

Some reflections on multiple, selective and entangled modernities and the importance of endogenous theories ¹⁾

In memory of my long-time intellectual friend Imamura Hitoshi

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No objective frame encloses us, we must build our house on our own.

(Th. W. Adorno) ²⁾

There is no point in speaking of a geographically influenced dichotomy between East and West. (Imamura Hitoshi) ³⁾

1. *One reason for the difficulties inherent in the concept of modernity and modernization lies in its semantic ambiguity, in its being both normative and descriptive. Modernity was and still is characterized by the discrepancy between expectation and experience, too. Therefore modernity is always at odds with itself.*

During the last decades modernity and modernization have been a subject of considerable debate not only in the transatlantic realm but also in many non-European regions. It was in this context that Ulrich Beck spoke of the “modernization of modern society” (*Modernisierung der modernen Gesellschaft*). The linguistic construction of this striking expression makes it clear, that the term “modernization” has compelling normative connotations while the term “modern” is used rather descriptively. It is this ambiguity of denoting both the normative and the descriptive which might cause the difficulties that arise when such concepts as modernity and modernization are used.

1) The present text is an edited version of a manuscript that was the basis of a lecture I have given at the conference “Globalization and Modernity in East Asia” on 10th November 2006 in Busan/Korea.

2) Th. W. Adorno, GS (Collected Works) 19, 23f.

3) Imamura, Hitoshi, *Shisoh no seiza* (Constellation of Thinking), Tokyo (Yohsensha) 1987, p. 244.

Two terms suggested by Reinhart Koselleck, a renowned German historian, could be helpful here. He talks of experience-causing concepts and of expectation-led concepts⁴⁾. According to the Bielefeld-based historian - such concepts include for example revolution, patriotism, republicanism, but also freedom and progress, concepts which were taken up by many people in the 18th century when they had hardly any corresponding experience to fill them with, but these concepts aroused all the more expectations. Koselleck comments laconically : the less experience, the more expectation. All these terms that became established with the Enlightenment thus turned into collective singulars. Until the so-called "Sattelzeit" ("saddle time", a term used by Koselleck to denote the time when feudal structures began to crumble), freedom only meant the freedom of those who were in possession of certain privileges. The prince for example had the freedom to hunt in his hunting ground. The peasants did not have that freedom⁵⁾. Equality and fraternity meant mutual assistance, helping each other out among members of the corporation. All these terms, however, gradually took on a more generalized meaning. Freedom was even extended to the whole of humanity. (Kant talked of "each and every human being", after all). Koselleck stresses, that such terms always contain a semantic surplus or rather a potential.

With regard to these experience-void but all the more expectation-led terms, Koselleck also talks of temporal repetition concepts, which means that these concepts have to be continually fulfilled and experienced at the respective point in time. This certainly also applies to the terms modernity and modernization, because they always refer to something that does not yet exist, something that one should strive to achieve.

What makes these concepts special is the fact that - apart from their forward-looking, expectation-led potential - they have been met with scepticism, suspicion and mistrust from the beginning, accompanied by the sometimes ironic but often troubling question, what they are all supposed to be good for. It is not without irony that Koselleck says that these

4) Koselleck, Reinhart, *Begriffliche Innovationen der Aufklärungssprache*. (Conceptual Innovations in the language of the Enlightenment) In : Ulrich Kronauer and Jörn Garber, *Recht und Sprache in der deutschen Aufklärung* (Law and Language in the German Enlightenment), Tübingen 2001, pp.4-26.

5) The semantic change of the concept of freedom was already noticed by Karl Marx and pointed out in the *Communist Manifesto* : "It (the bourgeoisie) has replaced the numerous documented and well-deserved *freedoms* by an unscrupulous freedom of trade." Karl Marx, *Die Frühschriften* (Early Writings), Kröner Taschenbuchausgabe, p. 528. (Italics K.M.)

concepts were contentious from the very beginning, ever since they had gained the character of a collective singular. And these concepts have indeed always been accompanied by the negative experiences of whatever they have committed. It is perfectly obvious to all of us that classic conservatism thrives on the scepticism towards these concepts. From the very beginning, modernity has therefore been at odds with itself.

2. Modernity and modernization is characterized by the fact that it is a process. Modernity is constantly subject to change, which is probably due to the semantic ambiguity and the discrepancy between expectation and experience hinted at in point 1. The historical change from classic liberalism to the social welfare state and its slow disintegration with the corresponding forms of institutional arrangement, identity and life styles is probably an inherent quality of modernity. Communism, too, is part of modernity.

Modernity and modernization is characterized by the fact that is a process. Modernity is constantly subject to change, which is probably due to the semantic ambiguity and the discrepancy between expectation and experience hinted at in point 1. In his book "Sociology of modernity", Peter Wagner revised the transformation process of modern society - a difficult topic to theorize about - by basing it on theoretical foundations taken from A. Giddens and M. Foucault. He did this in relation to the institutional system as well as to everyday practices. For him modernity is a constant balancing act between freedom and discipline (Foucault) and a constant and dialectical process between enabling and constraining (Giddens). He goes through the different stages of modernity, from the golden age of liberalism in the middle of the 19th century, the crisis of modernity at the turn of the century, the closure of modernity - by that he means the established welfare state with its corresponding trade union organisations and its associated life-styles - to the second crisis of modernity, which became apparent in the late '60s. By going so, he writes in regards to the much discussed project of modernity : "It is the relation of affinity, but non-identity between ideas and institutions of modernity that is at the root of most of the problems in analyzing the history of modernity. …… this project (of modernity, K.M.) has never translated into similarly neat and pure institutions. To pursue an analysis of modernity, then, requires a distinction between the discourse on the modern project (itself ambiguous and amenable to a sociology of knowledge as well as subject to historical transformation), and the practices and institutions of modern society."⁶⁾

The metamorphosis of modernity is indeed so evident that we can ask ourselves : Is it permissible to subsume all these diverse phenomena, full of unique contrasts under one epoch with a term like modernity? A few examples would be enough to illustrate the plausibility of this question. Plato actually needed about as much time as Lord Byron to travel from Italy to Greece. Is not the difference between the stagecoach that carried Goethe to Italy and the Airbus that needs just an hour from Frankfurt to Rome much more significant than the difference in travelling experiences between Plato and Lord Byron? What about the contrast between those first industrialists with their top hats and monocles, and modern managers who from their first class seat control whole lines of business with their lap top? Or the differences between the red brick office building from the turn of the 20th century and the glass and steel head-office building of a multi-national corporation? Do they really belong to the same epoch? The ideology of chastity that Victorian gentlemen assumed to be the rule for well-educated young ladies and the sexual permissiveness after the sexual revolution, or ladies in crinolines at soirées and topless bathing at a southern beach today - a greater contrast is hard to imagine. The often excessive talk about post-modernism gives evidence for how easily these enormous contrasts within modernity can delude into assuming the dawn of another epoch. Moreover, the radical changes in family structure, life planning and in living standards are so evident now that the famous saying by Fukuzawa Yukichi is not a Japanese exception anymore, but the standard. Fukuzawa, who had grown up in the late Edo period, and had made a great intellectual contribution to the building of the Meiji Empire, wrote about his life : “I feel as though I had lived twice !”

We would not hesitate nevertheless, to consider all the szenarios I just mentioned as examples of modernity, precisely because of its inherent Protean quality. Why? Because we have long been familiar with acceleration as a distinguishing feature of modernity, because we know that it is exactly this ever accelerating change that is intrinsic to modernity and modernization. Yet Peter Wagner’s description of modernity is not only right in regard to the accelerated processuality, but also because within this process people have always held on to the normative, experience-causing terms of modernity and continue to do so, regardless of what was and is meant by freedom, equality and autonomy.

6) Wagner, Peter, *A Sociology of Modernity*, London and New York, 1994, p. 4. (German : Wagner, Peter, *Soziologie der Moderne*, Frankfurt/NY 1990, p. 25.

3. *But in the way modernization occurs continent-, culture- and nation-specific diversity is evident. Acknowledging the keyword “multiple modernities” enables us to perceive much more clearly the selectivity of various realizations of the expectation-led concept modernity and modernization. From this perspective even Europe is not a monolithic block. But we have to be careful not to get caught in the trap of civilization theory.*

If Peter Wagner is right in postulating that the project of modernity has never been realized in its perfect form, this applies all the more to the diversity of modernity in various countries and regions of this world. We know by now, that even in Europe there are actually more divergences than convergences. The waves of democratisation driven by Catholicism - as pointed out by José Casanova and referring to Poland, Latin America, the Philippines and also to Korea in parts, still remain a challenge for the rather monolinear classic theories of modernity⁷⁾. The examples of economic growth in many countries, including our region, as well as a look back at the European diversity also help to make us aware of the selectivity of modernization. There is (and I quote Habermas) “no linear relationship between the development of a democratic state under the rule of law and capitalist modernization.”⁸⁾ This relationship has to be developed anew in each situation. There are a number of possible options at hand.

In any case, faced with the diversity and selectivity of various forms of modernization, I think, we can justifiably talk of multiple modernities. Even a universalist, such as Jürgen Habermas spoke of multiple modernities when he received the Kyoto Prize (and I quote) : “Japan was the first among the Eastern empires to assume an avant-garde role in confronting the challenge of modernization, while at the same time adhering to, and intensely drawing from, its own cultural resources. These creative achievements provided the first example for what we now call multiple modernities.”⁹⁾ Apart from contingent factors such

7) S. e.g. Casanova, José, Private and Public Religions. In : Social Research. An International Quarterly of the Social Sciences. Vol. 59, No. 1 (Spring 1992), Spp. 17-57. José Casanova, The Sacralization of the Humanum : A Theology for a Global Age. In : International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society, Vol. 13. No.1, 1999, Spt. 21-39. José Casanova, Global Catholicism and the Politics of Civil Society. In : Sociological Inquiry, Volume 66, No.umer 3, Summer 1996, ppS. 356-373.

8) Habermas, Jürgen, Faktizität und Geltung (Facticity and Validity), Frankfurt 1992, Sp. 644.

9) Habermas, Jürgen, Acceptation Speech. In : Inamori Foundation, Kyoto Prize and Inamori Grants 2004. p.73.

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as geography, mineral resources and the changing constellations in terms of world politics, a decisive part is obviously played by what is generally referred to as culture or civilization. Yet a word of warning would be required at this point in regards to all views of essentialising civilization, which I have to dispense with due to space restrictions.

4 . In the past it was always assumed, that, firstly, the Western pattern of modernization would spread automatically, and, secondly, that even if modernization were to initially adopt different characteristics in various parts of the world, due to different preconditions, different modes of modernization would eventually converge, emulating the western pattern. This is the theory of convergence through diffusion. Despite the fact that completely different approaches to interpret modernity were competing with each other, and despite the fact that each of them was based on selective perception, this theory of similar development and unstoppable spread was never questioned.

How easy things were in the past. In the good old times of the 60s and 70s one could naively and casually take for granted the exemplary function of the European achievement in matters concerning modernization. Firstly : the West will spread to the East and South. Modernization was synonymous with Westernization, whatever was meant by that. Secondly : every nation, every region was supposed to undergo a more or less similar developmental process, be it out of its endogenous potential or as a result of contact with the West. The implicated assumption was the eventual convergence of different paths. And hardly anyone saw a contradiction in the convergence through diffusion.

In the West itself, we only see competing interpretations of modernity and modernization in retrospect. Just a few examples : According to Jacob Burckhardt the modern individual emerged as early as the Quattrocento (15th century) as is already implied in the famous title of the fourth chapter of his book on the Renaissance “The Discovery of the World and of Man”, while for Karl Marx the so-called “producing individual” did not emerge in England until the beginning of the 18th century. For the classical history of philosophy, modernity alias the “Neuzeit” starts with Descartes, and Heidegger, who never accepted modernity, still used this classification for his engagement with the concept of modernity, while Nietzsche, another great critic of European modernity, saw modernity already announced by the Socratic turnaround and the following Alexandrian philosophers. We also remember the great dispute between Weber and Sombart in regards to the driving power of modern capitalism. For Benjamin of the Arcades Project (the “Passagenwerk”)

modernity was hell. His friend Adorno, who had to emigrate, always talked of the “wounds of modernity”. For him modern arts - testifying to these scars - were the starting point for the concept of modernity. For Jürgen Habermas, however, who was intellectually socialized in the rich post-national-socialist Federal Republic of Germany, only the project of modernity still counts. It is obvious : all of these interpretations are selective in their respective perception of history.

However, until recently the paradigm of the inexorable diffusion of Western modernity was common to all these perspectives which tried to understand modernity, be they affirmative, cynical, ironic, critical or negative. One only has to read Marx’ remarks about the British rule in India. Or the famous dictum in the communist manifest : as the bourgeoisie “has made the country subject to the city, it has also subjected the barbaric or semi-barbaric countries to the civilised ones, the peasant peoples to the bourgeois peoples, the Orient to the Occident.”¹⁰⁾ This diffusion theory was usually complemented by the conviction that diverse developmental paths - as much as they may differ in origin - will nevertheless converge into common crystal clear structures eventually. North America, Western Germany, New Zealand, Australia but also Norway and Iceland, all have similar modern social structures after all. Why shouldn’t Chile, South Africa, Japan and Korea follow in their footsteps? One of these days the Chinese will also follow suit. This was the general assumption more or less, or certain nations were seen as being incapable of modernization from the outset. The rest of the world adopted this point of view.

5 . The fact that the rest of the world naively accepted this paradigm is not so easy to understand from today’s perspective, considering the many catastrophes western societies had to go through, catastrophes they had unleashed themselves. On closer examination, however, one thing becomes apparent : Other parts of the world or rather other cultural realms have orientated themselves by the way the West saw itself ; a self-concept the West developed as a means of self-affirmation in its phase of consolidation from the middle of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century and in the time after World War II. And that - combined with wealth and power - was convincing enough.

Looking at it in a level-headed way this seems outrageous, since it is hard to understand,

10) Marx, Karl, Engels, Friedrich, Kommunistisches Manifest (Communist Manifesto). In : Karl Marx. Die Frühschriften (Early Writings). Ed. by Siegfried Landshut, Stuttgart 1971 p. 530.

why the rest of the world should have had to follow the example set by western modernization. Especially since there were at least two moral catastrophes, World War I and II, which have marred the image of the West. Additionally, the enormous number of victims the West is responsible for should never be forgot, not only at home, mainly through industrialisation (one look into Friedrich Engels' article : "On the Condition of the Working Class in England" would suffice, and one reading of Gerhart Hauptmann's naturalist dramas or Charles Dickens' "Oliver Twist" and "David Copperfield"), but also away from home through colonisation. How can it be explained that western modernization was nevertheless seen as exemplary for quite some time?

My hypothesis is : The rest of the world adopted this self concept of the West, which it had developed in its phase of consolidation and which then proved effective in forming a certain mentality. The first phase of consolidation happened right after 1848, when Europe had slowly recovered from the political unrest, which itself is immanent to all processes of modernization. In a way Hegel's philosophy of history anticipated all these discources of self-affirmation. Democracy, emancipation, reason and science were presented as complete contrasts to the black continent and the slumbering east. Although, judging by the norms of today, much was left to be desired in the Europe of that time. Women were not allowed to vote and contrasts between classes were close to eruption. At any rate, it was still more civilized than the rest of the world, at least that is what Europe believed and the rest of the world thought so too, despite the atrocious pillages caused by the European assets in the rest of the world.

The second phase of consolidation was the time after 1945, when Europe was slowly recovering from the war with which it had burned the world. A new self-confidence and trust in modern achievements and their intrinsic values was reclaimed. Economic success but also the success in peacekeeping spoke for itself. "The Golden Age of the West", as Eric Hobesbawm has called it, was widely accepted. This means : It was the combination of normativity and success which made Europe so fascinating for the non-European world.

6 . The theory of convergence has been shattered. What we are confronted with now is the reality of multiple and selective modernities. And these are the results of an engagement with the European modernity as well as with endogenous traditions which also belong to modernity, thus, results of interpretation. Such interpretations are intricately intertwined in the same way as modern cultures

and societies are entangled in each other. In this context, we have to stress the significance of endogenous theories. Just as local knowledge is important to ethnologists so local theories should be important to the social sciences.

In the meantime, the theory of convergence has finally been shattered. What we are now confronted with are multiple modernities. I do not consider it necessary to list any examples to prove this. The term multiple modernities also implies that there are selective forms of development of modernization. Pre-war modern Japan for example opted for state-induced industrial development and military expansionism at the expense of democracy, both options being part of modernity. Modernity outside the European core countries is the result of both a selective adoption of again selective national ways of modernization in Europe as well as the selective continuation of endogenous traditions. This means that the process of modernization is a repetitive process of interpretation, which is kept going due to the discrepancy between expectation-led concepts (according to Koselleck) and the experience gained by them.

Modernity as an interpretative process is closely connected to what some historians, sociologists, ethnologists and scholars of culture studies call *entangled modernities* now. There are, however, diverse interpretations of this concept, too.

For the post-colonial perspective, represented by the ethnologist Shalini Randeria from Zurich for example, this term means, that European modernity cannot be imagined without the colonies. It is not only about the economic exploitation of the colonies, which certainly contributed to the original accumulation of capital, nor is it about the cultural transfers from the colonies to the metropolises. It is in fact about the self-constitution of European national cultures. A compelling example she uses is the origin of English literary history, which was initially written down to be able to teach English-speaking Indian pupils, the so-called children of Macaulay, a rough outline of English literature.

This concept, which Randeria called “relationism” between the colony and its colonial masters, can be taken even further with the concept of entangled modernities. By also applying it to Europe, it can be recognized how intricately entangled the separate national paths actually are. Thus, using the term “histoire croisée” (or criss-cross history in English) Benedicte Zimmermann, a French sociologist, and Michael Werner, a German cul-

tural studies scholar working in Paris, have for example succeeded in showing, that even at a time, when Germany and France were two enemy states confronting each other armed to the teeth, they were also copying each other's workers and health insurance and pension schemes¹¹. They copied quite a lot from each other. Bismarck's reform was by no means a patented invention of the German Reich. Colonial masters also learned from each other. The Japanese colonial government in Seoul specifically sent scholars to Prussian Poland in order to study Prussian language politics.

There is however an even more far-reaching version of entangled modernities, which I consider to be of greater importance. It is the insight that every modern national culture is in fact a conglomerate of numerous elements and factors which have come from various directions and have turned into a special chemical mixture in the respective melting pot. What we have long known about modern languages, be it English or German, Korean or Japanese, is that every modern language in fact constitutes a kind of linguistic entangledness, and that should also be perceptible in the different versions and mixtures of modernity. The Japanese social security system is after all a mixture of an American Wild-West-security system and the European continental system, which itself is already a mixture of various elements. Japanese pop music used to adopt many elements from the Korean song tradition in the past, probably already in colonial times. Endless examples could be listed here - but an imaginary excursion into kitchens and into the field of gastronomy as well as into the Jazz music scene should be sufficient to provide some evidence for this theory. Nearly 50 years ago the French ethnologist Michel Leiris already drew attention to the fact that cultural development, and modernization in particular, is a process of contacts and exchange relations. He called it "fécondité des contacts" (fecundity of contacts).¹²

What we need now - and I have to keep this very short due to space constraints - are considerations that take into account the significance of local theory traditions. The great European modernization theories have helped us a lot so far. But we have neglected to acknowledge our own theoretical traditions, conceptions of history and attempts to critical-

11) Werner, Michael, Zimmermann, Benedicte, Vergleich, Transfer, Verflechtung. Der Ansatz der Histoire croisée und die Herausforderung des Transnationalen. In : Geschichte und Gesellschaft, Band 28, 2002, pp. 607-636. Werner, Michael, Zimmermann, Benedicte (ed.) De la comparaison à l'Histoire croisée. Seuil (Le Genre humain 42) Paris, 2004, pp. 115-49

12) Michel Leiris, Race et civilisation. In : Michel Leiris, Cinq études d'ethnologie, Paris 1969, p. 51.

ly appraise societies undergoing modernization. Admittedly, these traditions would not have developed in the way we know them today, without these European theory models. The local theory traditions themselves provide an interpretative framework for the reception of the European interpretation of modernity. Theoretical debates on modernity are always the result when different traditions of thought are brought together - in Europe and elsewhere.

The mistake of the Japanese Max Weber-adepts was that they tried to modernize the Japanese society of the post-war period by using Weber's theory, whereas Weber himself, faced with the results of the European modernization process, only tried to reconstruct it in retrospect from his specific local experience and to cope with its paradoxes. It is to my mind, about time however that non-European literary, sociological and philosophical discourses about modernity are not only made in academic discourses acceptable, which could perhaps trigger slightly dangerous forms of self-assertion, but that they should also be used productively as a theoretical basis. The European discourses of modernity will then be seen as respective local discourses, which, like the East Asian or Arabic discourses, can always be universalized and symmetrically connected to other theoretical traditions and thus reflect entangledness much more clearly. This would be the advantage of multilateral learning in philosophy and theoretical sociology in a time of *entangled modernities*.

As Max Weber wrote nearly a hundred years ago : "Increasing intellectualization and rationalization do not, therefore, indicate an increasing general knowledge of the conditions under which one lives."¹³⁾ We need something more, something ethnologists call "local knowledge". And formalized theories may well be able to learn from these local knowledges. In this context, I would like to point out the new Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Sociology, which does not only list sociological keywords of an established western etymology, but also words and expressions which are used in other parts of the world, especially in the Islamic world, China and Japan. These are often expressions for coping with respective experiences with modernity and modernisation like "Seikatsu" or "Seikatsusha" or

13) Weber, Max, Wissenschaft als Beruf (Science as a Vocation") (1919), in : Weber, Max, Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre, Tübingen 1973, p. 594. (H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (eds.), Max Weber, Essays in Sociology, New York : Oxford University Press, 1946, p. 139). Cited in : Wagner, Peter, Soziologie der Moderne, Frankfurt/New York 1995, p. 57, (Wagner Peter, A Sociology of Modernity, London and New York, 1994, p. 26).

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“Seken”, “Tatemaie and “Honne”, “Asabiyya”. It is important to note that they do not always occur as explananda, strange words which are used by the “indigenous people”, but as potential explanantes, which might also gain insight when applied to the social phenomena and processes in the West. The term “charisma”, for example, originated in a certain cultural and social context and can now be used worldwide. Compared to these words, also listed German keywords like “Gemeinschaft” and “Gesellschaft” or “Verstehen” appear to be slightly inadequate. Suddenly, their universal validity seems to be less certain than a few decades ago. These other keywords are not numerous, but this start could serve as a modest attempt at developing a new theory in accordance with the view of multiple modernities.