

A Generalized Linkage Approach to Development, with Special Reference to Staples

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The career of development economics in the last 25 years illustrates one of the crucial differences between the natural and the social sciences. In the natural sciences, as Thomas Kuhn has shown, the formulation of a new paradigm is followed by an extended period in which the paradigm is fully accepted and the labors of "normal science" are devoted to its verification, application, and further extension. In the social sciences, on the other hand, the enunciation of a new paradigm not only gives rise to similar sympathetic labors, but is often followed almost immediately by a persistent onslaught of qualification, criticism, and outright demolition that is very much part of normal social science. This situation explains the distinctive intellectual climate of the social sciences: here the confident belief in a genuine cumulative growth of knowledge, so characteristic of the natural sciences, hardly ever has a chance to arise.

The story of development economics since 1950 is a case in point: it tells of progress on the condition that intellectual progress is defined as the gradual loss of certainty, as the slow mapping out of the extent of our ignorance, which was previously hidden by an initial certainty parading as paradigm. The main purpose of the present paper is not to trace the progressive disintegration of the initial paradigm; it is rather to build on one specific critical approach that was elaborated in the course and for the purpose of this disintegration. Nevertheless, if that approach is to be extended, a brief account of the movement of ideas within which it originated is perhaps a useful prologue.

From the point of view of intellectual history, one of the important, though hardly ever mentioned, dates in the emergence of development economics was the publication, in 1948-49, of two definitive articles by Paul Samuelson on the pure theory of international trade.¹ The arti-

¹ Paul A. Samuelson, "International Trade and the Equalisation of Factor Prices," *Economic Journal* 58 (June 1948): 163-84, and "International Factor-Price Equalisation Once Again," *ibid.*, 59 (June 1949): 181-97.