

# On The Decline of Contemporary Political Development Studies

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This study argues that the self-described "malaise" in the study of political development theory is in part the product of the early attempt to strip judgments of value from those of fact in the interests of a more scientific comparative politics; that the resulting science has been inclined to ignore or neglect what may be the most fundamental difference between the modern and premodern worlds, namely the elimination of all religious concerns from those of politics proper (the "separation of church and state"); and that this neglect is in turn linked with the crisis in self-confidence characteristic not only of the science of comparative politics but of science or rationalism simply.

The desire to know the ways and habits of distant peoples is, if not coeval with man, at any rate of very ancient lineage: Homer's wily Odysseus traveled the world to come to know the minds and cities of human beings, and Herodotus, arguably the first political scientist, compiled accounts of the customs of many peoples at least in part to see what was constant or natural among them. From very early on, one may say, the desire to study foreign communities and customs in order to know what the truly good political life is has marked man the rational animal. In the present century, the attempt to satisfy something of the same desire led to the conviction that the reasonable goal of political life is modern liberal democracy as embodied, more or less well, by the nations of the West. Far from being a merely parochial prejudice, however, this superiority of liberal democracy to all other forms of government was traceable to a great improvement in the science of politics itself.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, so certain did the conviction concerning the goodness of modern liberal politics appear that it formed the basis of a new discipline within political science itself, the discipline, namely, of comparative politics.

Amidst the extraordinary self-confidence and prosperity of post-World War II America, "area specialists" in the field of

1. Consider, *e.g.*, *Federalist*, No. 9.

political science grew dissatisfied with their deep but narrow expertise and sought instead to discover cross-cultural generalizations that would permit them not only to understand but indeed to help the many nations recently liberated from fascism or imperialism, countries that lagged behind the West in economic prosperity, technological advancement, and democratization. To reach this understandable and even noble goal, political scientists looked to the methods of modern natural science in the hope of matching the latter's astounding successes.<sup>2</sup> From it they derived tools of quantification and verification meant to bring true rigor to the study of political behavior and choice. Indeed, "behavioralism" thus understood made possible the new science of modernization.<sup>3</sup>

The expectations attending this science were high, as the titles of some of the seminal works of the 1950s and early-to-mid 1960s suggest: *The Progress of Underdeveloped Areas*,<sup>4</sup> *The Passing of Traditional Society*,<sup>5</sup> *Journeys Toward Progress*,<sup>6</sup> *Nation-Building*,<sup>7</sup> *The Dynamics of Modernization*.<sup>8</sup> The subsequent failure, however, of the "third world" to progress along the continuous and harmonious lines projected for it—and indeed the failure in some cases to progress at all—caused the students of modernization to revise considerably their belief that the manifold aspects of development went more or less hand-in-hand.<sup>9</sup> This change too was reflected in the literature: *The Cruel Choice*,<sup>10</sup> *Choice and the*

2. E.g., David E. Apter, *The Politics of Modernization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. xiv.

3. E.g., Samuel P. Huntington and Jorge I. Dominguez, "Political Development," in *Handbook of Political Science*, ed. Fred Greenstein and Nelson Polsby, vol 3 (Reading, MA.: Addison-Wesley, 1975), p. 2.

4. Bert F. Hoselitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952).

5. Daniel Lerner (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1958).

6. Albert O. Hirschman (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1963).

7. Ed. Karl Deutsch and William J. Foltz. (New York: Atherton Press, 1963).

8. Cyril E. Black (New York: Harper Row, 1966).

9. S.N. Eisenstadt, "Breakdowns of Modernization," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 12 (1964):345-67; Mark Kesselman, "Order or Movement? The Literature of Political Development as Ideology," *World Politics* 26 (1973): 140ff.; David E. Apter, *Rethinking Development: Modernization, Development, and Postmodern Politics*. (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1987), pp. 12-14.

10. Denis Goulet (New York: Atheneum, 1971).

*Politics of Allocation*,<sup>11</sup> *Crisis, Choice, and Change*,<sup>12</sup> *Pyramids of Sacrifice*.<sup>13</sup> Finally, from at least the early 1980s onward, doubts about the adequacy of all existing theories of modernization, be they mainstream or radical, center or left, have led to more serious misgivings concerning the very possibility of an objective, ideologically untainted theory at once broad enough to encompass the variegated phenomena of global development and narrow or precise enough to be useful with a view to prediction and the formulation of specific public policy. These misgivings have been accompanied by a marked interest in, not to say obsession with, theories of the theory of development: just as departments of comparative literature have become more interested in comparing theories of how to read literature than in reading literature, so the theoreticians of development are on the whole more taken up with inward-looking academic debates than with the lot of impoverished nations. The "contemporary decline of development studies," its "malaise,"<sup>14</sup> has advanced so far as to have led one scholar to declare, in the leading American journal of political science, that the study of development is "moribund" in the eyes of most political scientists.<sup>15</sup> The very great hope of the modern

11. David E. Apter (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).

12. Ed. Gabriel A. Almond, Scott C. Flanagan, and Robert J. Murdt. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973).

13. Peter L. Berger (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Doubleday, 1976). For a helpful overview, see Samuel P. Huntington, "The Goals of Development," in *Understanding Political Development*, ed. Myron Weiner and Samuel P. Huntington (Boston: Little, Brown, 1987), pp. 6-17.

14. Richard A. Higgott, *Political Development Theory: The Contemporary Debate*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), pp. 1-2.

15. John R. Freeman, "Review of *Rethinking Development: Modernization, Development, and Postmodern Politics*," *American Political Science Review* 83 (1989): 1046. Consider also, among the many studies that might be cited, R. S. Milne, "The Overdeveloped Study of Political Development," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 5 (1972):560-68; Dudley Seers, "The Birth, Life, and Death of Development Economics," *Development and Change* 10 (1979):707-19; David E. Apter, "The Passing of Development Studies: Over the Shoulder with a Backward Glance," *Government and Opposition* 15 (1980):263-75; Michael Edwards, "New Directions in Social Development Research: The Search for Relevance," in *Rethinking Social Development: Theory, Research, and Practice*, ed. David Booth (New York: Longman, 1994); and Robert A. Packenham, *The Dependency Movement: Scholarship and Politics in Development Studies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 305 and context.

science of comparative politics to understand precisely the growth of other nations seems to have collapsed, leaving its practitioners with little more than fragmentary theories incapable of comprehending, let alone aiding, a world of nations still riven by difference.

The aim of the present article is simply to try to clarify the causes of this decline. What follows does not claim or wish to be an exhaustive account of development theory from its origins to the present-day—the introspection characteristic of the field has resulted in a number of very fine such surveys—but seeks instead to highlight those aspects of the history of development theory that seem particularly important in coming to grips with its crisis or decline. And although I will conclude by making a couple of practical recommendations, I cannot hope both to diagnose and to cure the difficulty at issue within the confines of this article. I therefore limit myself to arguing that the contemporary “malaise” in the study of modernization is in the first place the product of the limitations of the science adopted at its origin; that this science has paid insufficient attention to what, I submit, may well constitute the core of modern politics, namely the “separation of church and state”; and that it has therefore been unable to grasp adequately the most fundamental differences between the modern and premodern worlds.

### **Comparative Politics and the Fact-Value Distinction: From “Modernization” to “Development” to “Change”**

Part of what makes development theory so fascinating is its attempt to combine two radically different strains of political science that are ultimately incompatible with one another: remnants of a premodern political science that insists on the possibility and indeed necessity of making judgments concerning justice or morality, Aristotle’s *Politics* being the classic example<sup>16</sup>; and another, altogether modern political science, modeled on the new science of nature, according to which “fact” and “value” are radically heterogeneous, the classic being the social science of Max Weber.<sup>17</sup>

16. Gabriel Almond and G. Bingham Powell, *Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1966), pp. 13, 213-15.

17. E.g., Talcott Parsons and Edward Shils, *Toward a General Theory of Action* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1951), pp. 52ff.; Gabriel A. Almond

At the outset, it is true, the fledgling science of modernization was not a "value-free" undertaking and neither, in its most clear-sighted forms, did it wish to be. This is particularly evident in one of the ground-breaking studies of the 1960s, David Apter's *Politics of Modernization*.<sup>18</sup> Apter clearly takes "Western society" as his "model" or "standard," and having such a standard is for him inextricably bound up with normative judgment: "analysis begins with moral content," for "in political life, that which is significant can only be understood in moral terms."<sup>19</sup> Politics, in other words, is essentially concerned with questions of good and evil, of justice and injustice, and to understand that life accurately or scientifically, one must begin by studying what is of greatest importance to it. And Apter is perfectly forthright as regards the specific moral vision informing his studies: "The moral purpose of government is to maximize freedom."<sup>20</sup> He concludes his study as follows: "The future of democratic society will depend on its ability to find new and effective ways to secure personal identity through liberty and solidarity through knowledge. This has always been the basis of the democratic ideal. These are the ultimate standards by which we evaluate both ourselves and others."<sup>21</sup> Apter adopts the standard he does, not because it is his own or American or Western, but evidently because it is true, that is, because it delineates the truly good end or aim of politics good for human beings as such.<sup>22</sup> Apter is of course fully aware of the dangers of "ethnocentrism,"<sup>23</sup> and although he concedes that "it is unfair to judge societies from the peculiar standpoint of our

and James S. Coleman, *The Politics of the Developing Areas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), pp. 7, 22; Gabriel A. Almond, *Political Development: Essays in Heuristic Theory* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970), pp. 32ff. The seminal statement is Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. and trans. H.H. Gerth and C. Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958).

18. Apter, *Politics of Modernization*.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. vii, xiii-xiv.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 463; see also Apter's interesting autobiographical remarks in "Passing of Development Studies," pp. 26-71.

22. Apter's position is complicated or confused by his conviction that all ultimate ends ("consummatory values") are "non-rational in character," i.e., nothing more than commitments.

23. E.g., Apter, *Politics of Modernization*, pp. ix, 20.

own political forms," he argues that "we must nevertheless put their efforts in a universal moral cast; otherwise we would demean their significance. It is no service to the modernizing nations (or ourselves) to judge their policies purely on the basis of utility. Government is, after all, a reflection of the nobler as well as the mundane purposes for which people live in society."<sup>24</sup>

Even as *The Politics of Modernization* was setting a new standard for modernization scholarship, however, dissatisfaction was growing with the moral or "normative" study of comparative politics as seen to that point. This dissatisfaction had many causes—the imprecise and inexhaustive nature of the modern-traditional dichotomy, questions concerning the global nature of modernization<sup>25</sup>—but at the heart of it seems to have been the doubt, expressed or not, whether political science as science is constitutionally capable of making "value judgments." For the science of politics wishes to render the true, rational account of political things or to see political things as they truly are. It would seem, however, that political life at its most serious is concerned with nothing other than "value judgments," with questions of right and wrong or of competing moral claims. *Political* scientists are therefore compelled to study those claims, but as *scientists* they are haunted by the alleged insight into the fundamental irrationality or relativity of all moral judgments and hence by the awareness that such a study is impossible; they therefore lack the confidence in their analysis of politics that, say, their physicist colleagues enjoy in the study of motion.

Yet if comparative political science cannot speak of better and worse political communities, then neither can it speak of the simply best as the goal toward which developing communities should strive. Description rather than prescription must become its principal task. For comparative political science to act on the basis of the conviction that the fact-value distinction is true entails abdicating its role as helpmate to the underdeveloped and

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14; see also p. 14 n. 6.

25. Reinhard Bendix, "Tradition and Modernity Reconsidered," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 9 (1967):292-346; Joseph R. Gusfield, "Tradition and Modernity: Misplaced Polarities in the Study of Social Change," *American Journal of Sociology* 72 (1967): 351-62; and Rajni Kothari, "Tradition and Modernity Revisited," *Government and Opposition* 3 (1968): 273-93.

thus abandoning its original *raison d'être*. This momentous change in the self-understanding of comparative political science in fact took place in the course of the 1960s, one sign of which was the apparently slight or trivial change in emphasis from "modernization" to "development" studies.<sup>26</sup>

The seeds of this quiet revolution were sown at least as early as 1960 with the appearance of Almond and Coleman's *Politics of the Developing Areas*.<sup>27</sup> The pathbreaking studies included therein tried to "find concepts and categories appropriate for the comparison of political systems differing radically in scale, structure and culture"<sup>28</sup> or to discover (as another scholar later put it) "a number of functions which must be performed in *any* political system and then [to compare] systems in terms of the structures which perform those functions."<sup>29</sup> Thus the work attempted to delineate the features of the developed community or communities in abstraction from the specific form of polity involved (e.g., kingship, aristocracy, democracy) and without being limited to the modern varieties of states: "all the types of political structures which are to be found in the modern systems are to be found in the non-Western and primitive ones."<sup>30</sup>

The fully self-conscious break between modernization and development arguably came only with the publication, in 1965, of Samuel P. Huntington's important article, "Political Development and Political Decay."<sup>31</sup> According to Huntington, "it is useful to distinguish political development from modernization and to identify political development with the institutionalization of political organizations and procedures."<sup>32</sup> As Huntington summarized the point sometime later, the identification of modernization with development "limited too

26. Cf. Raymond Grew, "More on Modernization," *Journal of Social History* 14 (1980): 180ff.

27. Almond and Coleman, *Politics of the Developing Areas*.

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

29. Samuel P. Huntington, "The Change to Change: Modernization, Development, and Politics," *Comparative Politics* 3 (1971):299 (emphasis added).

30. Almond and Coleman, *Politics of the Developing Areas*, p. 11.

31. Samuel P. Huntington, "Political Development and Political Decay," *World Politics* 17 (1965): 386-430.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 386.

drastically the applicability of the concept of political development. . . . it was impossible to talk about the 'political development' of the Greek city-state or of the Roman Empire."<sup>33</sup> The refinement for which Huntington argued and which on its surface appears to be admirably broad-minded, had the practical effect of discouraging the hitherto crucial comparison of the *goodness* of Greek city-states, the Roman empire, modern commercial republics, and so on, relative to *the* standard of the simply good community. Previously, to speak of the modern nation as the goal toward which the rest should aim was to suggest that, however admirable premodern societies may be in other respects, they lacked political maturity and hence the goodness attending maturity. They were defective in the decisive respect. The shift to "development" permitted the political scientist to speak in gentler terms, if not of all kinds, at any rate of many more kinds of polities. Feudal aristocracies, vast empires, and liberal republics were now understood to be susceptible in principle of reaching a mature or "developed" condition, and, to repeat, no real comparison between or among the various peaks was carried out: "when we talk about different kinds of political systems, we are not arguing that one class of political system is 'better' than another. We are simply arguing that one political system differs from another . . . and that these differences are subject to measurement in the empirical sense of the term."<sup>34</sup>

In effect, then, the proponents of the shift from modernization to development argued that what was at the outset the most serious inquiry must be dropped. To a degree and for a time it was. The most pressing task appeared to be the discovery of the categories or characteristics by means of which all "developed" communities could be recognized: Almond and Powell,<sup>35</sup> for example, argued that differentiation, subsystem autonomy, and

33. Huntington, "The Change to Change," p. 301.

34. Almond and Powell, *Comparative Politics*, p. 215. It is true that the authors go on to recognize "ethical judgments" as "a second and very important question," but they suggest that a separate book would be needed to treat it. This procedure depends on the undefended presupposition that one can come to know what a given political community is without first taking seriously its moral character or that the essence of a community is its quantifiable structure rather than the avowed end or aim of those structures.

35. *Ibid.*

cultural secularization were among the most important indicators of development; Lucian Pye<sup>36</sup> suggested three somewhat different factors—individual equality, political capacity, and institutional and structural differentiation; and the Committee on Comparative Politics of the Social Science Research Council<sup>37</sup> delineated five “crises” that any developed polity would have to face: identity, legitimacy, penetration, participation, and distribution.<sup>38</sup>

As is suggested already by the inclusion of participation, equality, and secularization in the various schemata meant to identify a developed political community, it proved very difficult for political scientists to rid themselves of the desire not only to identify the simply good polity but to identify it with some version of the liberal democratic polity. This difficulty, to say nothing of others, eventually led Huntington, the very proponent of “development” in contrast to “modernization,” to wish to abandon development too on the grounds that it was in all likelihood “superfluous and dysfunctional.”<sup>39</sup> In particular, confusion remained as to whether development was a “descriptive concept or a teleological one”; however much it may have wished to be simply the former, it in fact remained the latter according to Huntington: the concept of political development “has served as a way for political scientists to say, in effect: ‘Hey, here are some things I consider valuable and desirable goals and important subjects to study.’”<sup>40</sup> In order finally to be rid of the “teleological preoccupations which underlay much of the work on political development,”<sup>41</sup> Huntington argued that one must shift one’s focus to “change”: “If . . . political scientists had . . . talked about political change . . . rather than political development . . . , they might have avoided many of the definitional and teleological

36. Lucien Pye, *Aspects of Political Development* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1966), pp. 31-48.

37. Leonard Binder et al., *Crises and Sequences in Political Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971).

38. Cf. R. T. Holt and J. E. Turner, “Crises and Sequences in Collective Development Theory,” *American Political Science Review* 64 (1975): 979-94; R. Sandbrook, “The ‘Crisis’ in Political Development Theory,” *Journal of Development Studies* 12 (1976): 165-85.

39. Huntington, “The Change to Change,” p. 303.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 304.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 314.

problems in which they found themselves."<sup>42</sup> Theories concerning "componential change, crisis change, and complex change" would "liberate" political science from "the teleological concerns with modernization and development."<sup>43</sup> The political scientist as scientist must therefore attempt to record as precisely as possible the brute fact of political change—that it occurs, when it occurs, for how long, to whom, and so on. All notion of change for better or worse within a nation's borders and among nations, however, would be strictly forbidden; the scientist who knows what he is doing does not know and therefore ought not speak about progress or decline, that is, about the things that are of greatest concern to the citizens and statesmen they study. The science of comparative politics understood as the science of change could therefore speak with confidence and staggering detail only about things of very little political interest.

### From "Change" Back to "Development"— Via "Dependency"

If we take our bearings by the original goal of comparative studies and thus do not apply to ourselves such restrictions concerning judgments of better and worse, it becomes manifest that the change from "modernization" to "change" was a decline in the relevance and weightiness of the science of comparative politics. And in fact the hoped-for exile of all "teleological preoccupations" was never fully carried out. It is true that a good part of the profession subsequently devoted itself to amassing data concerning "order" and "change"—allegedly value-neutral concepts—and simply ignored the difficult questions concerning the better, worse and hence the simply best community. But during this same period, a radically different approach to the study of development arose that was somehow more serious and satisfying and as a result became, from a radical fringe, the near-orthodoxy of the profession: the dependency school.<sup>44</sup>

42. *Ibid.*, p. 305.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 322.

44. Consider, e.g., Tony Smith, "Requiem or New Agenda for Third World Studies," *World Politics* 37 (1985): 532; Packenham, *Dependency Movement*, pp. 240ff.

Very briefly, this approach rejected root and branch the modern commercial republic in general and the United States in particular as the goal of modernization and replaced it with some version of a socialist democracy, be it Marxist or "neo-Marxist."<sup>45</sup> The dependency school was therefore perfectly willing to proclaim the values guiding its studies, and it overcame the difficulty of the claimed heterogeneity of facts and values on the basis of a Marxist theory of history. A very grave difficulty arose, however, as Marxism began to diminish in both political authority and theoretical force. By the end of the 1980s, Marxism may fairly be said to have been refuted by history, that is, by the one authority capable of making such judgments according to Marxism itself. And as the persuasive power of the dependency school and its numerous offspring or subdivisions began to sink as a result, the problem of the fact-value distinction quietly resurfaced.<sup>46</sup>

45. E.g., Andre Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America: Historical Studies of Chile and Brazil*, rev. and enlarged ed. (New York: Review Press, 1967); Osvaldo Sunkel, "National Development Policy and External Dependency in Latin America," *Journal of Development Studies* 6 (1969):23-48; Susanne J. Bodenheimer, "The Ideology of Developmentalism," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 15 (1970):95-137, and *The Ideology of Developmentalism: The American Paradigm--Surrogate for Latin American Studies* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1971); Theotonio Dos Santos, "The Structure of Dependence," *American Economic Review* 60 (1970):231-36; Aidan Foster-Carter, "Neo-Marxist Approaches to Development and Underdevelopment," in *Sociology and Development*, ed. Emanuel de Kadt and Gavin Williams (London: Tavistock, 1974); Raymond D. Duvall, "Dependence and Dependencia Theory: Notes Towards Precision of Concept and Argument," *International Organization* 32 (1978):51-78; Fernando Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, *Dependency and Development in Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979); and Peter B. Evans, *Dependent Development: The Alliance of Multinational, State and Local Capital in Brazil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979). For helpful overviews, see Higgott, *Political Development Theory*, pp. 5-10, 45-73; Smith, "Requiem or New Agenda for Third World Studies," p. 544ff.; and Packenham, *Dependency Movement*, esp. pp. 238ff.

46. For criticisms from different perspectives, see, e.g., Andre Gunder Frank, "Dependence is Dead, Long Live Dependence and the Class Struggle: A Reply to My Critics," *Latin American Perspectives* 1 (1974): 89ff.; S. Lall, "Is 'Dependence' a Useful Concept in Analysing Underdevelopment?" *World Development* 3 (1975):799-810; Colin Leys, "Underdevelopment and Dependency: Critical Notes," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 7 (1977):92-107; M. Godfrey, "Is Dependency Dead?" *Bulletin of the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex* 12 (1980); Tony Smith, "The Underdevelopment of Development Literature: The Case of Dependency Theory," *World Politics* 31 (1979):247-88; "The Logic of Dependency Theory Revisited," *International Organization* 35 (1981):755-761; and "Requiem or New Agenda for Third World Studies"; Daniel Levine, "Paradigm Lost: Dependence to Democracy," *World Politics* 40 (1988):377-394.

It should be noted that, in the 1980s, Huntington himself made a return to "development," but the tack he now took in studying it focused on the scientific analysis of "culture": "If the differences in the present and future development and goal achievement of East Asia, Latin America, and sub-Saharan Africa are to be found in the different values and beliefs of East Asians, Latin Americans, and Africans, then surely a primary place has to be accorded the comparative analysis of culture."<sup>47</sup> Indeed, culture and its impact on development "cry out" for a "systematic and empirical, comparative and longitudinal study by the scholars of political development."<sup>48</sup> To be sure, Huntington notes that culture is a "tricky" concept, in some sense a "residual category" to which the social scientist will appeal when all else fails.<sup>49</sup> But this is not its only difficulty. If Huntington means to suggest that each of the locales mentioned is headed for its own peak of development fueled by its own unique culture and that none of these peaks or cultures can be said to be superior to any other, his understanding of culture is fundamentally relativistic. Huntington clearly believes, however, that the study of the various cultures of the world—the science of culture, one may say—is *the* key to understanding the truth of things. But this means that the culture that understands the importance of culture and is therefore in principle open to the study of culture enjoys a privileged place among the world's cultures: many of the "cultures" studied do not even know that they are cultures or have one, just as they did not know that they may have had problems with integration, penetration, identity, and so on. But would one not be compelled to say of a foreign culture that took a step in the direction of the truly scientific culture (*e.g.*, by becoming aware of its culture as culture) that it had progressed? and of a culture that had taken indefinitely many such steps that it had approached or arrived at the truly developed condition, the true peak, as such the reasonable goal of politics? The science of culture proves to depend on the belief in the comprehensive culture as the true (*i.e.*, nonrelative or absolute) perspective from which to view and

47. Huntington, "Goals of Development," in *Understanding Political Development*, pp. 27-28.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

49. *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

understand the many cultures. And even if Huntington were to concede the superior status of the comprehensive culture, in the absence of a theoretical argument to support precisely this status claimed for Western, scientific culture, it is nothing more than an unscientific presupposition or prejudice.<sup>50</sup>

To sum up: political scientists of the 1950s and early-to-mid 1960s believed in the goodness of liberal democracy and wished to help others to attain that good, but they subsequently came to doubt or reject that belief as a (mere) value judgment. For the rest of the 1960s and well into the 1970s, some took refuge in the quantitative analysis of order and change but managed thereby only to avoid the issue. The subsequent rise of a more or less modified Marxism seemed to offer a way out of the impasse caused by both the necessity and apparent impossibility of making value judgments—until, that is, the theoretical ground of Marxism began to give way. The vitality of the dependency school's return to a more human or humane science of development proved to outlast that of the school itself, and in 1983 one scholar could write: "Attempts to minimize the normative component [of development theory] are no longer deemed feasible or acceptable in the 1980s as they were in the hey-day of attempts to create a value-free social science."<sup>51</sup>

It is of crucial importance to see, however, that the return to a "normative" or "postbehavioral" science was not accompanied by a satisfactory theoretical account or justification of the science in question, for to acknowledge the impossibility of a political science that ignores "normative" judgments is not yet to prove the possibility of a "normative" political science. The study of development cannot do without such moral judgments, but it remains uncertain whether it has earned the right to them. As a direct result, I suggest, the study of modernization and development has just been declared to be, if not dead, at any rate dying.

To understand more precisely what is at stake in the raising of the question of the possibility of making rational value judgments—and therefore also of the very possibility of

50. The same difficulty arises if one substitutes, as Huntington seems to have done, "civilization" for "culture": Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72 (1993):22-49.

51. Higgott, *Political Development Theory*, p. 8.

comparative political science—I propose to dispense for a moment with the contemporary debate and to reconsider briefly something the study of modernization more or less presupposed but which bears further reflection: modernity or the modern.

### **“Modernity” Reconsidered**

For the purpose at hand, it must suffice to say that the most important documents pertaining to the founding of *the* modern form of government, the liberal commercial republic, point first and foremost to the writings of a handful of philosophers or theorists as their intellectual wellspring. The modern republic understood itself to be above all an experiment or project on the part of certain philosophers. The social contract, popular sovereignty, modern representation, the separation of powers, the natural rights of man derived from reflection on the condition of solitary human beings in the state of nature—all of these ideas have their origin in the writings of (among others) Hobbes, Spinoza, Locke, and Montesquieu. Precisely the success of the moral and political revolution undertaken by these philosophers, however, makes it difficult for us to understand fully all the changes they wrought and by means of which they helped to shape the world that is our own. This difficulty is clearly important for the study of premodern or developing countries in the light of modern or developed ones, for unless we understand all that was achieved by the philosophic politics of the moderns, we cannot understand adequately the decisive differences between the two worlds.

To be sure, many of the manifestations of the modern undertaking have been recognized and subjected to impressive scrutiny: the growth of technology and the human mastery of the environment, economic prosperity and the increased distribution of wealth, freedom of speech and the press, the trend toward universal enfranchisement, and so on. Given the apparent impasse into which contemporary development theory has fallen, however, it is at least plausible that, important as these considerations undoubtedly are, they are but the spokes radiating from a center that has been unduly neglected and in many cases simply ignored; it is surely too imprecise to say that modernization or development aims essentially at “expanding choice,” understood as “the range

of articulated alternatives available to individuals and collectivities," and to do so by means of the "twin processes of commercialization and industrialization."<sup>52</sup> I submit, rather, as a tentative and heuristic hypothesis, that the center of the modern project was the subordination of the religious to the political in such a way as to permit or require politics to look to a scientific and hence humanly accessible account of the manifest or visible world in contrast to all appeals to privileged knowledge of an invisible one. I suggest, in other words, that the inquiry into modernization is too imprecise if one fails to see that its core was the effort to "liberalize" political life in the sense of divorcing from it the concern with religious belief. In what follows, I wish simply to arouse curiosity about this neglected aspect of modernization and thereby to foster further inquiry into it.

To begin, then, to gain something of a more balanced picture of modern politics, it is helpful to cast a glance as it were behind modernity to the most impressive statements of premodern politics. Chief among these is Aristotle's *Politics*, the classic exposition of premodern political science that was as such the obstacle Thomas Hobbes, for one, still had to overcome.<sup>53</sup>

According to Aristotle, every community or partnership aims at some good, but the partnership that aims at the most authoritative good is itself the most authoritative partnership and surpasses all others. This most authoritative community or partnership is "the political community."<sup>54</sup> The political community, that is, may come together for the sake of mere life, for the provision of the daily necessities and mutual protection, but it continues or persists "for the sake of the good life," for the sake of "living well" and "nobly." Thus when Aristotle turns to delineate his "best regime," he must first take up the question of what the best way of life is, for the best government will necessarily have as its goal the promotion of that life.<sup>55</sup> To be sure, Aristotle was aware of a much more circumscribed conception of politics, if only as a theoretical possibility, but he rejected that possibility as radically defective:

52. Apter, *Rethinking Development*, pp. 16, 89.

53. E.g., Hobbes *Leviathan*, ed. C. B. Macpherson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), pp. 687, 697-700.

54. Aristotle *Politics* 1252a1-7. Translations from the Greek are my own.

55. *Politics* VII.1-3.

It is clear, then, that the city is not a partnership in location, for the sake of not committing injustice against one another and for mutual exchange. All of these things must be present, if in fact there is to be a city, and yet when quite all of these things are present there is not yet a city. . . . Living well, then, is the end of the city, and these [other things] are for the sake of that. The city is a partnership made up of families and villages in a complete and self-sufficient life. This, as we say, is living happily and nobly. One must set it down, then, that the political community exists for the sake of noble deeds, but not for the sake of simply living together.<sup>56</sup>

Aristotle's *Politics* is thus helpful in bringing out the comprehensiveness of premodern political life, the very great claims that it made, its overriding ambition not only to know but indeed to strive after the good life for a human being. Because classical politics at least attempted to shape and elevate the whole of human life, and because human life could not be conceived of except as aiming ultimately at happiness and "noble actions," classical politics of necessity had at its core such admittedly difficult questions as the character and status of nobility and happiness.<sup>57</sup> These very questions, in turn, could not be answered without at the same time taking some stance toward questions of the cosmos or the whole, for example, whether it is created or uncreated, eternal or sempiternal, and, above all, whether there is present in it god or gods. Even (or precisely) the sober and thoroughly "scientific" Aristotle is compelled to speak, in the course of his discussion of the best way of life, of "the god",<sup>58</sup> in formulating an answer to the question of the best way of life at which the community should aim, one cannot but think eventually of one's proper place in the whole and therefore also of "the divine"—"whatever it is that keeps this All together."<sup>59</sup> Accordingly, Aristotle puts the priests or those who tend to the gods "first" in his enumeration of the elements necessary to the best regime.<sup>60</sup>

56. *Politics* 1280b39-1281a4.

57. See again Almond and Powell, *Comparative Politics*, pp. 13, 213-15.

58. *Politics* 1323b23 and 1325b28-32.

59. *Politics* 1326a32-33.

60. *Politics* 1328b11-13. More precisely, Aristotle says that the priests are "fifth and first," an ambiguity that captures Aristotle's recognition of the necessity of the care of the divine to healthy politics, but at the same time his desire to limit the influence of the divine, i.e., the priests. This may be said to be the limit of Aristotle's attempt at political enlightenment. For similar indications of the importance of the belief in gods to a healthy politics, consider Plato *Laws* 716a-c, as well as the beginning of Book VIII and Book X as a whole.

With this much as a background sketch, let me turn to consider the theoreticians of the modern undertaking. While it is true that Locke (for example) maintains, every bit as much as Aristotle would, that the "public good is the rule and measure of all law-making," and that "If a thing be not useful to the commonwealth, though it be never so indifferent, it may not presently be established by law,"<sup>61</sup> Locke's understanding of the public good is radically new: "The *commonwealth* seems to me to be a society of men constituted only for the procuring, preserving, and advancing of their own *civil interests*," the latter being defined in turn as "life, liberty, health, and indolency of body; and the possession of outward things, such as money, lands, houses, furniture, and the like."<sup>62</sup> It is therefore "the duty of the civil magistrate, by the impartial execution of equal laws, to secure . . . the just possession of these things belonging to *this life*."<sup>63</sup> Since "the whole jurisdiction of the magistrate reaches only to these concerns," it "neither can nor ought in any manner . . . be extended to the salvation of souls."<sup>64</sup>

Thus the political community was no longer self-consciously to strive after excellence of soul or the good life but to secure instead only those most fundamental conditions necessary to the preservation of the "life, liberty, or estate of any man."<sup>65</sup> For "happiness" is, if not simply illusory, at any rate so manifestly controversial and individual a condition that the civil authority as such cannot hope to secure it for all or even for any. Government must rather permit each to determine and then to pursue happiness as he or she sees fit, a pursuit limited only by the comparatively few demands of civil stability. In order to redefine politics in this way, however, it proved necessary to confront the question with which the classical philosophers too grappled of the relation between the belief in the divine and politics, as Locke states with perfect frankness: "I esteem it *above all things* necessary

61. John Locke, *John Locke On Toleration and the Unity of God* [critical edition of Locke's *Letter on Toleration*], ed. Mario Montuori (Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben, 1983), p. 59.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 15 (emphasis in the original).

63. *Ibid.*, p. 17 (emphasis added).

64. *Ibid.*, p. 17; cf. e.g., Plato *Laws* 724b.

65. Locke, *John Locke On Toleration*, p. 59.

to distinguish exactly the business of civil government from that of religion, and to settle the just bound that lie between the one and the other."<sup>66</sup>

This new understanding was so foreign to political life as previously known that each of the philosophers of the modern project devoted a good part of his writings to the discussion of the relation between religion and politics with a view to preparing, as each saw fit, the specifically modern orientation. Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*, for example, is of course preceded by a first treatise, and this latter proves to be nothing other than an extended exercise in Biblical criticism (not to mention his *Reasonableness of Christianity*, and *Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul*). Similarly, fully one half of Hobbes's *Leviathan* is devoted to Christianity and the problem of Christian politics, and the very title of Spinoza's greatest political writing bears witness to the overriding concern of the liberal philosophers: *The Theologico-Political Treatise*. To many students of political thought today, the theological sections of these otherwise political and familiar writings are, if not simply unintelligible, at any rate mere relics of a long-since settled quarrel. The thinkers in question knew more clearly than we now do, however, that the success of modern politics depends in the first place on shielding or liberating politics from the sway of religious authority; only then can human beings be free to order their collective lives by means of autonomous reason, our "only Star and compass," without deference to supra-rational claims.<sup>67</sup> The purely human community, conceived, founded and governed by human beings in the light of this-worldly "reflection and choice," was a radically new undertaking whose success was still very much in doubt even at the time of the American founding.<sup>68</sup> The modern philosophers indicated bear witness, then, to the centrality of the question of the belief in the divine to political life and thought, for while arguing that religion can and must be either subordinated to or eliminated from political life properly understood, they thereby grant the political importance of religious belief as such.<sup>69</sup>

66. *Ibid.*, p. 15 (emphasis added).

67. Locke, *First Treatise* § 58.

68. Consider *Federalist*, No. 1.

69. Consider the following statement of Karl Marx, made comparatively late in the development in question: "the criticism of religion is the premise of all criticism. [...] The criticism of religion disillusion man so that he will think, act,

Generally speaking, the philosophers of the modern liberal project attempted to forge this new freedom for political life in one of two ways. The first, pursued with somewhat different means by Hobbes, Spinoza, and Rousseau, was to place religion under the control of politics in the guise of an established "civil religion." This strategy, which enjoyed the advantage of appearing to continue the traditional arrangement, entails for Hobbes, among other things, the following:

The Laws of God therefore are none but the Laws of Nature, whereof the principall is, that we should not violate our Faith, that is, a commandment to obey our Civill Sovereigns, which wee constituted over us, by mutual pact one with another. And this Law of God, that commandeth Obedience to the Law Civill, commandeth by consequence Obedience to all the Precepts of the Bible, which . . . is there onely Law, where the Civill Sovereign hath made it so; and in other places but Counsell; which a man at his own perill, may without injustice refuse to obey.<sup>70</sup>

According to Rousseau in his *Social Contract*, "Of all Christian authors, the philosopher Hobbes is the only one who correctly saw the evil and the remedy, who dared to propose the reunification of the two heads of the eagle, and the complete return to political unity, without which no State or government will ever be well constituted." For when Jesus came to "establish a spiritual kingdom on earth," he thereby separated the "theological system from the political system"; this in turn "brought about the end of the unity of the State, and caused the internal divisions that have never ceased to stir up Christian peoples." While accepting Hobbes's daring solution or proposal, however, Rousseau called for a civil religion that is still more "liberal" than what the *Leviathan* prescribes:

and fashion his reality as a man who has lost his illusions and regained his reason; so that he will revolve around himself as his own true sun. Religion is only the illusory sun about which man revolves so long as he does not revolve about himself. [ . . . ] The immediate task of philosophy . . . is to unmask human self-alienation in its *secular form* now that it has been unmasked in its *sacred form*. Thus the criticism of heaven is transformed into the criticism of the earth, the criticism of religion into the criticism of law" (in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker, 2nd ed. [New York: Norton, 1978], pp. 53-54 [emphasis in the original]).

70. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chap. 43.

The right that the social compact gives the sovereign over the subjects does not exceed . . . the limits of public utility. The subjects, therefore, do not have to account for their opinions to the sovereign, except insofar as these opinions matter to the community. Now it matters greatly to the State that each citizen have a religion that causes him to love his duties; but the dogmas of that religion are of no interest either to the State or to its members; except insofar as these dogmas relate to morality, and to the duties that anyone who professes it is obliged to fulfill toward others. Everyone can have whatever opinions he pleases beyond that.<sup>71</sup>

The second path leading to the liberalization of politics, followed by Montesquieu in his *Spirit of the Laws*, for example, was to separate from public life the belief in god or gods and to relegate it to an unpolitical, private "sphere." In the final analysis, this restructuring of political life required a thoroughgoing depreciation of the very concern for piety and knowledge of God; it required the attempt to "detach religion from the soul" by "favor, by the commodities of life, by the hope of fortune; not by what draws attention to it, but by what makes one forget it"—in short, by the pursuit of commerce and the worldly comforts provided by it, human beings being made to "preserve, feed and clothe themselves, and to do all the things of society."<sup>72</sup> One sees the fruition of Montesquieu's approach in the following remark of Thomas Jefferson: "it does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty gods or no god. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg."<sup>73</sup>

71. Rousseau, *Du Contrat Social*, IV. viii.

72. Montesquieu, *De L'esprit des Loix*, XXV. 12; XXIV. 11.

73. Thomas Jefferson, "Notes on the State of Virginia," in *Writings* (Library of America, 1984), p. 285. For Montesquieu's influence on the American founding, see, e.g., *Federalist*, Nos. 9 and 78; and Thomas L. Pangle, *Montesquieu's Philosophy of Liberalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), pp. 4-10; and *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 67-68, 89-94. It is instructive to compare Jefferson's statement with the judgment of the great medieval jurist and scholar, Moses Maimonides, himself an Aristotelian in matters pertaining to the "sublunary" world. Maimonides likens "all human individuals with no doctrinal belief, neither one based on speculation nor one that accepts the authority of tradition" to "irrational animals." He explains: "To my mind they do not have the rank of men, but have among the beings a rank lower than the rank of man but higher than the rank of the apes. For they have the external shape and lineaments of a man and a faculty of discernment that is superior to that of the apes" (Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963], pp. 618-19).

I suggest, then, that the premodern or "undeveloped" nations around the globe all share some version of the nonliberal understanding of the relation between politics and the belief in the divine. I submit, as a proposition to be subjected to empirical scrutiny, that however great may be the very real differences among them, all such communities are not marked by liberalism's reworking of the public role customarily assigned to religion and would at least at first resist any effort in this direction. Thus it is, perhaps, that modernization in the third world never really caught on or did so only piecemeal, for the single-minded pursuit of technology, commercial enterprise, high finance, and so on, needed to "modernize" presupposes the prior acceptance of the goodness—including the morality—of such pursuit; it presupposes that the government and therefore the people influenced by it are right to turn their attentions to other and decidedly more mundane concerns than were previously deemed worthwhile or permissible.

### Religion in Contemporary Development Studies

It will be objected immediately that development studies have for some time been aware of the importance of religion in developing nations, as is confirmed by the considerations of "secularization" in developmental typologies and by the fact that religion is one of the elements in the "modern-traditional" dichotomy. This objection has some merit, but as one of the leading scholars of religion and political development has conceded, "the religious component of tradition (a very large part of the whole) has received relatively little attention." Indeed, "various factors, including the secularist assumptions of contemporary Western culture, have tended to relegate this problem to low priority."<sup>74</sup> And twenty years after this remark was made, not much seems to have changed: "there has been little general academic awareness of the importance of religion in most studies of politics in the Third World."<sup>75</sup>

74. Donald E. Smith, *Religion and Political Modernization* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 3.

75. Jeff Haynes, *Religion in Third World Politics* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1994), p. 1.

For so long as comparative political science enjoyed self-confidence in its method, the belief in God or gods was reduced to and explained away as the naive attempt to satisfy individual or collective needs, for example, "the necessity of accepting death, . . . of establishing an individual personality, and . . . of identifying objectives."<sup>76</sup> The scientist thus assumed that the claims raised by the believers were in need of such reduction because false. Today, one may find that political scientists are no longer so certain that their science is *the way* of looking at the world and that they therefore wish to be open to other, alternative ways (including nonrational and even antirational ways). The claims of a shaman, for example, must be seen as one legitimate way of understanding reality. This "openness" is a still less satisfactory approach to the world than the more traditional, unabashedly scientific one, for not only does it deny to political science its implicit claim to understand the world, it does not really do justice to the shaman's self-understanding: magic is not merely one among many ways of acting in the world according to the shaman but rather *the way*, the true way. The up-to-date political scientists are thus caught between a science they no longer quite believe in and a faith they do not quite share.

Part of the difficulty with the treatment of religion in contemporary comparative studies is its extremely abstract character. One component of the "secularization process," for example, is said to be the "emergence of a pragmatic, empirical orientation," another the "movement from diffuseness to specificity of orientation."<sup>77</sup> So vague or imprecise is the social scientific description of religion that it sometimes lumps religion together with explicitly atheistic ideologies: "The distinct set of ideologically bound parties and interest groups—Catholic, Communist, Socialist."<sup>78</sup> Similarly, another scholar could speak of the "political religion of the U.S.S.R." because he defined religion as that force in a society responsible for positing the "ultimate commitments that become personal ends for individuals and cultural ends for societies," it being understood that all such commitments or ends are "nonrational in character."<sup>79</sup> Marx is therefore as much a prophet as Moses because each posited

76. Apter, *Politics of Modernization*, p. 268.

77. Almond and Powell, *Comparative Politics*, p. 58.

78. *Ibid.*, p. 62 and context.

79. Apter, *Politics of Modernization*, pp. 267, 270.

nonrational ends to which individuals or nations might "commit" themselves.

Comparative political science deals with religion in this manner as a result of its method, taken over from the leading theoreticians of sociology and, ultimately, from Max Weber.<sup>80</sup> In order to understand any political phenomenon, it is held to be necessary to develop a model or paradigm to encompass it.<sup>81</sup> Making use of various criteria as its X and Y axes, then, the scientist creates a grid describing "ideal types" meant to include all relevant possibilities. One such grid aimed at clarifying the relation between religion and politics includes "consummatory (sacred) values" in contrast to "instrumental (secular) values" on the one hand and "hierarchical" in contrast to "pyramidal" arrangements on the other.<sup>82</sup> The conjunction of a hierarchical state with consummatory values is called a "sacred-collectivity" of which no example can be given because it is a "pure normative model"; the conjunction of pyramidal rule with consummatory values, though "difficult to label," includes theocracies as a "subtype." But what does one really learn about a given theocracy by applying to it the additional labels "pyramidal" and "consummatory"? According to the self-understanding of present-day Iran, for example, it is an Islamic nation ruled in accord with the one true law. Does the student of comparative politics understand that nation better by translating these claims into jargon, or does the act of translation replace the attempt to understand those claims and above all to grapple with their

80. See, e.g., Talcott Parsons, *The Social System* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1951), pp. 370, 374, 378, 402; Smith, *Religion and Political Modernization*, p. 3; and Winston Davis, "Religion and Development: Weber and the East Asian Experience," in *Understanding Political Development*, ed. Myron Weiner and Samuel P. Huntington, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1987), pp. 223ff.

81. Cf. Albert O. Hirschman, "The Search for Paradigms as a Hindrance to Understanding," *World Politics* 22 (1970):329-43; and Smith, "Requiem or New Agenda for Third World Studies," p. 535ff.

82. Apter, *Politics of Modernization*, p. 24. Another is suggested by Donald E. Smith (*Religion and Political Development* [Boston: Little, Brown, 1970] and *Religion and Political Modernization*, pp. 3-28) according to which historical and ahistorical religions form one axis of the grid, organic versus church structures the other: Hinduism is an ahistorical organic religion; Buddhism an ahistorical, church-structured religion; Islam an historical organic faith; and Catholicism a church-based, historical religion.

truth? Another schema attempts to describe the modern project in the light of five rather amorphous categories of secularization (polity-separation; polity-expansion; political-culture; political-process; polity-dominance), and the "classic model of secularization" based thereon proves to describe accurately only one of the numerous countries treated in the volume in question: "in other cases the historical pattern was quite different."<sup>83</sup>

As these examples suggest, the scientific study of religion is primarily concerned with the delineation of ideal types that as such are not descriptions of reality. All to the contrary, they are "artificial constructs which are not even meant to correspond to the intrinsic articulation of social reality and which, in addition, are meant to be of a strictly ephemeral character."<sup>84</sup> There is a peculiar consequence of this procedure: the theory of development assumes the deficiency of divine politics and the goodness of increased secularization but does so on the basis of a science that ultimately relies at least as much on an appeal to an otherworldly reality as do the religions it studies.

### Post-Modernization?

Recently, a last effort to save development studies has arisen in a most remarkable form. One of the leading theorists of development, present at its infancy, has had recourse to what one may loosely call postmodernism to shore up the foundations of his field. Leonard Binder's *Islamic Liberalism: A Critique of Development Ideologies*<sup>85</sup> combines profound knowledge of and concern for development studies with a philosophic seriousness that is, so far as I am aware, unmatched in the field. Indeed, Binder sees clearly the problem inherent in the attempt to understand, by means of modern political science, a foreign community whose self-understanding points not to science but to divine law; he understands, in other words, that the justification of science depends ultimately on the confrontation between reason

83. Smith, *Religion and Political Modernization*, pp 8-10.

84. Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 78.

85. Leonard Binder, *Islamic Liberalism: A Critique of Development Ideologies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

and revelation. I cannot hope to do more than draw attention to those aspects of Binder's rich and complex study that bear most directly on my theme.

Binder is concerned to foster a "dialogue or conversation" between the liberal West and the Islamic Middle East—in sharp contrast to what he calls, following Michel Foucault, a confrontation between two "hegemonic" and incompatible "discursive formations."<sup>86</sup> This concern stems from his belief that "by engaging in rational discourse with those whose consciousness has been shaped by Islamic culture it is possible to enhance the prospects for political liberalism in that region and others where it is not indigenous."<sup>87</sup>

Binder subsequently makes clear, however, the very great obstacles facing any attempt at genuine dialogue or conversation:

The possibilities of a benign dialogue between Islam and the West are limited even for the believers among us, because the gap in understanding is really constituted by the fact that ours is an unbelieving society, as Muslims clearly perceive, while theirs is a believing society. . . . The central question [characteristic of Western discourse] is "How is it possible to believe, given man's finite knowledge?" or "How is it possible to believe, given man's finite nature and the consequences thereof for what he can know?" Most Muslims think these questions are foolish, and that they are as much expressions of unbelief as any skepticism.<sup>88</sup>

The wariness of the Muslim interlocutor is not the only difficulty, however, nor perhaps even the greatest one. For as a result of the influence of "pragmatism, epistemological behaviorism, and ontological existentialism," the West itself is no longer "convinced that its moral superiority [rests] upon the confluence of rational discourse and its own political practice."<sup>89</sup> According to Binder, "Husserl's last desperate effort to reestablish the idealist tradition of absolute knowledge was soon overwhelmed by the existential phenomenology of his most famous student, Martin Heidegger."<sup>90</sup> In this "post-Kantian" world, then, precisely the "rational

86. *Ibid.*, p. 6 (emphasis in the original).

87. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

88. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

89. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

90. *Ibid.*, p. 87; see also p. 370 n. 4.

discourse" of liberalism proves to be nothing other than a "discursive formation," a "hegemonic" consensus resting not on reason but on resolute commitment or an act of the will. Consider: "This book is *primarily* concerned with the emergence of a liberal Islamic *discursive formation* which poses a *challenge* to the existing scripturalist and fundamentalist alternatives"; "The resurgence of Islam is both a threat and a promise, so the task of the moment is to *appropriate* religion as a part of the new bourgeois ideology before it is appropriated by some rival social force."<sup>91</sup>

The conversation or dialogue we are led to expect at the outset now seems impossible, for the one side is hostile to rational argument and the other no longer has any rational argument to make. How then is the "appropriation" in question to be effected? What Binder ultimately calls for is the adoption of a sophisticated hermeneutics, what he calls "the hermeneutic of authenticity," that is to mold the very self-understanding of the Muslim citizen:

Authenticity is the life-choice which the preferred elements of the tradition demand under present circumstances in order that they be reaffirmed as real, and appropriated as aspects of the being of the Muslim *Dasein*. That is the theory, but after all is said much remains to be done. The tradition must still be defined in terms of the present, and a course of action must be determined. It is necessary to formulate a project.<sup>92</sup>

One must wonder, however, what will remain of Islam once this search for "authenticity" has taken root. Such a search in the Islamic context requires "above all" that "the past [be] taken as real, ontically true, as an aspect of the being of Muslims by virtue of an understanding event that is evidently to be an act founded upon a living experience of the Islamic tradition."<sup>93</sup> Among such "understanding events" are the crossing of the Suez canal in 1973, the overthrow of the Shah in 1979, and the battle of Karameh in 1968.<sup>94</sup> When seen in the light of such events, "Islam may be

91. *Ibid.*, pp. 10 and 17 (emphasis added).

92. *Ibid.*, p. 295.

93. *Ibid.*, pp. 294-95.

94. *Ibid.*, p. 293.

taken as ontically true or historically valid by believers and nonbelievers alike."<sup>95</sup> Binder refrains from mentioning in this context *the* "understanding event" that Muslims (were they to speak in the language of modern philosophy) would surely claim to be "ontically true." In the best case, then, the hermeneutics of authenticity will result in a quiet skirting of the fundamental issue rather than a resolution of it.

It would seem that *Islamic Liberalism* wishes to appeal to the now out-dated prejudice in favor of rationality on the part of liberal intellectuals, above all in the Middle East, in order to foster what appears to be a "benign" conversation but which in fact will, perhaps unbeknownst to the liberal interlocutor, seek to dominate the illiberal "hegemonic" consensus there. At all events, the argument of *Islamic Liberalism* does not in fact leave room for a genuine *conversation* between reason and faith, and no *rational* defense of liberalism is possible on the basis of it. For once the rationalism or science originally underlying liberal politics is seen as nothing more than a discursive formation in no way grounded in "absolute knowledge," it becomes another manifestation of faith, one that has the decisive disadvantage of being unable to appeal to the revealed law of the one true God; the old quarrel between reason and revelation is thus replaced by a new contest between two faiths, one divine, the other mundane. This is a problem, not indeed for faith in the divine, but for science insofar as it wishes to have as its basis knowledge and not belief. The decision to look at the world scientifically becomes just another value judgment as indefensible on rational grounds as any other such judgment. In this light, science and therefore political science come to sight as radically questionable activities.

### A Preliminary Prescription and Conclusion

I have argued that the decline of political development studies is due to the effects of the "fact-value distinction," that is, to the continuing and debilitating uncertainty whether the political scientist as such can *know* that one community is better than any other and hence whether it is reasonable to speak of

95. *Ibid.*, p. 294.

"development" at all. And chief among the "values" thus neglected by the political scientist are those pertaining to belief in God or gods. According to the principal architects of political life in the West, however, the central fact distinguishing the modern from the premodern, the rational from the irrational, and indeed good politics from bad, is the subordinate role the modern political community will assign religion. Having become so accustomed at home to the separation of church and state as the "natural" relation between politics and the divine, we Western liberals have tended to overlook religion as a vital concern of political life abroad; we have therefore also tended to exclude it from our political science. In addition, contemporary development studies have underestimated the *theoretical* problem religion or belief in the divine poses to science. For if in fact "science" is nothing other than a "value" that as such can be accepted or rejected at will, there is no principled or scientific reason why one cannot reject science altogether in favor of (what is said to be) a divinely based law code, for example. In brief: because contemporary social science has not examined doggedly enough the question of the very possibility of the scientific manner of looking at the world, that science—and with it contemporary development theory—has degenerated into a quasi-religion whose principal article of faith is the possibility of science and scientific politics.

Surely the first step in correcting this grave deficiency is to see it as such, and no one who has done so could expect any easy remedies. As for the recent ventures into postmodernism,<sup>96</sup> it is doubtful whether we will be able to discover an adequate foundation for political science by having recourse to a philosophy the fundamental tenet of which is the unflinching awareness of the absence of all foundations. These more sophisticated attempts to refound development studies are genuinely beneficial, however, in that they help to bring to light the philosophic issues at stake. They thus contribute to a redirection of the debate from an endless series of *ad hoc* models and paradigms to genuinely philosophic questions that deserve the attention of the political scientist. Such attempts, in other words, have restored the original

96. For a comparable effort by another of the founders of political development studies, see Apter, *Rethinking Development*, chaps. 1 and 10. Cf. Smith "Requiem or New Agenda for Third World Studies," p. 560.

link between comparative politics and political theory, the severing of which resulted in a "real intellectual deterioration in this field of study."<sup>97</sup>

One strategy the student of comparative politics might pursue is the serious return to the philosophic origins of modern politics, beginning from (though not limited to) the founders of liberalism previously mentioned. One could thus come to see *for oneself* the precise nature of the arguments originally adduced in behalf of the modern world, many of whose features we still admire but whose universal rational supports we have come to doubt. This return to the genuine roots of modern liberal politics holds out the possibility of restoring at least some version of the liberal republic to its original place as the true and reasonable goal of political progress and would in turn make possible a revival, not merely of the study of development, but of that of modernization proper.

A philosophic return to the roots of liberalism would also act as a kind of inoculation against the extreme hopes, and therewith the extreme disappointments, that attended the first rise of modernization studies. For despite their recognition of the universality of the principles supporting liberalism, neither Montesquieu nor Rousseau, for example, permitted himself to believe that liberalism could be realized universally. Brute nature (e.g., climate) may limit what can reasonably be done in any given case.<sup>98</sup> Above all, the philosophers of liberalism were keenly aware of the need *as political scientists* to respond to the claims of the pious to know the true world, and each attempted to do so. Here again, it is only by reading or re-reading those "theological" portions of the relevant texts that one can know for oneself how liberalism originally understood its own foundation.

Although the overriding purpose of these remarks is to discern the theoretical or philosophic cause of the crisis in political development studies, let me now make a couple of broad practical suggestions as a contribution to its reinvigoration. First and most simply, the study of development today should begin to pay much more attention than is usually done to religion or faith in

97. Almond and Powell, *Comparative Politics*, p. 4.

98. See Montesquieu, *De L'esprit des Lois*, XIV-XIX; Rousseau, *Du Contrat Social*, III. viii, beg.

the divine when studying non-Western communities; it should be more alive to the possibility, at least, that some concern with the divine animates the whole of life there and hence also political life. Here we have some reason for optimism, in part because massive political events have recently forced the interested observer to note the importance of religious concerns abroad (e.g., the revolution in Iran, the civil war in Afghanistan, the rise of the FIS in Algeria), in part because the increasing availability of texts originating from the "Third World" has helped to challenge our often provincial theoretical framework.<sup>99</sup> Yet even a new openness to the political importance of religion will probably come to nothing if the usual approach to religious questions remains. I suggest that the social scientist begin by paying closer attention to the *self-understanding* of the nation or community in question. For it is only by listening to a community's own articulation of its fundamental concerns that scientists can avoid imposing upon their object of study their own categories, presuppositions, and prejudices—among them that, to repeat, religion is necessarily a "private" matter not properly the concern of politics, let alone of political science. At least to begin with, the social scientist must allow a given community to present itself fully as what it is or wishes to be, the hierarchy of its concerns and goals intact, its chosen terms of expression respected. As goes without saying, these brief remarks do not by themselves constitute a new agenda, but it is hoped that they indicate something of the spirit in which empirical studies might profitably be carried out.

At all events, the inquiry into the causes of the malaise of development theory provides a unique opportunity for the student of political theory to reconsider the nature and possibility of science today. Precisely because the divinely based politics of the nonliberal world—the world that is of greatest concern to development theory—offers the most serious challenge to the scientific orientation and the modern politics based thereon, a careful reconsideration of that politics, one that pays close attention to the belief animating its core, would permit the contemporary social scientist to begin to reconsider the deeper question of the very possibility of science.

99. See, e.g., the discussion of Sayyid Qutb and Tariq Al-Bishri in Binder, *Islamic Liberalism*, pp. 170-205, 246-92.