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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version
Sammelwerksbeitrag / collection article

Contradictions and Social Evolution

A Theory of the Social Evolution of Modernity

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1. A CRITIQUE OF MODERNIZATION THEORY

1.1. The Key Concepts: Differentiation and Rationalization

The classical theory of modernization is based on the general evolution-ary assumption that modernization is the result of differentiation and rationalization. However, the extent to which these processes are neces-sary aspects of modernization is an open question. Discussions of mod-ernization must at least ask about the extent to which dedifferentiation and derationalization are also developmental processes that characterize modern societies.[1] If these counterprocesses can be shown to be part of modernization, then differentiation and rationalization are only two among the many possible results of the evolution of modern society. They then lose the explanatory power that is attributed to them in classi-cal modernization theory.

The real problem is that differentiation and rationalization are not variables explaining modernization, but processes needing explanation. In other words, I propose that differentiation and rationalization are not causes, but effects of modernization. My strategy is to look for the pro-cesses producing and reproducing these effects. The theoretical starting point is to look first for the modus operandi, a generative structure of

1. For recent contributions to the theory of modernization in terms of differentiation see Smelser 1985 and Luhmann 1982; for modernization theory in terms of rationalization see, among others, Habermas 1981 and Schluchter 1981. For the theoretical problems posed by the processes of dedifferentiation and reenchantment see Tiryakian (this vol-ume); pleas for reenchantment are found (among many others) in Berman 1984 and Moscovici 1976.

modernity, and then for the opus operatum, that is, differentiation and rationalization as possible outcomes.[2]

I start by restating two classical problems of sociological theorizing. The first is the Durkheimian problem of relating the process of social differentiation to the conditions producing it.[3] How does differentiation come about? What forces underlie the process? Durkheim's answer is unsatisfactory: he takes demographic growth and increasing social den-sity as the central causal variables for the progressive dissolution of collec-tive consciousness (and the individualization resulting from it). Thus the key to explaining modernization is ultimately demography, something nonsocial (but as we know, socially produced!).

The second problem is the Weberian problem of relating the process of rationalization to the social conditions producing it.[4] How does ratio-nalization come about? Weber gives a historical answer. He identifies specific social groups as the carriers of the process and then relates these groups to the general social structure, that is, the system of status, class, and power. Thus modernization is explained through the more or less contingent historical emergence of specific social groups. For Weber it is history that ultimately explains modernization.

The alternative theoretical approach to Durkheim and Weber is that of Marx. Marx's theory states that the evolutionary change of society (a change that has been conceptualized by later theorists as differentiation and rationalization) is the product, first, of the contradictions between the forces of production and the social relations of production and, second, of the contradictions between social classes. Ultimately, contradic-tions are the causes of modernization.[5]

Within the Marxian theoretical framework social development is a process based on two types of contradictions. The first type is a contradic-tion between social actors, that is, the conflict between social classes. As long as contradictions are understood as contradictions between social groups, the theory explains the development of society through genu-inely social factors. The second type refers to a more abstract concept of

2. Such a macrosociological focus on the conditions generating society is prominent in French sociology. For two (very different) versions see Touraine 1977 and Bourdieu 1984. I take the distinction between modus operandi and opus operatum from the latter.

3. Alexander (this volume) describes this Durkheimian problem as being one of relating general models, social processes, and historical analyses of specific strains and tensions. My chapter can be read as an attempt to relate these levels.

4. For a treatment of the Weberian problem see Schluchter 1979, 1981. Going beyond Weber, Schluchter tries to develop the general model of rationalization, leaving the ques-tion of social processes and historical analyses more or less aside.

5. See Godelier 1973 for a systematic discussion of Marx's distinctions between levels of contradiction.

contradiction. In it social structures rather than social actors are seen to contradict each other.[6] The configuration of social structures is supposed to set into motion the evolution of society. This abstract use of the notion of contradiction has become relatively important in more recent theoretical thinking: contradictions between systems are seen as leading to self-blockading situations and contradictions within systems as generating incompatible functions that the systems fulfill.[7]

But these functionalist reinterpretations run the danger of an analytical nominalism that is empty of any social theory. I consider communication theory to be a more promising theoretical approach to a reinterpretation of the Marxist approach of explaining social change because it is more adequate to the study of modernization than functionalist and neofunctionalist reinterpretations of Marx. In communication theory neofunctionalist reinterpretations of Marx. In communication theory the analyst can give a systematic place to the concept of contradiction.[8] Reformulated in this way, the concept of contradiction becomes the starting point for a more adequate theory of modernization.

1.2. Evolutionary Theory and Modernization

I propose the following preliminary theoretical assumption: contradictions are mechanisms that initiate or continue communication. Insofar as societies are the most complex system of communication, contradictions can be treated as the mechanisms for the evolution of such systems.[9] This hypothesis entails an evolutionary theory that draws from beyond the old alternatives of an epigenetic mysticism and a Darwinistic functionalism.[10] It takes contradictions as the mechanism producing modernizing processes like (functional) differentiation and rationalization.

6. This structural notion of contradiction has often been criticized as being "objectivistic." Such a critique can be found in Habermas 1979, who relates this type of contradiction to the problem of system integration as opposed to social integration. See also Sahlins 1976, who distinguishes two "historical materialisms," one of which is guilty of the objectivistic sin.

7. See Sjoeberg 1960; Offe 1972.

8. A systematic treatment of the notion of contradiction is found in Elster 1978, (esp. chapters 4 and 5); Luhmann 1984, (488ff.); Miller 1986, (esp. 296ff.).

9. Evolution is not to be conceived as the change of society or some of its subsystems—to do so would be a case of misplaced concreteness—but as the evolution of structures that regulate the construction of the system (and its subsystems). Such structures are assumed to be on the level of social evolution structures regulating communication.

10. The differences between Darwinistic and epigenetic theories can be reduced to differences in the concept of contradiction. Either evolution is conceived of as the resolution of contradictions between systems and their environments (the old Darwinistic explanatory strategy) or it is conceived of as the resolution of a general contradiction underlying the history of humankind (an idea that is related to the old progressivist thinking in social theory).

This hypothesis changes the evolutionary assumptions underlying modernization theory in a fundamental way. I discuss two modifications here. First, modernization theory should not be tied to the idea of a fixed and unidirectional path of development to modern society. Differentiation is not an explanatory variable but only a descriptive category that says that there are increasingly more fields of social conflict and struggle. Differentiation must therefore be described as the structural by-product of collective practices that produce a modern social order. Second, modernization theory is not to be tied to the idea of a self-propelling force (reason or unreason for example) that pushes social development. Rather, rationalization is the cultural by-product of collective practices that construct a cultural order through learning processes and symbolic struggles, both of which together establish legitimate authority and generate the symbols society needs to reproduce itself as a legitimate social order.

As a substitute for the two evolutionary assumptions that modernization is self-propelling and unidirectional,[11] I propose the idea that contradictions open up diverging and even incompatible paths of development. There is no prescribed way to and through modernity. There are as many ways into modernity as there are historical developments. Therefore, modernization theory cannot be constructed by conceptualizing its outcome but only by conceptualizing the way this modern order is produced.

The problem then is to conceptualize and explain the social production of modern society. The conception I propose is threefold. First, it suggests looking at the learning processes of those social groups that create a new collective consciousness, that is, political and social ideas, to orient individual and collective social action.[12] But because these learning processes are part of a larger historical environment, we must also look further.

Second, we must consider the idea of class conflict. Class conflict should be conceptualized on the level of the system of status and power. In order to reproduce a given system of status and power, social classes engage wherever possible in struggles to classify and reclassify each other. They struggle to have "right" on their side. The symbolic universe of right, the idea of morality, sometimes even universal morality, has to be mobilized to secure the reproduction of the class structure.[13]

11. For an analysis of the pitfalls of old evolutionary theories see Habermas 1979. For a critique of Habermas's alternative see Schmid 1982. But the alternative Schmid (1982) proposes also remains unsatisfactory.

12. The following discussion is an attempt to locate the formal structures of learning processes, as described by Miller 1986, within a historical context. For an extensive discussion see Eder 1985a.

13. The role of the symbolic dimension in Marxist thinking has already been elaborated by Godelier. For a short and instructive account see Godelier 1978. For an interesting theoretical reformulation of this problem see Bourdieu 1984.

Third, my conception examines how differentiation and rationalization are related to the evolution of modernity. I explain them as the structural by-products, that is, the combined effects, of learning processes and class conflict that in turn reproduce these generating conditions. Learning processes and class conflict change the social and cultural dimensions of the structure of society. They lead to what Weber has called the differentiation and rationalization of *Wertsphären*.[14] This modern differentiation between moral, aesthetic, and theoretical symbols restricts the possible images of a legitimate social order to the moral sphere. In modern times this differentiation of the moral sphere (which structurally is probably the most important one) can no longer be grounded on a holy order, that is, a hierarchy, but only on the abstract and formalistic idea of a social order based on the equal agreement of those belonging to it.

With this theoretical program the reformulation of the notion of contradiction in communication theory should allow for the revision of the theoretical assumptions underlying the conceptualization of differentiation and rationalization as the paths to modernization and offer new grounds for describing the processes of modernization. And on a more general level it should allow for the revision of the implicit evolutionary assumptions of modernization theory.

In the following sections I discuss how the concept of the social production of modernity can be made fruitful in a systematic (not historical) reconstruction of developmental processes in modern society. First, I discuss the role of learning processes in the social production of modern society. These processes take place first in "enlightenment societies" (*Aufklärungsgesellschaften*) that call themselves "associations" in order to differentiate themselves from "corporations" and from the corporate groups of traditional society such as guilds, estates, etc. These associations contain the elementary structures of specifically modern collective learning processes. Next, I attempt to locate this evolutionary new type of association within the social structure of early-modern society. Here the specificity of modern social classes and the corresponding class conflict become the analytical focus.

This analysis then allows me to describe the evolution of modern society as one that is generated by learning processes and class conflicts and reproduced by processes of differentiation and rationalization. Differentiation is the key part of the mechanism that reproduces these generating conditions. But differentiation is in itself insufficient; it must also mobilize symbolic resources in order to continue reproducing differ-

14. See Habermas 1981, who uses Weber's distinction of *Wertsphären* for his own attempt to differentiate between various irreducible claims of validity constituting communicative action.

entiation. Rationalization is the process producing the symbolic resources needed for this reproduction. The analysis of the reproduction of modernization by differentiation and rationalization gives some preliminary answers to two central problems in modernization theory: the problem of alternative paths to modernization and the problem of the rationality of these different paths to modernization.

2. THE SOCIAL PRODUCTION OF MODERNITY

2.1. Association and Communication

Since the beginning of modernity certain social groups that are characterized by an evolutionary new form of communication have had a profound effect in triggering modernization processes. Such groups try to organize their mode of organization according to the principles of the equal and discursive handling of disputes.[15] This type of discourse is based—ideally—on the free and equal exchange of arguments, that is, on *Aufklärung* (enlightenment). Associations are the social contexts within which this evolutionary new type of discourse can take place.

I would like to distinguish among three historical manifestations of associations in modern society. The first is tied to the rise of groups that since the eighteenth century have identified themselves as the bearers of enlightenment.[16] Within these groups social and political life is discussed in a way that differs fundamentally from the past. This form of collective discussion, which is-learned in small political and private associations, forces these associations to describe themselves in a way that is independent of their place in a hierarchy. They begin, instead, to describe themselves as part of a social movement, as *Aufklärungsbewegung*.

A second historical manifestation of the modern type of associations is that found in the working class movement.[17] The culture of discussion found in the working class movement continues the tradition of the Enlightenment. The difference between the associations of the working class movement and the earlier associations of the Enlightenment is in the content of the discussion. The discourse organized in the associations of the working class allows for learning the competence needed for

15. This observation should not be mistaken for the claim that these associations have actually functioned in this manner. I only claim that these principles define the structural model of these associations.

16. Important descriptions of this phenomenon are Nipperdey 1972 and Koselleck [1959] 1973. For a systematic sociological treatment see Eder 1985a, (67ff.).

17. The idea of treating the working class movement as a collective learning process is an old idea in the socialist tradition. See, e.g., Na'aman 1978 and Vester 1970, who utilize this concept for a reconstruction of the labor movement; see also Thompson 1978. Also relevant in this context is Tilly 1978.

organizing the workers as a collective social force. Thus the specific social experiences of the workers modify the contents, but not the form, of the discourse of the eighteenth-century associations.

A third historical manifestation of the modern type of associations is the associations that have emerged since the end of the last century in the petit bourgeois classes. But the social experiences necessary for these "middle" classes to produce an autonomous discourse arise only in the second half of the twentieth century when the old petit bourgeoisie is complemented and strengthened by a new petit bourgeoisie[18] that is the result of the increasing professionalization of work. The associations of these new social groups describe themselves today as "new" social movements. These new associations defend a private "life-world" that differs from both the just society defended by the working class and the public sphere defended by the bourgeois/*citoyens*. This new life-world is their own private world, their own psychic and physical integrity. Thus the specific experiences of these groups modify the content of discourse, but they do not modify its logic.

In all these groups a reflexive use of communication is practiced. As people learn to communicate about communication, they revolutionize the traditional order. The evolution of modern society becomes dependent on the communication that is the subject of communicative relationships. Reflexivity in communication is the starting point for the social production of modern society. Those who participate in modern associations know that they are taking part in a collective learning process. In the *Aufklärungsgesellschaften* of the eighteenth century (the Jacobin clubs were their radical variants), the *Arbeiterbildungsvereine* of the nineteenth century (the associations for the self-education of the workers), and the therapy groups of the late-twentieth century, the function of learning has become part of the process of communication. The mechanism constituting the modern associations since the eighteenth century can therefore be defined as discursive communication.[19]

The form of communication practiced in these associations throughout modernity changes the form and the content of the learning processes taking place in these associations. Thus the idea of an evolutionary new type of learning is the theoretical key to the cultural consequences of the emergence of associations since the beginning of modern society. Cultural change in modern society is produced by a collective learning process whose logic is defined by the logic of discursive com-

18. For a controversial discussion of the social-structural basis of the new social movements see Offe 1985; Eder 1985b; Bourdieu 1984.

19. The concept of discursive communication has been elaborated by Habermas (1981). The following text can also be read as an application of this type of sociological theorizing to the theory of modernization.

munication. Cultural change, then, is bound to the logic of modern discourse.

2.2. Collective Learning Processes

The constitutive element of discursive communication is a "generative," or "deep," structure. This structure is defined by two principles: equality and the discursive handling of conflicts. The logic of discursive communication is structured according to the principles that we ascribe as being central to modernity.[20] The logic underlying the modern discourse thus allows for learning processes that are fundamentally different from traditional ones. These modern learning processes are based on the principle of ceaselessly testing the universalizability of the normative order of civil society. Their mechanism is the resolution of contradictions by argumentation or "critique." They are modeled according to the logic of a universalization procedure.

A universalization procedure is defined as the impartial consideration by everybody concerned. The basic structure of an impartial judgment is "equality more geometrico." Equality more geometrico means to consider only the behavioral manifestation of an act, not its motivations or circumstances. This basic structure must then be applied to a specific case. First, impartiality can be described as giving everyone an equal chance to act in his or her own interest. This condition is the equality of opportunity. A second way to construct a situation of impartiality is to distribute chances to act in such a way that all possible positions within the distribution are acceptable to all. This condition is the equality of differential chances to act. The logical structure of the operation of the principle of the equal consideration of everybody becomes logically more complex in both cases. In the first case it is applied to an abstract other; in the second case the relevant other becomes somebody with needs that clash with yours, a situation that has to be taken into account within the procedure of universalization. Going from the first to the second level, the hypothetical operation takes additional empirical parameters into account. The problems inherent in these approaches result in a third way of describing impartiality: the unequal distribution of chances to claim the universality of wants and interests within a process of collective discussion. This condition is the equality of communicative relationships.

Thus we can distinguish three steps in the development of the logic of

20. For an interesting theoretical treatment of the model of civil society see Dumont 1967, 1970. For an early treatment of its discursive aspects see Habermas 1962. For a systematic use of both notions for a reconstruction of modernization processes see Eder 1985a (87ff.).

universalization[21] that underlies collective learning processes since the eighteenth century. The form of communication invented and practiced by the early associations (the societies of enlightenment) has become the foundation for the model of modern society. This model is civil society. This model sets forth the characteristics of association—the equal rights to free thinking. speech, and association—as basic to civil society. The more this complex learning can be organized, the more the idea of a democratic organization of civil society can be radicalized into the postulate of the democratic organization of the well-being of society. This idea culminates in the idea of the democratic realization of the good life by civil society.[22] The theoretical proposition is that these increasingly complex forms of a civil society are incorporations of the logic of the learning processes that have been going on since the eighteenth century. This development, then, can be conceptualized as the manifestation of collective learning processes using the logic of universalization as its basic mechanism.

2.3. Social Class and Class Conflict

The concept of discursive communication is insufficient for explaining the production of a social order in modern society because discursive communication cannot control its institutional environment. On the contrary, it sometimes even serves ends contradictory to its intentions. Associations do not exist merely in the thin air of discussion. Being part of a wider social context, they are not independent of the power system inherent in the social order. They are bound to an institutional framework. And the symbolic universe produced by discursive communication is used for legitimating purposes within this institutional framework. To grasp this aspect of the social reality of modern society, we have to look for the social struggles accompanying and controlling the processes of discursive communication.

Associations are part of the class structure of society. This being so, contradiction comes into play as a mechanism of class struggle. Class conflict thus constitutes a social reality beyond the collective learning processes initiated in associations. This social reality has been described

21. Habermas's theory of communicative action (1981) can be read as the theoretical program of the reconstruction of this type of universalization procedure. A theoretical solution to the problem of developmental logic is the idea of a permanent social contract (Eder 1986a). This solution offers an alternative to Kohlberg's (1981) psychological conception of developmental logic. See also Eder 1985a (67ff.); Tugendhat 1980.

22. For a discussion of the development of democratic rights see the classic work of Marshall (1950). But it should not be forgotten that these ideals are taken from the theoretical work of intellectuals, who are tied more or less to the different social and political groups and movements producing modern society.

since the beginning of the nineteenth century as a reality structured according to class-specific opportunities and rights. Whether such classes correspond to concrete groups has been the object of controversy.[23] But in modern societies class has become a specific way of describing social differences in society. How far the implicit self-description is adequate varies historically.

Since the eighteenth century the classification of the objective positions that separate social classes has followed a different logic from that underlying the previous classification of estates. The transition in early-modern society to a new logic of classification was a result of freeing the social order from traditional bonds and was part of the process of commercializing agriculture and handicrafts. The new social order became different from traditional bonds because the unifying hegemony of the church was broken.[24] Without the church a society without religious bonds arose. In order to substitute for hierarchical classification, a new classification system had to be built into the social structure.

During the transformation of traditional society into early-modern society social relations remained organized around the bonds of patron-client relationships. Class relations were established, as Thompson puts it,[25] between the patrician culture and the plebeian. The patrician culture was organized around the idea of autonomy and self-determination in private life. The plebeian culture, however, was organized as a "moral economy." The moral economy was opposed to the market economy; it defended "just" prices against market prices and the principle of concrete reciprocity against the principle of subjective rights. Taking the example of eighteenth-century England, the structure of these class relations can be described as gentry-crowd reciprocity.[26] The gentry, which is defined as a polite culture dissociating itself from the plebeian culture of the crowd, employed the classical means of control: the majesty and terror of law and the symbolism of their cultural hegemony. Both contributed to the theatrical representation of patrician culture. The plebs, however, had at their disposal the elements of a traditional culture: the

23. For a new sociological look at the concept of class see Luhmann 1985. Luhmann treats classes as emerging from processes that make interactive relations increasingly secondary for social structure. But his discussion suffers because he confuses class structure and differentiation-as-stratification.

24. For the English example see Thompson 1978 (133ff.).

25. Thompson 1974 (382ff.).

26. For this "cultural" definition of class relations see Thompson 1974 (397–98). This definition is formulated in opposition to those definitions of class society that are too narrow and too economic in nature. The same may be said of Calhoun 1982. It is important to see not only "class" but also "class relations." This point has been emphasized by Kumar (1983), who points out that class action cannot be explained when classes are seen as isolated entities with no relationship to other classes.

moral economy. The struggles between social classes were still struggles for the reconstruction of the traditional good society and were struggles between traditional status groups. Thus the conflict between these class cultures functioned like a bridge between the old and the new.

As soon as class conflict is identified as being concerned with the social organization of industrial work the classification underlying class conflict becomes more clearly defined. Social classification starts to be thought of as the result of individual effort. But the classification of social reality can still be reduced to a dichotomy: to the contradiction between capital and labor. Classes are constructed around the contradiction between those who sell wage labor and those who buy it.[27] But contrary to the preindustrial phase of modern society, both factors, capital and labor, are defined in ways that are independent of cultural or political traits. Culture and politics become the superstructure, something actually secondary in describing the class structure of industrial society. The further development of modern society, however, has called this dichotomy into question.

Later, with the withering away of the industrial model of development and the coming of "postindustrial" society, a new contradiction appears between social groups defending technocratic progressivism and those defending a communicative life-world. Today class conflict is being transformed into a fluid antagonism that reaches into every aspect of social life. Class conflict has expanded in time as well; it has become permanent class conflict. The social reality created by this permanency is a system of classification that radicalizes the individualist premises of the modern system of classification. This system of classification that compares individuals and that counts the (economic and cultural) capital they own results in the highly individualized class structure of modern society.[28]

These ways of classifying people create a power discrepancy between social groups that has to be shown to be normal; the discrepancy must be seen as being legitimate.[29] Class conflict necessarily is accompanied by practices that generate the legitimating symbolic order. The purpose of

27. This interpretation of classes differs from the conceptions that see classes as concrete social groups. Rather than trying to identify the groups that constitute a class, my theoretical approach constructs classes theoretically and tries to find out whether historically these classes actually emerged. I expect that any identity between theoretical constructs and historical classes will be an exceptional case.

28. This development can only be grasped by a theoretical approach that constructs classes as clusters of indicators that are shared by individuals. When such indicators become diversified, empirical classes are increasingly less bound to a single or several concrete social groups. Today, classes can be described as highly "individualized." For this point see Beck 1983.

29. Bourdieu (1980, 1984) has developed at length the idea of collective illusions as systematically distorted visions of the world. Theoretically, this notion is, so far, the most interesting sociological reformulation of the old concept of ideology.

legitimating practices is therefore to make the existing relations between individuals appear to be normal relations. Resolved in this way, legitimating practices allow for the symbolic reproduction of the class structure of a society. The symbols favored by those who are on top are the symbols claiming universal validity because such symbols produce the most perfect image of legitimacy for the class structure of modern society. Thus on the level of class conflict, another logic of cultural change intervenes. Cultural change is not only the result of learning processes but also the result of class-specific symbolic practices.

2.4. Legitimating Practices

The production and reproduction of class structure is dependent on the symbolic practices by which classes try to maintain their differences. For this purpose symbolic resources are used to legitimate the class structure.[30] Class conflict produces not only a social relation but also a symbolic relation. This symbolic relation serves as a specific mechanism for organizing and reorganizing the symbolic universe that legitimates modern society. A look at modern history might clarify this point.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries princes and the newly established parliaments tried to break the sovereignty of religious authority by postulating a new basis for legitimizing political domination: the welfare of the people.[31] This secular ground for domination legitimated either the absolute sovereignty of the king or the representative sovereignty of the estates. The plebs still lived in the old world of the moral economy, which was culturally opposed to both the world of the absolute prince and the world of the new estates. The ensuing struggles on the symbolic level were struggles between the modern and the traditional world. Thus the symbolic practice of the absolutist state (constructed as the practice of the rule of law) was opposed to the symbolic order of traditional life (defined as the practice of customary law) that was defended by the lower classes.

At the beginning of the industrial revolution a new field of symbolic struggle was added. The dominance of the old class cultures was broken by the rising bourgeoisie, which transcended these cultural worlds with its idea of an individualistic and competitive society, a society based on

30. For a systematic treatment of processes of classification in modern societies see Bourdieu 1984. My analysis implies a critique of Touraine's central assumption that the concept of society is no longer adequate as a description of modern social life. Touraine's idea of centering social theory on a modified version of class conflict is insufficient to tackle the developmental processes going on in the cultural representations of society. For this perspective see Touraine 1981.

31. The collected papers of Hintze (1970) is still the best systematic analysis of this period. For a more recent treatment see Mousnier 1974, 1980.

"industria." It was legitimated by a radically individualistic ethic, the Protestant work ethic, and its telos of never-ending maximization and perfection. This class made the individualistic society of a market economy the symbolic world shared by both the upper and the lower classes. The legitimating practices based on this symbolic world led to the model of class relations that was created in nineteenth-century Europe between the labor movement, on the one hand, and the organizations of the industrial elites, on the other hand. This model conceived of this relationship as a game between pressure groups bent on maximizing power and interests.[32] It conceived of the capital-labor relationship as a bargaining one. This symbolic world created the illusion that was necessary for the reproduction of this individualistic and competitive society. This illusion helped to reproduce—at least for a time—the class structure of modern society in its industrial phase of development.

The developmental dynamic of advanced industrial societies again changes its field of symbolic struggle. The world of the unlimited development of the industrial forces of production is replaced by a new legitimating practice: the programming of the economic, cultural, and social reproduction of society. The cultural world opposing such an encompassing program developed in both the working class and the bourgeois classes. This development took the form of a romantic culture emphasizing naturalistic sentiments that are opposed to the "coldness" of modern economic and political life. In late-modern society a new "green" philosophy, which is trying to develop another moral image of the good world, carries on this tradition of a culture that is opposed to a world controlled by the bureaucratic welfare state. The "new" social movements are explicitly opposed to the welfare state; instead they speak of health, green nature, and aesthetics, and they generalize the idea of the "good life" into all fields.[33] The ensuing symbolic struggles between different "modernities," that is, between modernity and romanticism, legitimate a society with a highly individualized class structure.

The winners in these symbolic struggles try to produce the image of defending claims that are universally valid. The claim of universalism is, at least in modern societies, the most promising strategy to reproduce a given class structure of society. If symbolic struggles arrive at defining the symbolic world of the upper classes as the legitimate one, the lower classes have to see their own existence as an illegitimate one. The degree

32. A history of the labor movement seen from a trade-unionist perspective is contained in Kendall 1975.

33. The new social movements manifest a conflict about the type of professional knowledge that should be used for the reproduction of society. See Eder 1982. For the green movement see Galtung 1986. Theories of postindustrial societies—with the exception of Touraine 1981—generally miss this point.

of legitimacy becomes the reference point for distinguishing social groups. The history of legitimating practices[34] is therefore the key to an understanding of the processes that constitute the symbolic universe of modern class society.

The symbolic universe of law offers the exemplary case of the processes of legitimating the class structure of modern society. On the one hand, legal norms fix the objective classification of legal rights. On the other hand, law has symbolic power because it claims to have morality on its side.[35] Law is a mechanism that is used in different contexts for the symbolic reproduction of an institutional order. In order to analyze this function of the symbolic universe of the law, I use examples from the history of legal and political thought.[36]

At the beginning of the sixteenth century both traditions adopted the new premises that there no longer existed a metaphysical order on which political and social life could be built and that the anthropological nature of man is the basic fact. These new premises emerged from the reflexive structure of modern social thinking: social thought had become dependent on the thinker (and his nature) as such. Hobbes's Leviathan and the radical Puritan theories of the covenant are examples of this radically new kind of social thinking; they mark the beginning of the evolution of modern representations of society.

The symbolic authority of the modern legal order is based on these new normative grounds. There are three key ideas: the idea of the maintenance of order by the rule of law; the idea that the state's function is to maximize the welfare of its constituents; and the idea that a good way of life must be defended against the consequences of uncontrolled progressivism. Order, welfare, and a good life are the normative grounds for the symbolic authority of modern law.

The images of a legal order constructed on such principles are the most effective mechanisms for producing the illusion that is necessary for the reproduction of society. The more complex the social structure of modern society becomes, the more complex these images become. The first idea, the idea of a formal legal order founded on the universalistic principle of the reason of state, structures and legitimates the absolutist

34. For a sociological approach to the history of social movements and cultural struggles in modern society see Eder 1986b. See also Eisenstadt 1981 and his contribution to this volume, which focuses on the complementary aspect of the elites.

35. The old and polemicized problem of the relationship between the moral and the legal is restated here in a new way. For the classical sociological treatment see Durkheim 1950.

36. For a history of political thought that takes this perspective see Skinner 1978. For legal history see the abundant nineteenth-century German literature. For the sociological use of this literature see Eder 1985a (329ff., 396ff.).

state that ended the religious wars by guaranteeing indifference to religious and social differences, thus creating order through law. The second idea of a legal order takes into account the fact that the modern state has taken on the regulation of the economic sphere, which up to that time had been integrated into traditional forms of living. The telos of a legal order is maximizing the welfare of a society through law. The third idea emerges from the dysfunctional consequences of maximizing social welfare. Because perfect order is no longer produced by regulative law, "progress" has to be corrected or, better, planned "by the people." The law then distributes the chances to participate in the planning of society. Law, conceived primarily as procedural law, becomes the incorporation of the democratic creed.[37]

Against the majesty of such a law the lower groups either mobilize a cultural world beyond the law or—and this is the normal case—they subject themselves to the law, accepting its authority and thereby contributing to its authority. Thus law is one of the foremost mechanisms of legitimating class structure. Legal practices are the most important among the symbolic practices reproducing the power structure of society.

3. THE EVOLUTION OF MODERNITY

3.1. The Social Reproduction of Modernity

In the preceding section I laid the foundations for a theory of the social production of modernity. I identified the mechanism that launches processes of social and cultural change, but I have not yet described the specific nature of the processes launched. The processes of social and cultural change that are seen as crucial by traditional modernization theory are (functional) differentiation and (formal) rationalization. Whether they are the master trends of change in the course of modernization is a question that must be answered now. My answer has two aspects. First, differentiation and rationalization can take different courses than those ascribed to them in classical modernization theory. Second, there are differences in the "functionality" and "rationality" of these processes that have to be explicated.

The first of these processes, differentiation, is a structural arrangement to meet the functional consequences of two types of modernizing forces: modern associations and modern class structure. This structural arrangement has to reproduce these generating forces. Otherwise, modernization cannot go on. Thus differentiation can be defined within my theoretical framework as the mechanism for the social reproduction of

37. A short description of the stages of legalization can be found in Habermas 1981 (2:527ff.).

these modernizing forces. A theory of differentiation describes how the opus operatum reproduces the modus operandi.

Classical modernization theory says that in modern societies differentiation takes on the course of functional differentiation, a course that is different from the traditional course of stratificational differentiation. The decisive innovation is the functional autonomy by which structural arrangements are equally and without external constraints able to accommodate[38] the functional consequences of the modernizing mechanisms. By separating and multiplying the fields in which the construction of modern society can take place, functional differentiation makes this accommodation possible.

Thus differentiation allows modern societies to accommodate learning processes and class struggles by structurally separating the specific spheres of action that are the objects of these collective actions. For example, the economic system and the religious system are based on functionally specific ways of accommodating the consequences of modernizing activities. Economic class struggle is no longer logically adapted to enactment in the religious sphere of action (as in traditional society). But there are still social struggles within the religious sphere, for example, in conflicts between religious professionals and the lay public. Specific class conflict occurs in the economic sphere and is manifest in the distance between capital and labor. And there are analogous struggles in the political and the cultural spheres. The most conclusive example is the effect of differentiating the educational system from other systems. The modern educational system reproduces the class structure of modern society much more efficiently than before, at the same time guaranteeing the cognitive skills a complex, modern society needs for its reproduction.[39] Functional differentiation is the mechanism by which the dominant elites reproduce their positions in an increasingly complex modern society.

But such differentiation is not a master trend; it is the trend of the masters. This observation implies that there is more than one path of differentiation in modern society. Functional differentiation, I propose, reproduces class structure by producing a distinctive structure for the

38. The concept of "accommodation" has been proposed by Smelser (1985, 124). This concept allows for the development of a more adequate idea of the functionality, or "success," of differentiation.

39. The functional differentiation of class conflict is normally thought of as the end of class conflict. This notion, however, presupposes a realistic definition of class, that is, it implies that we already know what a class consists of. I argue that differentiation allows for the reproduction of class structure. The best example of this phenomenon is the role of the educational system. For the reproductive role of the differentiated educational system see Bourdieu 1984.

formation of relatively autonomous elites and for the deformation of the people as the clients of these elites. Whether dedifferentiation takes place depends on whether social forces are strong enough to get rid of their confinements to the specific social spaces that, from the perspective of the elites, are rational and to redefine the social space in which they act. Such dedifferentiation mobilizes class conflicts that generate collective action beyond the established networks of communication to involve those who do not yet communicate with each other.[40]

Thus those who argue that the formation of elites is the most important function of structural arrangements have to plead for functional differentiation. Those who argue that the organization of the collective interests of the lesser classes is the most important function must plead against functional differentiation. Ultimately, functional differentiation is an option, not a fate. It is a possible but not a necessary trend of modernization. Using it as a master trend implies a value judgment. To give theoretical distinctiveness to it contributes to its image of being "rational."

3.2. The Cultural Reproduction of Modernity

The ability of functional differentiation to dominate the process of modernization depends on its ability to reproduce the image of an egalitarian social order. Thus a second form of the reproduction of modern society has to be taken into account: Rationalization allows for the cultural reproduction of modernity.

As I have already indicated, in modern society rationalization is the result of a double production of culture: learning processes and practices that legitimate class differences. Collective learning processes constitute the discourse within which modernity is made possible. Symbolic practices try to mobilize the universe of discourse produced in these learning processes to legitimate existing distributions of power and positions in modern society. The mechanism generating rationalization is, first, discourse in associational life and, second, the interest on the part of social classes in legitimating their own position and illegitimizing the positions of others.

Rationalization is the result of two types of generating conditions and can assume different forms. What holds for differentiation also holds for rationalization: there is more than one path of rationalization in modern society. Rationalization is made possible by both the disenchantment and

40. An interesting concept trying to mediate between differentiation and dedifferentiation is the concept of "uneven" differentiation. See Colomy 1985. But, ultimately, he remains tied to the elitist perspective complemented by the idea that there must be structures providing a refuge or haven for critical (i.e., powerless) elites.

the reenchantment of the world.[41] The social preconditions for this difference are the differences between the high and the low cultures of modern society; both cultures are rationalized in different ways. Their differences consist in the differential use of the symbolic resources that are at a society's disposal. There are two ideal types of rationalization: disenchantment, which is related to the dominant groups in society, and reenchantment, which is related to the dominated groups. Both processes produce different images of the modern world, images that I refer to as "official" and "unofficial." What looks, when seen from the Weberian perspective, like historical vacillation between rationality and irrationality can be seen as the rivalry between an official and an unofficial type of rationalization. This difference has become central in deciding the course of modernization.

Among the best examples of the official version of rationality is legal rationality. There are, however, other symbolic universes based on this type of rationality. For example, the symbolic universe of political discourse and that of scientific discourse contribute in their specific manners to the official rationality of modern society. Rationalization triggered by these forms of rationality ends up, as Weber has argued, in disenchantment.[42]

Rationalization takes a different course when strong cultural movements put a society's accepted practices and ways of thinking, that is, its hegemonical symbolic order, into question.[43] Such movements can be brought about by psychic or ecological crises that cannot be resolved by purely political or economic means. Rationalization that takes a direction other than the official one ends up in reenchantment. Whether rationalization really takes this direction depends on the developmental paths set by such cultural movements.

Reenchantment does not necessarily mean "irrationalization." Reenchantment can be based on the old symbolic resources of religious orientations.[44] For example, we know the extent to which Catholic and Protestant ideas still influence individual and group choices in the continuing path to modernization. We know the effect of non-Western religious

41. The discussion about disenchantment and reenchantment refers above all to the religious aspects of rationalization. See Tiryakian (this volume). Lechner (1985) also takes reenchantment into account but reduces the conditions leading to reenchantment to discontent, that is, to a negative orientation toward social action. Thus the elitist theoretical stand can be kept.

42. These examples of rationalization are ones identified by Weber. For a systematic discussion of the different aspects of rationalization see Habermas 1981 (1:114ff.).

43. Cultural movements and countercultures are a difficult subject for theoretical treatment. For one attempt see Yinger 1982.

44. Reenchantment, conceived as the development of posttraditional religion, is a counterprocess to the process of secularization. For such a restatement of the notion of secularization see Werblowsky 1976. [

traditions on the process of the social production of the modern social order. Weber has proposed the difference between this-worldy and other-worldy orientations to distinguish between different symbolic logics.

Beyond such religiously based forms of reenchantment another form of reenchantment is the attitude toward nature. This form of re-enchantment challenges the productivist image of modernity, which is defined by its instrumental relation to nature, with a romantic image of another modernity that is defined by the integration of society into nature. This reenchantment leads to a rationalization of a more moral kind. Weber called this moralization "material" rationalization.[45] It questions the dominance of formal rationality and serves as the vehicle, as Weber saw it, of an irrational rationalization.

But Weber's interpretation is misleading. Both processes are contradictory forms of rationalizing the modern world. In traditional societies cultural differences center around the poles of orthodoxy and heterodoxy. In modern societies they center around the poles of formal and material rationality. But how do we decide on their respective degrees of rationality?

3.3. Falling Short of Modernization

The question of rationality comes up on both levels of the reproduction of modernity: on the level of differentiation and on the level of rationalization. When functional differentiation is substituted by segmentary forms of differentiation, a social structure emerges that is unable to reproduce the class structure of modern society. Moreover, when rationalization is replaced by a new magical image of the world, a cultural system emerges that is unable to reproduce the collective practices underlying the production of modernity. In this case a manifest regression occurs. But can we describe such a development as "irrational"? In addition, on the levels of differentiation and rationalization we are also confronted with antagonistic paths to modernization. Whether one of these paths is more rational than the other becomes a problem for a theory of modernization.

The key to these problems is not the theory of differentiation but the theory of rationalization because this theory contains the double problem: to look at the way the social order is rationalized and to identify the criteria for distinguishing what is to be considered as rational. Thus the theory of rationalization cannot escape the process of rationalization of which it is part.[46]

45. The concept of material rationalization was originally developed by Weber using the example of the legal postulates for justice.

46. The reflexivity built into the idea of rationalization has been treated by Habermas 1981 (1:106–13).

There are only two ways out of this problem: either to postulate a substantive normative criterion of rationality or to identify the social conditions that are necessary for rationalization to occur. The first solution is tautological because such a postulate itself becomes part of the symbolic struggles pushing rationalization in whatever direction. The second solution is to see the social conditions of rationalization as the "procedural" norms[47] that are necessary for rationalization and to examine whether they are in evidence and, if so, to what extent.

Reduced to its procedural form, the ultimate ground of the rationality of modernity, then, is that we can choose our symbolic orders, that we are not stuck with any one type of rationality, and that we can at any time abandon what we have ceased to accept rationally. Whether or not such a rational outcome is to be expected has to be treated as an open question. Classical modernization theory seems to have already decided this question by describing modernization as rationalization. In the following section, however, I show that this modernization is not necessarily a rational one. Therefore, modernization theory has to incorporate a more explicit notion of rationality into its conceptual framework. I suggest that we look for procedural rationality on the level of the conditions generating what has been called rationalization.

As I have shown, rationalizing the modern social order is dependent on two mechanisms. First, rationalization is the net result of social struggles between social classes. Second, these social struggles are dependent on collective learning processes to reproduce the cultural conditions of their existence. Thus two mechanisms are necessary to arrive at a modern social order. Although difficult to achieve, such a social order is even more difficult to reproduce. It has to be assured that learning processes and class conflict can go on. When reproduction fails, then social development regresses or is rigidified. The historical process becomes "pathological." The result of blocked class conflicts and blocked learning processes is the pathogenesis of modernity.[48]

Historically, pathological processes seem to predominate. Collective learning processes are more often blocked than released. Associations more often turn into forms of interaction producing enemies rather than forms favoring learning processes. The history of modern associations is much more a history of private feuds than a history of learning.

47. The concept of procedural norms has close links with communication theory. This point is examined later in this chapter.

48. The pathogenesis of modernity has been the topic of the classical discussion concerning the "German road to modernity." The central problem of this discussion has been whether there is such a thing as a "normal" road to modernity that can be attributed to a country.

The same applies to class conflict. Often class conflict is neutralized by populist appeals or reduced to an elitist struggle.[49]

Either way, the result is cultural conflicts that try to mobilize either the moral majority or the moral minority. Fascism radicalizes the moral majority: it offers integrative formulas with racist, nationalist, or imperialist orientations. Terrorism is the radicalization of a moral minority and is exemplified by the Jacobin terror after the French Revolution, the terror of Stalin, and that of the Khmer Rouge. Whether class conflict ends up as fascism or moral terror depends on the cultural logic of a modern society.

This conceptualization allows us to tackle the problem of pathological developments in a more promising way. Although associations "learn" and social classes "struggle" with each other, modernization nevertheless fails. Nationalism mobilizes expressive resources that are not rationalized by the former factors. Fascism mobilizes sentiments that cannot be controlled by the modern political and social movements. But why do such pathological developments occur? Why are learning processes blocked? Why is class conflict negated? What are the cultural foundations that make possible such outcomes?

A provisional answer to these questions can be given here. Ultimately, it is the symbolic universe in which a society lives that seems to be the decisive factor in determining whether modernization, once triggered and set into motion, will actually succeed or not. Variations concerning the degree of associational life and class conflicts in modern societies raise secondary questions: Why is there no socialism in the United States? Why is there such a strong tradition of class conflict in England? Such factors determine the tempo of modernization and the injustice tied to it. But they do not block modernization.

The crucial question, then, is why modernization in some societies within this reach of variations fails—at least for some time. It does so because there are cultural traditions that become dominant in specific phases of modernization. An example is the German modernization experience in the second half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries.[50] Although starting modernization like the other European nations, collective learning processes and social struggles over the cultural orientation of modernization were blocked in favor of a civil society that was controlled by the state. The state took tight control over associations, thereby controlling collective learning processes. The state also neutralized class conflict, thereby imposing a symbolic order on

modern society. The modern culture was created in an authoritarian manner. And as long as this type of creation remains dominant the possibility of pathological cultural evolution exists.

Therefore, the key to explaining the path of development leading into modernity lies in the learning processes and the symbolic practices in the sphere of culture. These processes and practices determine not only the type of rationalization (disenchantment or reenchantment) that will take place, thereby restricting the possibilities of structural differentiation, but they also determine the degree of rationality. Thus we will be able to regard the counterprocesses to functional differentiation and formal rationalization not as simple aberrations[51] from the path of modernization but as possible outcomes of modernization. The normality of differentiation and rationalization is precisely not the point. The question of normality and pathology is rather a question of the social conditions generating differentiation and rationalization. Only by taking into account the conditions that block collective learning processes and symbolic struggles will we be able to explain pathogenetic forms of differentiation or dedifferentiation, of disenchantment or reenchantment.

The description of modernizing processes as pathogenetic developments, which is much in vogue today, is a communication about the conditions that trigger collective learning processes and change the universe of discourse used in class conflict as a means of legitimating practices. Such communication, defined as the condition of rationality, about the pathogenesis of modernity cannot exclude, but can minimize, the possibility for the pathogenesis of modernity.

4. CONTRADICTIONS AND EVOLUTION

4.1. A Theoretical Treatment of Contradictions

The foregoing analysis of the social production of modernity has led to an analysis on three levels: collective learning processes, class conflict, and reproductive structures. This analytical distinction of levels allows for localizing both the structure and the functioning of contradiction as the mechanism for originating and reproducing communication. This implicit notion of contradiction must be clarified in the following sections.

Contradiction can be defined as a social event where somebody opposes what somebody else says. This definition leads to a first thesis: the notion of contradiction presupposes the notion of communication. Without communication contradiction is a meaningless category. Only within

49. This critique of an elitist or populist transformation of class conflict is found, for example, in Touraine 1981.

50. For a discussion of the concept of social pathology see Eder 1985a; for the idea of blocked learning processes as indicators of social pathology see Miller 1986.

51. Although it has often been mentioned that different paths to modernization cannot be reduced to aberrations from a master trend leading to modernity, seldom have the necessary theoretical consequences of this observation been considered.

a communicative relationship can contradiction occur at all.[52] This thesis leads to the following corollary: contradictions work on different levels of social reality.

On the level of associations contradiction is the mechanism by which participants in a collective discourse can construct a shared world of meanings. Such a shared world relies on concrete interaction, which forces those engaged in it into a logic that transcends their personal involvement and egoistic interests. A communication on the level of concrete interaction that uses the mechanism of contradiction is bound to the logic of argumentation. Argumentation is in turn a mechanism that binds all engaged in it to a collective reality, one defined by the learning process triggered by communication. Thus contradictions are fundamental for a first type of social reality: the reality of social groups. On this level we have to deal with concrete actors trying to communicate with each other.

But contradiction can be pushed to the point where argumentation is itself put into question: one side can argue against further argumentation and start to resort to power. The reproduction of communication in the group is interrupted. A substitute for the social basis of communication must therefore be found. The new basis is constituted not by social relations between persons but between classes of persons. On this level communication is a mechanism for locating and relocating classes in relation to each other. The mechanisms that force social classes to communicate, that is, to struggle, with each other are those of the marketplace because those who do not participate are necessarily the losers of the game. But at the same time this situation forces institutional agreements in order to reproduce the marketplace. Generating distinctions, that is, a world of social classification, is the result of communication on this level. Thus contradictions are fundamental for a second type of social reality: the reality of social classes.[53] On this level we have to deal with social classes communicating by struggling with each other.

But there is still another type of contradiction that escapes the description of contradictions given so far. These are the contradictions built into the structural effects of group and class action, into differentiation and rationalization. This level of contradiction is not the same as a contradiction between society and its environment because society cannot contradict its environment:[54] the environment is defined by the fact that it does

52. For the centrality of the concept of communication for a sociological theory see—each following different intentions—Habermas 1981 and Luhmann 1984. For the cultural anthropological point of view see Leach 1976. In the following I draw heavily on Miller 1986.

53. To insist on the difference between group and class implies the critique of classical conflict theory as developed by, for example, Dahrendorf (1959).

54. This point is one that Luhmann especially emphasizes. See Luhmann 1984 (191ff., 498ff.).

not communicate. The contradiction I mean is still within society. Thus we arrive at the broadest and most fundamental level of social contradictions: the level of structural contradictions that constitute the social reality of society. Structural contradictions do not constitute communication. But because they are communicated they allow for the reproduction of communication both on the level of group and on the level of class.

The levels of the communicative constitution of social reality can be summarized as follows:

—The first level concerns contradictions between actors communicating with each other. This level constitutes the social reality of the group and the learning processes triggered by communication between actors.

—The second level concerns contradictions between groups engaged in classifying and reclassifying each other. This level constitutes the social reality of class and the social struggles going on between classes.

—The third level concerns contradictions built into the developmental processes that are the structural effects of learning and class conflict. This level constitutes the social reality of society.

Contradictions on all three levels work together to produce social evolution. The implications of this conceptualization for the theory of social evolution can now be clarified.

4.2. Contradictions and Social Change

This discussion of the communicative function of contradictions on different levels of social reality shows that contradictions are the medium and the telos of communication. The telos of communication is not the resolution of the contradiction—for that would imply the end of communication. Rather it is to reproduce communication, to assure an ongoing stream of communication. This ongoing stream of communication means that social reality is something that is always in flux.

This relationship between contradiction and communication opens up a new theoretical perspective on social change. The second thesis concerning a theory of social change follows: contradictions generate social change and these changes are the mechanisms of evolution.[55] This proposition differs from usual conceptions of social change in one fundamental respect: it tries to explain change not by changes in factors outside the system but by internal generating mechanisms. Social change is

55. The difference between my approach and the Marxist strategy consists in differentiating between the changes produced and the evolutionary process that handles these changes. My approach avoids the problem of "misplaced concreteness," which is tied to theories that try to deduce social developments directly from observed actions.

itself a social product. A corollary of this general assumption is as follows: contradictions are constitutive of social change; they produce social change in the process of constituting social reality.[56]

Social change is constituted on the level of association by the very fact of contradicting. Communication exerts a specific constraint: it forces those participating in communication to learn or not to learn. Contradictions can be used to reinterpret the world; if this use is declined, those engaged in the communication must explicitly negate the possibility of learning that is offered to them. In either case social reality changes. In this problem, the theory of practical discourse has its generic field of application: it is an ideal model of the constitution of social reality. It leaves the other levels of social reality to other theories, such as systems theory.[57] Contradictions on this first level produce social change by triggering collective learning processes.[58]

But these learning processes do not suffice to explain social change because not every learning process survives on the level of the institutional order. Social change can therefore be seen on the level of the institutional order as the result of struggles between groups interested in classifying or reclassifying others or themselves. Contradictions on this second level produce social change by forcing social classes into class conflicts.[59]

These conflicts, whether they are described as class struggles or as forms of status politics, have structural effects beyond their intended effects. The structure of communication producing these effects gives rise to a type of contradiction beyond the actors and classes of actors. Contradictions on the level of the reproduction of the conditions generating society produce social and cultural change by mobilizing antagonistic models of reproduction (i.e., differentiation and rationaliza-

56. Here, some possible misunderstandings should be mentioned. The centrality of contradiction does not imply that contradiction is the guarantor of rationality; those who contradict do not necessarily understand those whom they contradict. This also applies to contradictions in class conflict; the result of class conflict is not rational per se. And the same applies for the idea of rationalization; the empirically given process of rationalization (what is real) is not necessarily rational. None of these empiricist presuppositions has to be made. The only thing that counts is the fact of contradiction. Reality is nothing but the environment, which is a continual resource for changing the conceptions of reality.

57. This is the theoretical strategy of Habermas (1981), who is working with two different theories at the same time; the difference between these theories is established by their normative difference.

58. A systematic account of this term is given by Miller 1986. See also Eder 1985a, 1986b.

59. The theoretical treatment of classification leaves open the question of the mode of differentiation used in classification. Whether there is functional, segmentary, or other differentiation remains to be seen. For a special treatment see Schwartz 1981.

tion) that take for their theme the structural basis of communication.[60] Thus Marx's idea of the contradiction between the social relations of production and the forces of production is abstracted to become a contradiction between the antagonistic forms of differentiation and rationalization that are to be specified on each level of the evolution of society.

4.3. Evolutionary Mechanisms

This discussion still leaves open the problem of how contradictions on the different levels of reality are related to one another. How are contradictions that generate learning processes related to contradictions on the level of class conflict? And how are the contradictions on this level related to contradictions on the level of the reproduction of society? This problem leads to a third thesis: the social changes on these different levels are the mechanisms of social evolution.[61] Evolutionary changes are the result of the combined effects of contradictions producing changes on different levels of social reality.

This thesis implies that it is neither collective learning processes nor class conflict nor structural strains alone that explain the evolution of society but their evolutionary interaction. Collective learning processes function like the mechanism of mutation, offering varying patterns of social reality produced in various social groups. Class conflict functions like the mechanism of selection, favoring the patterns of social distinctions that will be integrated into the institutional system of society. Differentiation and rationalization function like the mechanism of reproductive isolation, stabilizing the system of society.

But there is a problem in grafting such an evolutionary-style theory, well designed though it may be for biological evolution, onto the process of social change. The processes described are not tied to a specific evolutionary mechanism. The evolutionary mechanisms these processes serve are interchangeable. This implies that learning processes, class conflicts, and structural antagonisms can all be selection environments. And mutations can result from any of the social processes mentioned. The same reasoning is valid for the mechanism of reproductive isola-

60. This observation points to the central place that a theory of reproduction has for sociological theorizing. A sociology of culture is a necessary and important part of such a theory of reproduction, but it has to be complemented by a sociology of social structure. A new approach to such a sociology can be found in Bourdieu 1980, who works with the concept of a social topology. He speaks, in a manner similar to the language of differentiation theory, about the logic of different fields of action, and of the homologies concerning the social positions in these fields and the homologies of these fields within the general society—both of which reproduce a classified reality.

61. For these discussions on the relevance of the biological model see Plotkin 1982; for a sociological application see Eder 1987.

tion (stabilization). The possible recombinations of mechanisms and processes thus strongly suggest a theory of evolution with a highly complex structure.

An important corollary goes along with this theory of evolution: given these mechanisms, a strict Darwinian theory, which may be defined as a theory that assumes no relation between mutation conditions and selection conditions,[62] is not feasible. A Lamarckian theory would work better. The Lamarckian approach, which assumes a strong relation between mutation conditions and selection conditions, is better suited for explaining the interchangeability of mechanisms and processes in the theory of social evolution. It would allow us to anticipate that the mechanism of stabilization could be transformed into the mechanism of mutation as soon as structural antagonisms became the topic of communication in groups. Or it would allow us to anticipate that the mechanism of stabilization could be transformed into the mechanism of selection as soon as the description of structural antagonisms became a weapon in the hands of one class of actors against another class of actors.

The analysis of modernization, then, demands a much more sophisticated theory of evolution. Evolutionary theory, itself a product of modernization, is a way of describing modern society. As such, it must take into account the force of collective action. It must also take into account the dimension of social and cultural conflict. And it must be able to account for the success or failure of historical developments. It would seem that only an evolutionary theory that leaves open the question of what a modern order is about and that concentrates on the question of the social production of modernity will be able to grasp the changes occurring in society. These are changes that, after all, often contradict the theory of modernization that sociologists have formulated concerning this type of society. But perhaps this contradiction is still another mechanism of change in modern society.

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62. See Harré 1980 (293ff.).

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