

Abstract

Modernization describes the process of change from a traditional, agrarian society to a modern, industrial society. It is not clear what led to the jump into modernity. The roots of modern society are the two great upheavals of the 18th century: the political upheaval caused by the American and French revolutions and the economic upheaval caused by the Industrial Revolution. Industrialization has caused many drastic changes in human society: the craftsman has been replaced by the “unskilled” factory worker. As a result of industrialization, mass populations moved to the cities. The family was no longer a unit of production, but was instead reduced to a unit of consumption and socialization. Finally, the social structures and beliefs of society have changed drastically. Despite many positive aspects, modernization also has a negative side to it. Industrialization is not something a country can choose to do on its own.

Summary

Modernism describes the process of change from a traditional, rural agrarian society to a secular, urban, industrial society.

The modern industrial epoch is only a very small part of the long history of human civilization. Around 10,000 BC, the first hunters and gatherers began to settle down and to cultivate the land. For the first time, mankind was able to produce more food than was needed through the practices of herding and agriculture. This change in human development is known as the "Neolithic" or "agricultural revolution."

The second great upheaval in human evolution was, millennia later, the Industrial Revolution. Max Weber argued that the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century provided a fertile ground for industrialism and modern science. It promoted a new work ethic which paved the way for a modern way of life.

Modern society came about through two great upheavals in the 18th century, one political (the American and French revolutions, which established the political character of modern society as constitutional and democratic) and one economic (the Industrial revolution in Great Britain, which laid down the economic pattern of modern society). The experiences made during the industrialization of Britain became to be seen prototypical for industrialization as such. Through the division of labour, skilled craftsmen were gradually replaced by unlearned industrial workers.

There have been two significant increases in population in the history of humankind. The first occurred after the Neolithic revolution, the second dramatic increase of population occurred after the industrialization.

Modernization processes also caused great changes regarding the structure and function of the family. The family was no longer a basic unit of production, but became a unit of consumption and socialisation.

Another result of industrialization was urbanisation, which proved to have a host of negative consequences, like overcrowding, unsanitary conditions and unemployment.

Furthermore, the explanation for the world was no longer found in religion but in science. Max Weber called this phenomenon “the disenchantment of the world”. Finally, modernization brought significant changes to the very social structures of human existence. Some of these changes were for the better, but modernism certainly had negative consequences, too.

Modernization has not reached the same level worldwide. While some countries have reached high standards of living, others are still underdeveloped. However, industrialization is not something a nation can decide to do on its own; it is affected by many outside factors.

Presentation: "Modernization", May 13th

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Content Questions

- 1. What role did the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century play in the development of industrial capitalism?*
- 2. Which "watershed" events were the origins of modern society?*
- 3. What role did Britain play in the development of the industrial society?*
- 4. Compare the agrarian and industrial society. What are their main differences?*
- 5. What is the "Malthusian check" which affected the population before the Industrial revolution? How was it "overcome"?*
- 6. Compare the pre-industrial and post-industrial cities. What are their characteristics and main differences?*
- 7. In what way did industrialization affect the family and its functions in society?*
- 8. How were religious beliefs affected by modernization?*
- 9. Could it have been expected that the rise of an industrial society would begin in north-western Europe? Why or why not?*
- 10. What does "urbanization" mean?*
- 11. What are characteristics of the post-industrial society?*

Excerpt from Paul Göhre's book *Three Months in a Workshop* (1895)

“[The broachers] had nothing to do but to polish by hand the rough machine-drilled holes till they were true and smooth, an eternal and monotonous drudgery. How is it possible that there can be, in such toil, any joy of work, any inner satisfaction, any mental stimulus or moral development?

Broadly speaking however the evil results of subdivision of labour among our workers in all the categories were greatly lessened by the collective character of our industry, and by the same means the quality of their efficiency was ethically heightened.

Our work was based on the principle of the co-operation of all in each and every article produced [...]

In consequence, the sense of mutual responsibility and absolute interdependence was strong among us, and a lively interest in the result was felt by even the unskilled workmen. [...]

True, most of the men were unconscious of the salutary influence of this community of labour, but to my eyes it was always most patent whenever chance, curiosity or business took conditions obtained, and the activity of many of the workers was inorganic and mechanical, making no demands on the brain-power, so that their industry could not afford the counter-balancing advantages of our own. [Their work was] devoid of every moral and educational stimulus which the biblical idea of work includes [...] His sole duty was to cut into the same place with the same motion and the same rate of speed, or to count mesh after mesh for eleven hours, day after day, work which for an active man with the possibility of growth in him is, in fact, no work of God's service, but a torment of hell. ... This kind of labour was not so common as we know it to be in other industries, yet it was frequent... “

Question 12

What impact can factory work as it is described here have on a man's psyche?

Vocabulary exercise

Find the appropriate words that fit in the gaps. The list of words at the end may help you with this.

1. For more than half a million years, small bands of what we may agree were human beings _____ (walked or travelled without any definite aim or destination) the earth as _____ (“*Jäger und Sammler*”).
2. About 10,000 BC some _____ (“*Jäger und Sammler*”) took to cultivating the earth and _____ (making used to living with or working for humans) animals. This process is called the _____ revolution.
3. With simple stone tools and a social order based on kinship ties they preserved the human species from _____ (an animal that kills and eats other animals) and natural _____ (events that causes great harm or damage).
4. It is not fully understood what produced the _____ (a sudden big increase or change, also: a long or high jump) into modernity.
5. Members of the group of English Protestants in the 16th and 17th centuries who wanted simpler forms of worship are called _____. They valued frugality (what does this term mean?) and hard work.
6. From the enormous potentialities of science and industry, the West acquired a _____ (a force that increases the rate of development of progress) and a dynamism that pointed to a future immeasurably grander than anything previously achieved.
7. Modern society owes its origin to two great _____ in the 18th century, one political, the other economic. (a big change that causes a lot of confusion, worry and problems)
8. Industrial society came to stand as the _____ (the perfect example of) of modern society.
9. Industrialization brings a growth in trade and manufactures. It multiplies the demand that political authorities establish a _____ (reliable) coinage, a standard system of weights and measures etc.
10. In competing with each other, the superpowers _____ (zogen sie hinein) into their respective spheres of influence the less powerful countries of the Second and Third Worlds.

abundance
alienation

anomie
autocratic

calamities	hunters and gatherers
charted on a clock	inducement
city dweller	intrinsicly
clerk	intransigence
closure	kinship
dependable	leap
disenchantment	legacy
domesticating	Manchestertum
drew	momentum
epitome	Neolithic
epitomize	nuclear
eschewed	persuasive
estranged	pivotal
extended	plogh/plow (US)
fragmented	plunging
franchise	
prime mover	
puritans	
roam the earth	
[simple and plain costing little]	
spouses	
stifled	
stirrup	
stone	
strains	
ultimate judgement	
upheavals	
vestige	
viable	