

imposes its own categories, concepts, and methods. If we consider the literature of political development in general, we find that the process of negation and replacement emphasizes the negation of traditional culture, institutions, and economy by replacing them with modern culture, institutions, and economy.

Bias often determines the method of analysis, ways of interpretation, and findings of academic research. As such, the impartial researcher can never define bias, let alone neutralize or remove its effects. The definition and neutralization of bias must comprise two fundamental methods of dealing with socio-political phenomena. The determination of bias in theories of political development is the essence of change and social evolution, and this process requires a methodological approach.

If the researcher applies these approaches, the next step is to neutralize bias in his/her own studies. 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.

Chapter Four

Modernizing vs. Westernizing the Social Sciences: The Case of Psychology

Rafik Habib

Communities everywhere work to boost their technological performance and scientific activities, but emphasize performance more than testing scientific concepts and methods. Third World countries use science to measure the level of progress, and Muslims' desire for progress is achieved by absorbing and/or imitating scientific patterns prevalent in other, more advanced communities. The scientific paradigm adopted by advanced nations acquires legitimacy and importance by its ability to modify the environment in a manner acceptable to the people living in those parts of the world. In the Arab world and elsewhere, people import scientific innovations into their lives along with the lifestyle and ideals that accompany them, thus augmenting the need for more imported technology. Science should not be taken as an aim per se, but as a means of improving the quality of life by modifying the environment.

Imitation can never pass for an original achievement. Muslim countries have been able to import the formal and applied aspects of modern science but not its positive social role. Copying others lacks an essential aspect of true progress: the ability to develop new models of science and the patterns of life that reflect Muslim cultural identity.

True advancement in Western philosophy and theology did not gain momentum until the West learned to outgrow Arab thought. By contrast, the Arab world today has not transcended its awe of the thoughts and cultures of other countries. This obsession with the Other has outstayed its welcome and the imitative phase has become ineffective, serving only to prolong and reinforce the current state of backwardness. The Muslim world has complacently admitted many foreign concepts and values over a long period, emasculating its own identity, and losing genuine criteria for sound judgment.

Science is imported and consumed like any other commodity, and these points equally apply to the social sciences. While knowledge about physical and chemical facts can be safely transmitted from one community to another, knowledge about social facts cannot. Adopting and applying foreign knowledge entails adopting a whole lifestyle and social reality not rooted in the indigenous society. With social science, the risk is compounded because Muslim countries copy the functions and applications of scientific knowledge as well as the entire knowledge corpus. The findings of psychological and sociological research lose their significance when transported across the borders.

It would be more pertinent to consider the concepts or criteria used for research rather than accept them as objective and free of cultural bias. The existing fanaticism about the utopian nature of scientific objectivity subjects any attempt to institute a specifically Arab approach to science to serious criticism. Social science can easily become an effective tool for reinforcing cultural, behavioral, and moral dependency.

Particularly in the Third World, the adoption of the American model results in reinforcing American values among developing communities. Where media publicity and economic domination may fail, a transmitted program of scientific application may succeed. The result is a distorted image of a disintegrated individualistic society that lacks competitiveness, initiative, and productivity.

In the view of Mohammad Shakroun, the Arab individual is a

“collective” being, while imported science tries to turn Arabs into individuals who strive to compete. This creates a dilemma that forces Arabs to abandon their “collectiveness” in favor of an imported individualism. A radical empirical approach, on the other hand, can approach each society according to its own intellectual and cultural tendency and norms, values, and ethical judgments.

Arab communities are still at a preliminary stage of scientific progress. They need a speedy recovery program with radical changes. The present conflicts in many Eastern societies are not ideological but rather concerned with the demands of daily life and peripheral systemic details, with local differences in each society. Cultural progress and development result from intellectual and ideological creativity, which is contingent on scientific revolutions within the social structure.

When transmitting science from a foreign source, the Arab world just copies static intellectual frames that it esteems more than its innovators. Psychology in the Arab world is individual to the core. However, American psychology, from which we have copied a good deal, has outgrown this stage to a new stage characterized by a social and historical emphasis. Logically, psychology should develop in the importing countries because it requires a substantial degree of modification and reformulation to cope with the new social environment, but this is not the case. The combined problem of adhering to a sacrosanct empirical objectivity and the fall of ideology has resulted in halting the scientific movement in the Arab world and the Third World today.

The alternative of hope is a dynamic outlook and serious attempts at change, visualized as a set of radical mental operations that may lead to an acceptable and appropriate solution. This could be achieved wherein the Arab world would outgrow the present state of scientific and intellectual adolescence and cultural fanaticism; develop its own concepts and methods and use them flexibly to rephrase theoretical methods and approaches; witness its own scientific revolution through new findings and discoveries in theories, method, and thought; and completely envisage the new scientific perspective and a substitute ideology, leading to an alternative cultural state and a new cultural stage.