large part a synthesis and elaboration of the nineteenth-century European classics, together with some other elements of western social thought, including especially Malinowskian functionalism in social anthropology.[17]

In his early work, Parsons clarified and elaborated Tönnies' distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* into five major 'dilemmas of orientation' which he termed the pattern variables. Four of these had a bearing on the sociology of development, including the first, affectivity versus affective neutrality. The latter was shown when an actor postponed or renounced immediate gratification, as in decisions to save and invest rather than spend on current consumption. We may detect overtones of Weber's Protestant ethic here. Affective neutrality also characterized social relations in modern societies, which tended to be contractual, impersonal, and calculating; the continuing need for affective gratification in these societies was largely concentrated on family life, the one island of security left in which a high level of diffuse affectivity prevailed. As for the other three, Parsons gave a succinct example: 'The American occupational system is universalistic and achievement-oriented and specific.'[18] In other words, compared with other societies, in the USA people tended to be hired for what they could do rather than for who they were, careers were open to talents, and

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people were paid for carrying out specified tasks, rather than entering into more diffuse relationships. Where people recruited workers or admitted pupils on the basis of kinship, we in western countries called it nepotism and regarded it as incompatible with the ways of modern society.

In a later work, Parsons combined evolutionary and comparative perspectives in analyzing changes in the structures of societies ‘ranging all the way from extremely small-scale primitive societies to the new supernational societies of the United States and the Soviet Union’. That evolution entailed differentiation, including for instance the separation of workplaces from households. That did not mean that the older units had ‘lost function’; on the contrary, as already noted, just because the household was no longer an important unit of economic production it might well perform its other functions better. However, new roles had to be created in which authority was not derived from kinship; and there was a problem about establishing a new pattern of values appropriate to the new type of society. These new values might encounter severe resistance from groups adhering to older values which were no longer appropriate, a resistance he identified as ‘fundamentalism’:[19] I return to this subject in chapter 10.

It may be helpful at this point to tabulate the terms in which some sociologists of the classical tradition (including Parsons) have characterized the basic processes of change.

Spencer	from simple from military	to complex to industrial
Maine	from status	to contract
Durkheim	from homologous segments from mechanical solidarity	to interdependent associations to organic solidarity
Tönnies	from *Gemeinschaft* (natural, organic community)	to *Gesellschaft* (artificial, isolated association)
Hobhouse	growth in scale efficiency (complexity, differentiation), mutuality, and freedom	
Parsons (1951)	from affectivity from particularism from ascription from diffuseness	to affective neutrality to universalism to achievement to specificity
Parsons (1966)	adaptive upgrading, differentiation of sub-systems	

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Two general remarks may be made at this point about those older theories. First, evolutionary ideas have been called in question, not least among societies or peoples explicitly or implicitly classed as backward or primitive. Nonetheless, it is still very difficult not to think in terms of stages of development, especially about population trends, as in the next chapter; and this is the core of truth in works such as Rostow's *The Stages of Economic Growth*.[20]

Secondly, while some of the founding fathers, notably Spencer, saw a continuity between natural and social science, others, notably Durkheim, insisted that social facts were *sui generis*, in a class of their own, not to be explained in terms of other sciences such as biology and psychology. In Britain, sociology was born in a life-and-death struggle against the eugenics movement, which followed Spencer in seeing progress as the survival of the fittest and biological heredity as the primary factor in social welfare, and favoured encouraging the birth of the fit and discouraging the birth or survival of the unfit. For the leading eugenist Karl Pearson, heredity accounted for nine-tenths of a man's ability, and selection of parentage was the sole effective process known to science by which a race can continuously progress. Countering this, for Hobhouse the calling of sociology was to show that 'the biological conditions of human development are not such as to present any insuperable barrier to progress', and that 'we may expect to find progress, if anywhere, rather in social than in racial modification'.[21] Sociologists in Britain ever since have been consistently wary of anything that smacked of genetic determinism or biological explanations of human behaviour.[22] Likewise in later generations, sociologists generally have rejected socio-biology.[23]

Among anthropologists, Malinowski's functionalism was explicitly biological: the function of a people's culture, their system of institutions, was their flesh-and-blood survival. When Parsons took over Malinowski's concept of functionalism, however, despite some acknowledgement of 'viscerogenic needs', the main emphasis was on the survival of a social system, a much more abstract concept; while his 'pattern maintenance' was clearly a quite different notion from the flesh-and-blood survival of a human population. Indeed, it could sometimes be argued that a people's flesh-and-blood survival would be better assured, and their needs more adequately met, if their social system were not maintained but changed.

In latter-day development studies, in continuity with those earlier controversies, sociologists' aversion to natural science has been evident in suspicion towards technological solutions such as the Green Revolution for 'Third World' problems. Similarly there has been an emphasis on human agency in famines, down-playing droughts, floods, desertification, etc., and highlighting class factors ('famine was always class famine')[24]