
REVIEW ESSAYS

SMALL GAINS FOR BIG THEORIES: Recent Work on Development

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DINAMICA DE LA CRISIS GLOBAL. By SAMIR AMIN, GIOVANNI ARRIGHI, ANDRE GUNDER FRANK, and IMMANUEL WALLERSTEIN. (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno, 1983. Pp. 256.)

THEORIES OF DEVELOPMENT: MODE OF PRODUCTION OR DEPENDENCY? Edited by RONALD H. CHILCOTE and DALE E. JOHNSON. (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1983. Pp. 256. \$25.00 cloth, \$12.50 paper.)

NORTH/SOUTH RELATIONS: STUDIES OF DEPENDENCY REVERSAL. Edited by CHARLES F. DORAN, GEORGE MODELSKI, and CAL CLARK. (New York: Praeger, 1983. Pp. 257. \$27.95.)

THE STATE AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT IN SPANISH AMERICA: THE POLITICAL ROOTS OF DEPENDENCY IN PERU AND ARGENTINA. By DOUGLAS FRIEDMAN. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1984. Pp. 236. \$22.50.)

MERCADO INTERNO Y ECONOMIA COLONIAL. By JUAN CARLOS GARAVALLIA. (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1983. Pp. 507.)

CULTURA Y MODERNIZACION EN AMERICA LATINA: ENSAYO SOCIOLOGICO ACERCA DE LA CRISIS DEL DESARROLLISMO Y DE SU SUPERACION. By PEDRO MORANDE. (Santiago, Chile: Instituto de Sociología de la Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, 1984. Pp. 181.)

FROM DEPENDENCY TO DEVELOPMENT: STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME UNDERDEVELOPMENT AND INEQUALITY. Edited by HERALDO MUÑOZ. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1981. Pp. 336. \$28.50 cloth, \$12.50 paper.)

UNFINISHED AGENDA: THE DYNAMICS OF MODERNIZATION IN DEVELOPING NATIONS. By MANNING NASH. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1984. Pp. 148. \$26.50.)

DYNAMICS OF WORLD DEVELOPMENT. VOL. 4: POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE WORLD-SYSTEM ANNUALS. Edited by RICHARD RUBINSON. (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1981. Pp. 288. \$22.50 cloth, \$9.95 paper.)

DEPENDENCY THEORY: A CRITICAL REASSESSMENT. Edited by DUDLEY SEERS. (London: Frances Pinter Publishers, 1981. Pp. 211. \$30.00 cloth, \$10.50 paper.)

THE THREE WORLDS: CULTURE AND WORLD DEVELOPMENT. By PETER WORSLEY. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984. Pp. 409. \$28.00 cloth, \$12.95 paper.)

Jorge Luis Borges once remarked, "We have stopped believing in progress. What progress that is!" So it is in our collective effort to fashion a theory of development. Progress is not trusted in the sense of a growing consensus about the explanation for economic growth and social well-being. The big theories—modernization, dependency, world systems—wax and wane according to rhythms that fail the standards of either cumulative self-correction or successively unique, but efficient, scientific revolutions. Paradigms lost, such as modernization, are back and looking fit. Theories of dependency, scolded for a decade and presumably superseded, are now appreciatively reassessed. Progress is boring; theoretical counterpoint is animating new research. What progress that is.

The volumes under review provide a fair representation of theory and research mainly, but not exclusively, on Latin America in the early 1980s. The set may be examined usefully from two standpoints. It provides, first, a portrait of theoretical arguments within and across live traditions. Second, it reveals major themes in research, especially when examined in the context of some exemplary monographs of the same period. Judgments arising from these two perspectives suggest that today's research on Latin American development is more deft precisely for its theoretical understatement.

Three tendencies characterize development theory of late, each with a long pedigree and a continent aspect reflecting past controversies. The first is a renewed emphasis on culture that appears in both renovated modernization and mellowed Marxist theories. Coming from once-opposed camps, old pros such as Manning Nash and Peter

Worsley use cultural mediation, respectively, to salvage historical modernization “from the spectral dance of bloodless categories sometimes characterizing theory in social sciences” (*Unfinished Agenda*, p. viii) and to resocialize brittle economic illusions of underdevelopment. Affinities between these reformulations include a willingness to quit venerated simplifications, to wrestle with social divisions that go beyond class, and to contend with the slippery issue of how encompassing cultures may also figure in a set of influences on the development process.

Nash’s slim and unpretentious volume, *Unfinished Agenda: The Dynamics of Modernization in Developing Nations*, dismisses the “naive, ethnocentric, and largely erroneous paradigm of modernization” (p. 3) but retains the same term in an anthropological vision of “the growth in capacity to apply tested knowledge to all branches of production” (p. 6). That capacity varies widely in style and degree according to the historical timing of the drive to modernity, the novelty of the incorporating colonial society, the organization and aims of social groups that lead the change, and so forth. Yet the process is also herded within limits imposed by generic features of the modern world (for example, industrialism), the interaction between developing and advanced nations, and modernity itself as a “cultural projection.” Outcomes, far from the Westernization predicted by old modernization theories, are highly contingent and depend refreshingly on the aims of class and status groups in each “multiple society.”

Worsley’s thick, decidedly pretentious, and marvelously dense volume comes at similar issues from reflections on Marxism. Like Nash, Worsley is irreverent. Early in *The Three Worlds: Culture and World Development*, he observes: “Marxist theories about the Third World have by now become bogged down in a seemingly endless multiplication of exercises in mode-of-productionism and world-systematics in which the distinctive features of each country simply disappear and all become look-alikes, only distinguished from one another insofar as some are central, others peripheral or semi-peripheral. Sociology, in these studies, is merely a kind of social economics” (p. 41). Virtue has fled with the reification of concepts originally intended for sociological analysis. Much current Marxism “reposes on the assumption that the economic base is material. It is not. . . . The label ‘mode of production’ is a misnomer, since production never takes place except as part of a wider set of extra-economic institutions and relationships” (pp. 28, 35). Culture is the “missing concept,” a mode of analysis and evaluation that lifts two-dimensional political economy to a finer understanding while lending theoretical surefootedness to historiography.

Kindred tendencies in recent development theory do not spell convergence. Pedro Morandé’s interpretive essay, *Cultura y modernización en América Latina*, suggests that alien doctrines of modernization

and sociology have penetrated Latin American thought and social structure so thoroughly as to mask any cultural identity. Can Marxism and modernization be replaced by analyzing cultures already bastardized by their influence? Nash is untroubled by the ideological contraband aboard his definition of modernization. His emphasis on colonialism, religion, and education claims that social groups still make choices about development. Having discovered the missing conceptual link, Worsley conducts a tour de force of the undoing of the peasantry, ethnic and national struggles, and the making of the working class with only an embedded sense of culture. Much needs doing, but there appears a Weberian common ground. Growing agreement on culture as the salvation of economism is a good start—or better, an overdue return to the essentials of Marx and Weber—but it only poses the problem of integrating cultural and developmental analyses. Progress means starting again on a social reconstruction of economic categories, qualified introduction of global constraints, and appreciation for the variety of developmental paths taken through the concrete action of classes and status groups.

Research demonstrating some of these characteristics is typified by Robert Wasserstrom's new look at *Class and Society in Central Chiapas* (1983). Wasserstrom returns to the land of Robert Redfield and Sol Tax with a new understanding of how Indian communities were transformed by the insidious penetration of Roman Catholicism and European political economy. Yet he also shows how *indígenas* resisted, rebelled, and adapted to these forces in resourceful ways that produced a distinctive hybrid society, rather than a prostrate periphery—polyglot *cofradías* in religious and social practice, politically manufactured ethnicity, social classes that shifted with the terrain and colonial economic fortunes. Another vivid example comes from the Richard Rubinson collection under review, *Dynamics of World Development*. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, writing on Saint-Domingue's coffee revolution (circa 1760), begins by suggesting that Marx's notion of "the contradictory unity of production and consumption" may settle some theoretical arguments but promises new insights when joined with Braudel's stress on "the reintroduction of social and cultural factors into economic analysis." Coffee production began on the edges of Santo Domingo's sugar economy, a sideline and social mobility initiative by white "junior managers" on the plantations. Abrupt, but temporary, declines in world coffee prices led to a panicky withdrawal by these original producers who, above all, would run no risk to their petty social position. Opportunity was opened to marginal groups: intermingling freed blacks, French newcomers, and their miscegenetic offspring, all seeking a niche in colonial society. During the subsequent coffee boom, these new class and status groups "threatened not only the *sucriers'* economic preemi-

nence but the sociopolitical order" (p. 37) and doubtless contributed to the imminent "Black Jacobin" revolution left out of Trouillot's truncated analysis. The argument's vitality, however, arises from its understanding of sugar and coffee as two modes of production and as much more: "an opposition between two groups of planters, between two views of colonialism, between two subcultures" (pp. 33–34). All of these analyses profitably open avenues closed to the dull-witted polemics that have lately made ideological sport of development theorizing.

So to the second major tendency in recent work, the effort to reassess dependency theory and the very different directions it has taken. For all the contentiousness that pervades the endless reviews of dependency theory, two observations are plain. Presently, it dominates our domain assumptions about Third World development, in Alvin Gouldner's phrase, and it continues to produce results in the hands of skilled researchers. Dependency theory does not go away or yield gently to supersession, which is probably a good thing. It is also abused in mimicry and used in a denatured fashion to perform tasks for which the theory per se is not fitted.

The abuses of dependency theory stem from its easy adoption by conventional and neo-Marxist practitioners alike. As Fernando Henrique Cardoso described the early manifestation of this habit, "what had been an endeavor to be *critical* and to maintain the *continuity* of previous historical, economic, sociological, and political studies in Latin America was transformed into an article for consumption" (1977, 8, emphasis in original). *North/South Relations: Studies of Dependency Reversal*, the collection by Charles Doran, George Modelski, and Cal Clark, has a consumptive look about it: a presumption that dependency is a singular and factual state of affairs explaining many things, save what can be handled by "dependency reversal." This mirror-image idea summarizes "a complex process that is not complete and not self-contained . . . [but] offsets and transforms some of the imputed [sic] consequences of dependency" (p. xi). The reasoning, by no means unique to these editors, is that dependency is a theory, albeit one with gaps and shortfalls that are satisfactorily repaired by appending its missing parts and leaving its substantive logic alone. Not surprisingly, some of the more interesting chapters that follow in this collection (Volker Bornschier on multinationals and W. Ladd Hollist on Brazil's agricultural ruling classes) flatly refute the thematic notion of reversal. Heraldo Muñoz's collection, *From Dependency to Development: Strategies to Overcome Underdevelopment and Inequality*, begins on a similarly unpromising note, one more go at the relative merits of modernization *versus* dependency theory, but it wisely shifts to reprinting some new and revised papers on development strategy. Engaging discussions of development styles and the environment by Osvaldo Sunkel, a history of Cuban policy by Joel Edel-

stein, and Muñoz's own useful treatment of the "dependency of the centers," for example, are not exploited in any conclusion. The papers are good, but the volume is scarcely more than packaging. As with beer, consumers are now offered an adulterated version of light dependency that grants inconsequentially that poor countries live in a world with rich ones and owe some of their problems to that fact.

Uses of dependency vary from the mechanical to the inventive. A bit of both appear in *Theories of Development: Modes of Production or Dependency?*, the collection edited by Ronald Chilcote and Dale Johnson. Chilcote's informed introduction calls attention to the multiple origins and diverse styles encompassed by the tradition but goes on opportunistically to improve these with a straightforward synthesis of "both dependency and modes of production analyses [that] can lead to useful understanding of concrete situations" (p. 17). The compatibility of the two theses is not seriously examined. Oddly, coeditor Johnson, in his conclusion to the volume, trashes "a mode of production framework [that] overemphasizes the internal and formalizes social relations" (p. 231), putting in its place a formulation of dependency cum class analysis. One wonders if the editors are still talking—or if they talked before editing yet another disjointed anthology. In the contested zone between editorial positions, some solid contributions press Marxist alternatives to dependency. With none of the reflection that Worsley offers, Norma Stoltz Chinchilla and Henry Veltmeyer argue in their contributions to *Theories of Development* that "articulated modes of production" explain social change in Guatemala and class formation based on surplus labor in Peru. Chinchilla synthesizes a huge amount of theory while leaving unspecified the connections between elements—how to link, for example, classes defined in production with any nonreductionist politics. Veltmeyer's superb treatment of a new semiproletariat creatively extends Marxist accounts of the Latin American labor force but has no need of dependency theory and no room for analyzing class action.

Dependency Theory: A Critical Reassessment, a collection edited by Dudley Seers, makes more sense and less theoretical mischief. It provides a long and exacting analysis of dependency subtraditions by Gabriel Palma that ends by endorsing the Cardoso brand described as "a methodology for the analysis of concrete situations of dependency." The short and stylish essays that follow are mainly by economists to whom the dependency grass looks greener than their own neoclassical tuffett. These contributions, however, amount to tidying, clipping, and reseeding the dependency field. Seers suggests that strategies for "de-linking" nations from the pernicious effects of the world economy are obviously constrained by dependent ties but vary also with the size, resources, location, ethnic composition, and military situation of the country seeking independence. In separate essays, David Evans and

Luc Soete urge a more realistic assessment of the mixed effects of trade on labor and technological gain. As in portions of the foregoing volumes, the suggestion is that where dependency theories fail, they should be given more to do—thus loading more weight on a rickety theoretical structure. But the theories do not perform class analysis, for example, because they lack any viable conception of class formation and action as fundamental tenets. Such omissions are not remedied by taking on board selected concepts from Marx whose meanings are lodged in a different explanatory logic.

If the theoretical advance of dependency has stalled, the same is not true of empirical work stimulated by the tradition. Dependency has served as a Kuhnian paradigm in the modest sense of fostering revolt, new worldviews, anomalies, and puzzle-solving research that undermines its progenitor. A splendid illustration is the recent book by Norman Long and Bryan Roberts, *Miners, Peasants, and Entrepreneurs: Regional Developments in the Central Highlands of Peru* (1984), which begins with the key question that other works prejudge: “whether integration into the international capitalist economy entails relative stagnation for underdeveloped economies or the possibility of sustained economic growth and diversification” (p. 1). The complex answer shows that dependent development in the mining enclave generated both inequality and economic opportunity in the forms of petty enterprise, agricultural suppliers, diversified services such as transportation, and expanded sources of household income. Development was certainly dependent. The Mantaro Valley did not control its surplus in the face of transnational corporations and the central government, no local bourgeoisie flourished to defend regional interest, profits and migrants flowed to Lima, and regional economic fortunes hovered between modesty and precariousness. But the valley did not stagnate: “significant growth and diversification has taken place in the region and . . . this is directly attributable to capitalist expansion . . . , precisely the situation that is supposed to prevent growth at the periphery” (p. 1). Although there are brands of dependency theory that recognize the possibility of growth, few explain it except residually. Long and Roberts break new ground by taking the “regional system of production” as the object of an explanation that draws on classes, politics, and the international division of labor.

Dependency theories have been very good indeed. Their clarity and testability explain why they have been demolished so often, continue to spawn critical work, and will be superseded not by adding expanded terms to old formulae but only through a fundamental shift in substantive logic. Marxism can take care of itself and has better things to do than resocialize its own prodigals. Meanwhile, as these

theories reverberate from application to reformulation, a friendly competitor has raided their stores.

The third tendency in development theory focuses on a global system. The problem is shifted from explaining the underdevelopment in given Third World regions, stemming in important part from international ties, to the workings of the world system itself in which poor countries are supporting players at best. Nowhere are the systemic passions more evident than in the translation of the *Monthly Review* symposium by Samir Amin and friends, *Dinámica de la crisis global*. This is the kind of book that fiction reviewers call a “romp”—four of the most celebrated and prolific theorists of the times up to some serious skylarking. The essays are best read as high-flown commentary rather than theory—a commendable activity that the original publishers probably intended for diverse audiences. The authors come at global problems such as overproduction, monetary instability, deepening recession, and shifting state alliances from oblique angles and nuanced differences about causes. If there is a common theme, it lies in the judgment that the crisis is not the denouement but simultaneously a regeneration and transformation of late capitalism, a transition toward a reorganized global economy and state system whose contours are risky to predict. This elusive generalization is not very helpful but makes much better reading than *Megatrends*. The authors are especially good on the provenance of crisis (its political origins around 1914–1917, “antisystemic” movements, the great postwar boom, and so on) and its long-run effects (U.S. decline, Third World empowerment, and new political axes dividing Moscow-Berlin-London from Washington-Tokyo-Beijing). The short run is murky, however. Of the essays first published in 1982, only one by André Gunder Frank mentions in passing the debt crisis.

Although neither the Amin nor the Rubinson volume treats readers to an intentional review of the current state of world-system thinking, both seem representative of certain accomplishments and failures. On one hand, this body of work has attracted many young recruits, and their efforts have helped bring the history ignored by modernization back to development studies while smoothing the edges of dependency theories. On the other hand, it has substituted some of the most appalling jargon of world systematics for historical analysis and has seemingly run out of steam lately. Wisely, no one has seriously claimed that world systems is a theory; nor for that matter have many pretended that it is a good way to study individual societies, their critics notwithstanding. What the proponents do claim, at least implicitly, is to offer something revealing about the world *as a system*. Yet, apart from a few rough formulations on this score by Immanuel Wallerstein dealing with core and periphery, or politically fragmented states in a

singular world economy, very little has been demonstrated about general relations among the parts of the system—and therefore very little has emerged to support the system metaphor. The system is mostly rhetoric and the research mostly a style of dependency. Perhaps this initiative has accomplished its useful work and will fade faster than dependency.

That is a reasonable way to interpret some exciting new research, notably Maurice Zeitlin's *The Civil Wars in Chile (or the Bourgeois Revolutions That Never Were)* (1984). History is the record of chancy struggles between and within classes. These struggles went one way in Chile, but they could have gone another, and that is what needs explaining. "It is impossible to understand how the so-called international division of labor, in which particular societies (or global regions) are located, was formed without prior analysis that reveals how the latter's specific class (and class-state) relations arose historically and how these impel or impeded the accumulation of capital" (pp. 232–33). In the review set, Douglas Friedman's lucid *The State and Underdevelopment in Spanish America: The Political Roots of Dependency in Peru and Argentina* makes a similar point in response to dependency and world-system analyses. Dependent development was a political choice, the result of a process in which "domestic crisis, class conflicts, and state development played the dominant roles" (p. 202). Juan Carlos Garavaglia's copious historical account of the production and marketing of *yerba mate* tea in Paraguay and Argentina, *Mercado interno y economía colonial*, notes that world-system notions were of no help in understanding the practices of labor exploitation or the role of commercial capital. William Roseberry's *Coffee and Capitalism in the Venezuelan Andes* (1983) demonstrates how the agrarian hinterland was incorporated by European capitalism without becoming capitalist, and in this regard supports Robert Brenner's (1977) seminal criticism of dependency and world systems.

A new generation of empirical work is appearing in the 1980s, much of it extraordinarily good because it is theoretically grounded yet probes for deeper and better organized evidence. In contrast with a decade past, this work seems less devoted to proving some theory than to explaining rich and unruly experience. This trend is partly due to the very theoretical controversies that we are sometimes too quick to condemn, given that their usefulness unfolds in tandem with new research. It is also a result of maturing research methods, especially the growing affinities between history, anthropology, and sociology. Finally, this work seems to be closing on certain epic questions: the social bases of economic life, the relation between class and culture, the nature and developmental role of the state—questions that humble our theories. Progress is saving us from theoretical conviction, at least for now.

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