

Theories of Political Development: A Case of Biased Discourse in the Political Sciences

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ANY ACADEMIC SCHOLARLY production emanating from the human mind and reality, i.e., based upon them and bound by their limitations, has to bear the characteristics of such mind and reality one way or another. In other words, such production is inevitably expressive – in all its manifestations – of the culture of the society in which such a human mind has been shaped and informed. Moreover, it inescapably reflects the social reality that has encompassed it and defined its key concerns, priorities, and crises. Thus, it cannot achieve full detachment even if it tries to do so; it will always be conditioned to some extent by the specificity of time, place, and people.

This understanding is closely associated with the natural disposition of human beings whose epistemological inputs are bound by time and place, not to mention the biases and desires of human beings, which might constitute serious hindrances to the acquisition of knowledge.

Generally speaking, the attempt to describe a certain human thought as universal and comprehensive in a way that makes it transcend the limits of time, place, and the potentialities of humankind is invalid and contrary to the givens of the human mind. Such an attempt is consequently unacademic, as it does not conform to the criteria of truthfulness and fairness. It is an academically faulty model governed by bias resulting in the neglect of numerous dimensions of social phenomena given that they are not in agreement with the established categories from which the researcher comes or with the findings he or she aspires to arrive at.

The essence of the concept of bias is self-centricity, and evaluating the

Other according to the criteria of the perceiving self. This implies utter negation of the Other, excluding it from the framework of history, existence, or knowledge and seeking to supplant a genuine identity with another that accords with the givens and goals of the biased/perceiving Self. This is accomplished through annihilation of the uniqueness and specificity of the Other, reabsorbing it into a system that the biased Self considers “ideal” within the milieu of its own worldview, intellectual systems, doctrines and higher ideals.

In light of this understanding of the notion of bias, we will deal with theories of political development which are considered the essence of the concept of development; these encompass all relevant theories in the domains of social, economic, and cultural development. Consequently, the following analysis will address the methodological and philosophical bases of most theories of development in the field of social sciences. The concept of political development and its philosophical, intellectual, methodological and conceptual roots will be marshaled to examine the influence of the concept of bias on the aforementioned theories and domains with the aim of finding whether bias has rendered such theories partial and exclusive, or whether these theories themselves are truly universal and applicable to most human societies regardless of their natural, environmental, cultural, religious or institutional differences.

THE SELF AND THE OTHER IN WESTERN SOCIAL SCIENCES

Science is characterized by the study of specific human or natural phenomena regardless of their details or geographical locations. It is essentially correlated with the subject matter and not with location or any particular details. For example, sociology, politics and economics are concerned with specific phenomena that are generally and ideally worthy of research. According to Western thought, science is an intellectual activity that deals with the actual and objective state of things. It is universal in the sense that it is not limited by space or time. In other words, science is not restricted to countries, nationalities or religions. This conclusion, however, is indeed questionable, if not susceptible to instantaneous refutation. A close examination of the origins and development of Western social sciences and humanities reveals that they insist upon considering theirs to be the best approaches to understanding and controlling human reality. Oddly enough, such sciences have not been successful in unders-

tanding Western reality itself. Despite their failing to provide a satisfactory understanding of the Western Self, they have nevertheless devoted specific disciplines to the study of the Other that may necessarily be different when judged from the Western social and even human points of view. The Self in this sense is represented by Europe and its extensions in North America and the South Pacific as well as the Jewish community in Palestine and historically the whites in South Africa.¹

Since the age of the Renaissance, with the advent of the Industrial Revolution, the rise of the Western bourgeoisie, the beginning of the Age of Enlightenment, and the rise of Socialism, there has been a steadily growing academic trend that focuses essentially on the study of “non-Western societies.”² Scholars of this trend took it upon themselves to study Oriental societies, in particular, in an attempt to understand their religions, doctrines, literature, arts, political systems, and behaviors. The purpose of such studies may well have been academic, i.e. oriented toward a real understanding of these societies, or it may have been basically political. At the same time, there has been substantial development in the methodology, tools and even the discourse of Western social sciences. By contrast, the disciplines that study non-Western societies are still flawed and devoid of any creative scholarly production.³

In this context, several sciences devoted to the study of non-Western societies came into being. They were mostly governed by their field of study and not by a specific subject matter. It all began with Orientalism. Controversy still surrounds the exact date of the emergence of this field, yet it is unanimously considered to be the first academic activity undertaken by the West to understand the non-Western world.⁴ It may have aspired to safeguard the Western mind from the intellectual challenge of Islam, to raise doubts about Islam itself, or to detach it from the East in order ultimately to control it. Next came Anthropology as a science that studies “Neolithic” human beings who are believed to have lived in Asia, Africa, and South America. Anthropology sought to achieve a twofold purpose. The first purpose was to arrive at an alternative, fixed, and referential starting point for the Western mind after these elements had been refuted forever by the Theory of Relativity on the one hand, and the severe doubts brought about by the age of materialism on the other.⁵ Its second purpose was to control the non-Western world and to undermine its culture and civilization with the aim of annexing it to Western culture.

In this connection, the relationship between anthropologists and colonialism is obvious and beyond any reasonable doubt.⁶ Finally, the theories of cultural and socio-political development, to name only two, coincide neatly with the political objectives behind all other theories of Western sciences devoted to the study of the non-Western world. Thus, Orientalism came into being at a time when the “Other” meant specifically Islam or the religious East. When the West began to expand beyond the East and to colonize other regions, it was imperative for it to understand the habits, values, behavioral patterns, religions, and cultural systems of these colonized peoples, hence, the need for anthropology. This was followed by different theories of development when the non-Western worlds got rid of the direct (colonial) hegemony of the Western world. Consequently, a new pattern of domination via ideas and commodities entailed the aggrandizement of the values, lifestyle and institutions of the West as the ideal human and social model to be followed by other societies. Non-Western societies, therefore, were expected to follow in the footsteps, and behave within the framework of Western civilization.

How is it, then, that the West has devoted specific sciences to the study of the Other? It was not based on a recognition of the finitude of science and its lack of universal validity, nor on the acknowledgement of the fact that these people enjoy a certain measure of acceptable distinctiveness and difference in relation to the Western experience. On the contrary, the “Others” have been looked down upon as representing an inferior social and cultural structure vis-à-vis that of Western societies and their advanced political and economic development. Therefore, Western sciences manifest a great measure of bias and self-centricity, a “civilizational arrogance”⁷ that relegates the “Other” to a position inferior to that of the “Self.” Hence, it is beyond the confines of credible academia to study those societies using the same analytical categories used in the study of Western societies; rather, there have to be independent sciences for the study of such societies.

NORMATIVENESS OF THE WESTERN SOCIETAL MODEL

Scientific fields concerned with studying the non-Western world (Orientalism, Anthropology, and developmental theories) have shared the same underlying premises, concepts, methodologies, and even findings. All of these unified attitudes form what can be considered to be a grand category

implying the idea that the Western societal model is the standard for all people, a touchstone against which all other human models can be measured. The sole criterion is how far those other models emulate the Western one. The foregoing assertions or “truisms” may be examined within this category:

(1) *The Simplistic Ethnic Viewpoint that Reduces Humanity to Two Groups: “Them” and “Us”*

According to the Western view, all peoples on earth may be divided into superior and inferior races. From Aristotle down to thinkers of political development, the Western, “scholarly view” of other peoples is predicated upon an ethnic classification of humanity. It looks upon all non-Westerners as one category which Aristotle describes as “barbarians,” whereas Westerners themselves are seen as Graeco-Europeans. For the classical dichotomy between Greek and barbarian, Christianity proposed a more magnanimous, and more flexible measure by which it divided humanity using faith as a measure; like the Greek viewpoint, it dismissed all non-Christians as being non-civilized. Anthropologists, in turn, provided yet another classification that differentiates between the civilized, i.e. Westerners, and the primitives, i.e., all others.⁸ Consequently, 19th-Century theses about Eastern backwardness and decadence and the disparity between the East and the West were linked to the then-prevalent ideas revolving around the essential bases of ethnic difference and the civilized/uncivilized dichotomy.⁹ Backwardness was widely used as a description of all that is non-Western, a simplification that arbitrarily divided all peoples into two types: “us” and “them.” The non-Western world was regarded as one unit characterized by a certain essence and by certain stereotypical characteristics that applied to all its constituents. This led to the promulgation of vague concepts that claimed to represent those “Other” societies. The result, however, was failure to express the true identities or fundamental tenets of such societies. They were described collectively at first as the “East,” a concept that suffers inherently from ambiguity and bias. To whom is a certain part of the world the “East?” What are the criteria that allow a certain analyst to judge it as “Eastern?” On what basis have all those broad areas been called “Eastern?” And does this concept apply neatly to one unit that enjoys cultural specificity and a unified civilizational and historical experience?

In view of these implications inherent in the concept of the East, it is hard to exonerate it of partiality or the Western self-centricity that considers Europe to be the center of the universe against which other parts of the world are identified.¹⁰ Those who define the “East” in this way risk a grave simplification, as what is also called the “Orient” or the “East” consists of a number of civilizations, cultures, religions, systems, societies, and institutions that are so diverse that they cannot be regarded as one concept or examined as a single field of study. Other concepts dealt with the Other by describing it as “developing countries” which are also classified as backward, primitive, agricultural, non-industrial, and Third World.¹¹ All these concepts reflect a subjective and an obviously superior Western outlook.

If the foregoing terms are re-examined from the perspective of geographical location, it will be noticed that they commonly refer to all that is non-Western. The societies in question, however, have hardly anything “social” in common. For example, from the political point of view, these countries do not constitute a single international political bloc encompassing homogeneous political systems. Political systems in such countries range from hereditary to Marxist regimes. Likewise, from the economic point of view, these countries do not share the same characteristics, as they differ essentially in terms of their patterns of production, standards of living, gross national products, and per-capita incomes. Nor do they represent a single geographical bloc, as they differ greatly in terms of geomorphology and climate. Finally, there is hardly any historical or cultural relationship among the countries under study; rather, they have been forcibly categorized by the West as one, despite their internal diversity.

PROJECTION OF THE WESTERN EXPERIENCE ON THE NON-WESTERN WORLD

According to contemporary theories of development, the Western experience is the only model to be emulated by other societies. Paradoxically, Western theorists of development have derived their propositions and theories from the history and essential content of Western progress and then tried to apply such concepts to the non-Western world. They argue that what applied to the West should necessarily work for other societies as well. This trend is a basic feature of sciences that examine the non-Western world. Since the advent of Orientalism, Western thinkers have

consciously or unconsciously projected the experience of their own societies onto the non-Western world in the following ways:

(1) *Classification of History into Ancient, Medieval, and Modern*

According to Oswald Spengler,¹² the method of dividing history into such periods is senseless, fruitless, and lacking in credibility. Not only does it depict history as a static process, but it also looks at Western Europe as an unjustifiably unique and established part of the world. Moreover, this classification makes other great historical civilizations revolve humbly around the pole of Western Europe as if the whole world has been created for the service of Western Europe, or as if the remaining peoples and civilizations were just a prop to that master world.¹³ In this way, the Enlightenment had to label everything before it as “Dark Ages” in order to claim the light for itself. In the period that is commonly regarded by Westerners as the Dark Ages, Islamic civilization was at its peak; and during what Europe calls the “Renaissance,” “Enlightenment,” and modernization, other peoples were massacred, pillaged, and dominated. At this juncture, a big question mark hangs over the criterion by which a certain period can be judged as dark and backward or as enlightened and advanced; still, are these criteria used to judge the achievements realized within a given society or those realized on a universal level?¹⁴

(2) *Western Political Science’s Adoption of the Concept of State, Derived from the Western Historical Experience*

This concept implies that the politically integral society is the society in which the state, with its different institutions and functions, is set up in conformity with the Western historical experience. Any model that departs from this Western norm is considered far from being a real state. According to the Western definition of the concept of the state, the absence of state administration and institutions testifies to the primitiveness or backwardness of society.¹⁵ Western thought does not allow for the existence of stateless societies or of states without authority. Once again, the standard model is the way the states emerged in Europe, which is elevated to the status of a universal model. This is a result of the tendency toward self-centeredness practiced by the West whenever it attempts to evaluate the experiences of other societies, as if its historical experience were the only valid one.¹⁶

(3) *The Linear Development of Human Societies Across Ascending Stages*

The projection of the stages of Western history onto human development has produced several theories in the fields of anthropology, political economy, and societal development stressing the unity and linearity of human progress and asserting the fact that it must follow a pattern of ascending stages. Anthropological studies in particular have been influenced by the Darwinian evolutionism that presupposes the existence of “one line of human development that must be followed by all human societies, according to fixed, unified systems and regulations that are unchangeable anywhere in the world.”¹⁷ In other words, the diversity of civilizations is governed by the principle of evolution (in terms of quantity, not quality or kind). According to this logic, it follows that primitive peoples, in order to keep pace with developed countries, have to go through the same stages of development.

Most theories of societal development also attempt to project the experience of Western development onto the non-Western world. Karl Marx believed in five stages of human development: primitive communism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism, and scientific communism. For Auguste Comte, human development passes through three stages: theological, metaphysical, and positivistic.¹⁸ Parsons, likewise, has posited three stages for human development: primitive, medieval, and advanced.¹⁹ Rostow has also identified five stages: traditional society, preconditions for take-off, the take-off, the drive to maturity, and the age of high mass-consumption.²⁰ Karl Yosher has divided these stages into rural, urban, and international economy.²¹ As for Organisky, he divides them into four stages: the traditional national union, industrialization, national welfare, and abundance.²² According to the foregoing theories, these are the general stages of human development that must be followed by all societies. According to this perspective, non-Western countries may approach the final stage of development, but they can never achieve it. Many scholars have seriously and perseveringly attempted the application of these stages to all countries regardless of time and place, and regardless of the fact that this may lead to academic dishonesty in understanding other societies. If this vision fails at times to find correlation among the aforementioned Western stages of development and those of other countries, the problem is readily solved by reference to the particularities and irre-

gularities of these cases. The standard here is the Western experience which has been generalized to encompass the whole world.²³

*(4) Projection of Western Ideals and Objectives
on Other Human Models*

The ideals as well as the objectives of the West have been applied, through theories of political development, to all peoples. They are considered the ideals and objectives of all humanity, i.e., the best ideal that the human mind can ever attain. To Westerners, these ideals and objectives are not mere ideals; they are a lived experience and an already established model which they seek to spread all over the world. They believe that the political goals of all human societies must be modeled after Western norms. No matter how inappropriate Western democracy and political institutions may be in the non-Western world, they have to be adopted wholeheartedly by its peoples. Likewise, the sublime economic objectives of all human beings should be securing the stage of abundant consumption. Culturally, the utmost aspirations of humankind should be the achievement of emancipation, the lifting of moral restrictions, and the dissemination of secularism. The conviction that these ideals are universal and that they should be sought by all societies has led to the emergence of short-term objectives requiring non-Western countries to “bridge the gap,” to “raise the standard of living,” and to “keep pace” with Western nations so that the former would perpetually follow in the footsteps of the latter. However, it is understood that non-Western countries would either need a miracle to achieve the same Western level of development or wait for Western countries to become suddenly stagnant and reachable. In other words, the world of the “Other” is doomed to chase a mirage because the circumstances that surround development in the West are totally different from those of the other world. Besides, it has to be taken into consideration that the West achieved its development partly at the expense of non-Western societies. It managed to do so mainly by plundering the resources of the Third World and through the brain drain, namely, by enticing Third World intellectuals and scientists to emigrate to the West. Consequently, the Third World has been doubly incapacitated, once through pillaging of resources by the West, and second by losing the chance to depend on the resources of its inhabitants.

In this context, some major questions have to be raised: Are the fore-

going goals humankind's goals everywhere? Do all human societies consider them basic aims that have to be realized? Can they not be regarded as means rather than ends in other societies? What about societies that believe in a divine message which motivates them to regard the hereafter as an end, and this life as a means towards that sublime end? What about some people who consider abstinence and asceticism as chief ends to be sought? Are these ends or goals the best that humanity has ever achieved? What more can be done after democracy, complete freedom, and economic abundance have been realized? What will be the importance of such concepts as social integration, purity, justice, and moral commitment? Beyond all this, have all human societies been consulted as to whether these ends represent their common aspirations? Have these ends been derived from a close reading of world religions and philosophies? Is it not more human for every society to have its own ends and ideals according to its beliefs, culture, needs, and ambitions, which may certainly be different from those of other societies?

JUDGING OTHER HUMAN MODELS ACCORDING TO THE CRITERIA OF THE WESTERN ONE

Theorists of development believe the Western experience to be the standard model against which all human models can be judged. This perspective has been held true not only in the domain of development but also in the academic field concerned with the study of the "Other". This prototypical Western model evaluates other experiences according to how far or close they are to it. The following are the most important postulates of the aforementioned argument:

(1) *Western Christianity as a Standard for Assessing Other Religions*

This tendency has been particularly prevalent in Orientalist studies. It implies that other religions can only be acceptable if they correspond to the fundamental tenets of Christianity. It also suggests that whatever does not conform to the Christian spiritual model is not only faulty and defective, but indicative of religious corruption, weakness, and ineffectiveness.²⁴ In other words, the West believes that Christianity is the most superior religion on earth and that the development of humanity has not yet outgrown its emergence.

(2) *Assessment of Other Experiences According to Contradictory Criteria Inspired by Successive Western Experiences*

The history of the West progresses in terms of ascending stages whereby each stage presents hypotheses that may contradict altogether its preceding one. Accordingly, there has been considerable accumulation of concepts and criteria, most of which are not handled in the study and evaluation of Western societies, probably because they involve a great deal of contradiction. The reason could be that Western thought has passed through several stages that formed modern Europe: “there was more than one Europe. There was the Europe that grew out of the Renaissance and the Reform, Enlightenment Europe, and post-1850 Imperialist Europe. And at the heart of each of these different Europes, various circles met and overlapped, thereby creating kaleidoscopic viewpoints: those of the politician, the priest, the merchant, the intellectual and the colonist ...”²⁵ With this considerable accumulation of stages and angles of vision, the Western thinker has had a great number of criteria whereby he or she can judge the societies under study. This has entailed, at times, criticizing or distorting the institutions of such societies. For example, Christianity and secularism used to criticize Islam and to level hostile accusations against it such as accusing it of being deficient in spiritualism or suffering from theocratic stagnation.²⁶

(3) *The Study of Non-Western Societies According to Indicators Stemming from the Contemporary Western Experience*

Western researchers argue that contemporary Europe is the epitome of modernity and advancement. They have consequently coined some key indicators, the presence of which denotes modernity, advancement and development, while their absence implies backwardness, primitiveness, and reactionism. From Louis Morgan onwards, there has been constant differentiation between indicators of the advanced society and those relating to the backward one. Morgan believed that a given society is advanced if the individual’s place in it is determined by the criteria of achievement; if social relations are not affected by the criterion of kinship; if the individual’s role is defined by how much he earns, by his position, and by his authority. If society is divided into social strata and not into clans, this society will be an advanced one and vice versa. Taylor, Fraser and Sir Henry Mean²⁷ proposed the same line of thought as Durkheim,

who suggested that a truly advanced society is the one based on organic cohesion while the society built on mechanical cohesion is considered backward. In a similar vein, Spencer differentiated between the military society and the industrial one²⁸ whereas Cowley differentiated between primary and secondary communities. Max Weber, on the other hand, differentiated between the rational and irrational society, while Anthony Leader's differentiation was between the agricultural and industrial state.²⁹ Finally, Robert Redfield differentiated between the primitive society and the civilized society.³⁰

A close look at these stock dualities and stereotypes reveals that they are built on what is called a "Teleological Bias" as well as a bias in favor of the way the West achieved its development without full understanding of the nature of non-Western societies.³¹ Hence, the phenomena studied are twisted to fit certain stereotypes which are radically at variance from said phenomena, a process that results in overlooking many of their dimensions. Such concepts came to be imposed on non-Western societies regardless of their specificities. The abundance of stereotypical hypotheses about the nature of non-Western societies made it impossible for such societies to be truthfully and honestly portrayed and presented. Researchers preferred, instead, to look for evidence that would enable them to arrive at a certain idealistic pattern that ultimately overlooked, if not amputated, considerable dimensions of this phenomenon.

NEGATION OF THE OTHER AND THE ABSOLUTISM OF THE SELF

An integral characteristic of bias and self-centricity strips the Other of the right to exist and exerts strenuous efforts to expel it from the framework of science, history or even being. The notions of Self and Other in this respect are not restricted solely to social existence; they also subsume the distinctive presence expressive of identity. That is why biased science is always trying to impose its own categories, concepts, and methods. This has to do with its conflict-based outlook on human existence, a perspective that sees others only by negating them, so that the Western Self can only achieve self-realization by negating the Self of others and annexing it to its own. This outlook is an integral part of Western thought despite all that is said about diversity and pluralism, for diversity in this sense is restricted to the

internal structure of a certain society within one culture or civilization. In other words, the pluralism under question is intra-civilizational rather than inter-civilizational. It does not mean the diversity of human civilizations; cultural and civilizational diversity is merely looked at from a folkloric perspective that augments the desire for supremacy and distinction. This means that the legitimacy of Others' existence and their right to formulate their own indigenous human models are not at all acknowledged. The most dramatic expression of the foregoing notion is the following quote from a native of the Solomon Islands: "You white men give orders; we no longer give orders to ourselves; we have to obey yours ... The white man has come to tell us we must behave like *his* father. Our own fathers, we must forget them... In the old days, we did this thing, we did that thing. We did not stop and say to ourselves first, 'This thing I want to do, is it right?' We always knew. Now we have to say, 'This thing I want to do, will the white man tell me it is wrong and punish me for it?'"³²

If we consider the literature of political development in general, we will find that the process of negation and replacement emphasizes three main dimensions:

(1) *The Negation of Traditional Culture by Replacing it with Modern Culture*

To Westerners, the concept of "culture" is derived from "cultivation" which suggests planting and sowing, and which can be extended to mean the planting of concepts, values and patterns. The underlying meaning of this concept, however, is the removal of traditional culture that is prevalent in non-Western societies. Theorists of political development have emphasized this by stating that development cannot be achieved in the presence of an incapacitating culture that is against the idea of development. This traditional culture therefore has to leave the scene and be replaced with the values of modern culture. The concept of "traditional culture" applies of course to all cultures except the Western one. The characteristics of the former were traditionally formulated as directly opposite to those of Western culture. Some of these characteristics are religiosity, heredity, class rigidity, and technological inertia. Contrary to this, modern culture is characterized by secularism, equality, achievement, universality, flexible class structure, technological advancement, and ineffectiveness of subjective factors.³³ Thus, the world is divided into two

spheres: that of real culture and that of folklore. Hence it is imperative to move toward one civilization representing the unity of humankind. As the present state of affairs suffers from diversity and fragmentation,³⁴ the cultural change of traditional societies and the destruction of existing cultural patterns in non-Western societies have to take place, since they are considered to be the real impediments to progress and development. Hence, there is almost unanimous agreement among theorists of development on the necessity of getting rid of the “traditional culture” and replacing it with the modern one, i.e., Western culture.

(2) *The Negation of Traditional Institutions by Replacing them with Modern Ones*

What has been said about culture applies also to institutions. Theories of development also stress the importance of removing traditional institutions and replacing them with modern ones fashioned after Western institutions. According to Western theorists, traditional institutions represent an impediment to development, no matter how deeply they are rooted in the culture of a given society or correlated with the society’s prevalent beliefs, establishments, and system of rights and obligations,³⁵ as well as the predominant social equation (balance).³⁶ However, the fact remains that modern institutions in the non-Western world have failed to create a vital interaction between the various strata of society in the political field. Thus uprooted, these institutions have lost their credibility and effectiveness due to their alienation and aloofness from the social structure and the traditional institutions.³⁷

(3) *The Negation of Traditional Economy by Replacing it with Modern Economy*

The Western experience has been chiefly based upon the Industrial Revolution. This has resulted in the increase of the role of industrialization in the economic structure and of cities in the social structure, as well as the diminution of agricultural life and the rural nature of people. Theories of development therefore argue that achievement of industrialization and urbanization – as it took place in the West – is indispensable for achieving development. Therefore, the elimination of traditional economies and societal systems mainly driven by agriculture is necessary for the establishment of a technologically advanced, industrialized society. For

this industrial system to prosper, there has to be: first, accumulation of capital³⁸ such as that achieved by Europe when it took advantage of peoples' resources under the guise of geographical discoveries and colonization. However, the non-Western world cannot achieve accumulation of capital unless it becomes burdened with debts. The second necessary element for the industrial system to prosper is industrialization and the adoption of modern technology.³⁹

It is worth noting that industrialization has had major effects on many societies. It has polluted the environment and destroyed many natural phenomena; it has spread social injustice and contributed to the emergence of exploitative, capitalistic classes that dominate all spheres of society for their own good; it has turned the human being into a mere cog in a machine⁴⁰ and caused economic imbalance among the different sectors of production. Agriculture has been neglected or at least industrialized as a raw material for other industries. Industrialization also led to the emergence of great monopolies in the field of politics and to the intervention of capitalism in decision-making and in the political process, through interest groups and tools for controlling public opinion such as information, media and propaganda.

Apart from these multifaceted problems, food is the main problem facing the non-Western world. It follows that the first priority of development in these societies is achieving self-sufficiency in food rather than industrialization. As the financial capabilities of these countries are meager and their populations are also very large, the economic model of industrialization there relies heavily on labor-intensive activities, simple technology, and scarce local resources. On the other hand, the very essence of the concepts of the world economy, with all its values and axioms, reflects the philosophy of Western society and its desire to universalize its model and to subdue the "Other". As is commonly understood by Western societies, economics is the science of the efficient allocation of rare resources to suit the diversity of needs; in other words, the scarcity of resources and the diversity of needs are well taken into consideration. This notion does not mean, however, that all countries believe in it. Islamic civilization, for example, maintains that economy means moderation, avoiding both extravagance or stinginess in food, attire, and shelter; it also asserts that a human being's needs should be limited in quantity and quality. It is the Islamic doctrine that calls for moderation

and warns against extravagance, yet, it stresses that worldly resources are limitless as they come from Allah the Almighty, whose resources never come to an end. The Qur'an enjoins: "Yet if the people of those communities had but attained to faith and been conscious of Us, We would indeed have opened up for them blessings out of heaven and earth" (7:96). Besides, approaches to and methods of development differ from one society to another depending on the culture and beliefs of that society. Some of these approaches can be enumerated as voluntary work, cooperation, teamwork, etc.

(4) *The Methodology of Determining and Neutralizing Bias in Theories of Political Development*

Thus far, bias has been defined as an attempt to impose the Self upon the Other; to negate the Other and to supplant it with the Self; to generalize the particular; to absolutize the relative; to regard what is temporal and limited as constant, universal, and comprehensive; and to consider a certain human experience out of the myriad rich experiences of humankind as the supreme human model which abrogates and assimilates all other experiences.

Such is the essence of bias as an epistemological process related to the philosophy underlying methodology and scholarship. Bias often determines the method of analysis, ways of interpretation and findings of academic research. It also transforms science into an ideology or political interest by negating the value of truth that should be the only aim of any intellectual or scholarly enterprise.

As such, the impartial researcher can never define bias, let alone neutralize or remove its effects. The ultimate objective of science is to express truth regardless of the researcher's outlook, philosophy or culture; in this way, knowledge can be useful to human beings wherever they are and irrespective of their color or race. This does not mean, however, the relinquishment of specificities, for these must always be taken into account. Knowledge should not claim to be universal and absolute on a particular matter. That is why the definition and neutralization of bias must comprise two fundamental methods of dealing with socio-political phenomena.

THE METHODOLOGY OF DETERMINING BIAS IN THEORIES
OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

The determination of bias in theories of political development is the essence of change and social evolution. This process requires some methodological approaches, most important of which are the following:

(1) *Differentiating Between the General and the Particular in Human Thought: Defining the Dimensions of the 'Common' in Human Epistemology*

It has been pointed out above that any kind of thinking is bound by time and place, and by the particularities of the human being who has originated or elaborated the idea. Therefore, the scholarly production of humankind – whether derived from empirical and intellectual principles or inspired by revelation – is characterized by a great deal of specificity and grounding in the milieu which produced it. There is invariably a close link between scholarship and the nature (characteristics) of time, place, and the human being. However, so long as there is a measure of universality and comprehensiveness, there must be common ideas and rules that apply to the whole of humankind at all times and in all locations. Thus, to define bias, one has to define the ideas, regulations, systems, or theories that generally characterize man and woman as human beings and then define particular elements that are linked with the specific details of a given culture, educational and belief system, era, or environment.

(2) *Precise Differentiation Between the Concepts of Correctness and Validity*⁴¹

Natural sciences deal with statements that are either true or false. In the physical domain, experiments are done to guarantee precision. As for statements about social issues, we should not be concerned about their accuracy; it is more rewarding simply to examine their time, place, and environment, for they are causally, directly and inextricably linked to their social, local, and temporal environment.⁴² Social sciences are hermeneutical, i.e., they are based on understanding rather than explanation. Therefore, definition of the extent to which bias exists has to begin with a clear and accurate differentiation between the concepts of correctness and validity. Socio-political notions and theories may be accurate in them-

selves and valid in a particular environment, yet they can be inoperative in another environment since what is at issue is not their logical accuracy but their validity or capability of causing change and improvement in a certain society. At this juncture, bias is conceived of as an attempt to reconcile accuracy and validity. In other words, a clear demarcation line between accuracy and validity is required for the definition of bias in order to neutralize its effects upon analysis, theory, or action.

(3) *Forming Abstract Notions of Social Concepts, Systems and Phenomena and Separating their Reality from their Appearance*

This can be achieved through a phenomenological approach, namely, by reducing a concept, system, or phenomenon to its essence and reality, ridding it of all its forms and manifestations and even the term expressing it, i.e., purifying it of all that history has done to it, and arriving at its essence or gist so as to ascertain the exact reason why it has appeared in our world. In addition, further research has to be done into the concepts, systems, and phenomena that express this essence and how far it is achieved in all human societies with a view to explicating those concepts, systems, or phenomena no matter how different and diverse their forms and manifestations might be. Meanwhile, each society is known to have a specific way of achieving the same goals. Forms, manifestations, and terms are there to express a given cultural and civilizational experience. Confining ourselves to certain forms, manifestations, or terms is likely to make of a certain human experience a standard model through which other human experiences are evaluated. This is, in fact, the essence of bias. Abstraction, on the other hand, gives an equal chance to all societies to express the same message in different ways. A cogent example in this context is the concept of “political party” as an institution and as a social phenomenon that appeared in Europe across its historical evolution. It would be beside the point to search for the same concept, institution, or phenomenon in non-Western societies or to regard any society that does not have the party system as politically inactive, primitive, or backward.

If the necessity of the existence of the party system for the advancement of society is examined from the point of view of the determination and neutralization of bias, the concept of political party has to be stripped, first, of its institutional forms and of all manifestations and methods characterizing it. The main objective is to reveal its real essence as an

organization that mediates between the rulers and the ruled, prevents the despotism of the former, works for the good of society, and provides an alternative to the political system if it deviates from the interests of society or fails to achieve them. From this standpoint, research can be done into the existence of such human activities in all societies and cultures. In the Islamic experience, for instance, the role of the political party is taken up by the Muslim scholars, professional masters, tribal chiefs, and authoritative people who act as arbiters in disputation and reconciliation. These entities perform the role of a political party without necessarily following its Western form and pattern. The same can also be said of such concepts as democracy, political participation, elitism, parliament, and such phenomena as revolutions, demonstrations, political development, etc. By doing so, the researcher can break out of the cocoon of bias which presents the Western experience as the chief frame of reference which presumably has to be emulated by all humanity.

THE METHODOLOGY OF NEUTRALIZING BIAS IN THEORIES OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

If the researcher defining bias in theories of political development – which are part and parcel of political sciences – applies the foregoing three approaches, the next step is to neutralize bias in his/her own studies. He/she has to be as detached as possible lest his/her subjective vision of things overlook reality and mirror the Self's own perception. In order to help the researcher to overcome these pitfalls, the following four points might be taken into consideration:⁴³

(1) *Dealing with the Phenomenon in Light of its Doctrinal Dimensions*

This is usually done through research into the system of beliefs (regarding divinity, holiness, and the unseen) behind the phenomena. Each phenomenon or socio-political theory is based on an eschatological or theological world reflected in its statements, concepts, and constituents.⁴⁴ This world comprises axioms that are not subject to discussion and are not even thought of by theorists or exponents of this phenomenon. Such axioms represent what can be called an ideational “taboo” that cannot be contradicted or examined because it is the sole foundation of the theory without which there can be no theoretical structure or phenomenon.

Thus, the researcher dealing with any phenomenon has to search for its “eschatological world” or the axioms underlying it and determining its dimensions. The definition of these axioms is a basic approach to a true and unbiased understanding of reality. As such, it is bound to put things in perspective and to interpret them according to their logical and ideological structure, not according to biased subjective interpretations.

(2) *Dealing with the Phenomenon in Light of its Historical Roots*

Dealing with the phenomenon in the light of its historical roots enables the researcher to reveal its origins and evolutionary stages, and to arrive at the best possible understanding of it. No human phenomenon or ideological theory sprang suddenly into existence without antecedents. It is the product of a historical evolution, across many stages, whereby each stage adds certain components to the phenomenon until it becomes wholly mature. Therefore, putting the phenomenon or theory in its historical context contributes to a deeper understanding. It also helps the researcher to neutralize bias, as he/she is not governed by his/her personal interpretations but by the history of the phenomenon under investigation.

(3) *Dealing with the Phenomenon in Light of its Environmental and Societal Pattern*

Social or political theories and phenomena do not exist in a vacuum. Rather, they are part and parcel of an extended social fabric; they affect it and are affected by it. The role of the researcher in this context is two-dimensional: to define the environment or the social pattern of the phenomenon, and to define the effects of the environment on the phenomenon.

This requires profound understanding of the limits of the environment and the societal pattern, that is, their nature, and their political manifestations. If we have a phenomenon or an idea from Egypt, for example, we will have to ask whether its social environment is the village, the city, the whole country, the Arab world, the Islamic nation, Africa, the world at large, etc. At this point, it has to be remembered that the environment and the societal pattern refer to the social, civilizational, and cultural spheres. Through a better understanding of the phenomenon, the researcher can thus greatly neutralize his/her bias. This also relates the researcher more strongly to his/her own reality, which is so vital in determining his/her own standpoint and frame of reference.

(4) *Dealing with the Phenomenon in the Totality of its Dimensions*

This can be achieved by combining the fragments and dimensions of the phenomenon without disproportionately concentrating on one single aspect of it. Each phenomenon has certain qualitative and quantitative dimensions. As for the qualitative ones, they are the economic, political, cultural, social, and geographical dimensions. The quantitative dimensions are the individual, the group and the community, the nation, and humankind. It cannot be said that every phenomenon has to be dealt with in all these dimensions. What has to be done first, however, is to look at it in its entirety. Thereafter, it is the turn of society to determine which dimensions are more effective and influential. A given phenomenon cannot be approached, for instance, by presupposing that the economic, cultural, social, or individual dimension is the one that defines and determines the phenomenon. The researcher should rather approach socio-political phenomena with all these variables in mind; then it is the reality of the phenomenon that determines which of these variables is the most effective. No single variable, after all, affects or controls phenomena in their totality. The same variable can be effective in one phenomenon but utterly ineffective in another. The economic variable, for instance, might be the major agent in one phenomenon, yet not in another. Through these approaches, the researcher can, to a great extent, neutralize his/her personal bias in an attempt to guarantee that what comes out in the end will be truth itself, or at least an approximation thereof.

There remains a basic factor that can only be controlled by learning the ethics of the scholar and the learner, for scientific research must be founded on honesty, moral probity, and adherence to the criteria of rightness and justice.⁴⁵ This truth is expressed in the verse from The Qur'an, "Do not allow your hatred for other men to turn you away from justice. Deal justly; justice is nearer to true piety ..." (5:8).