Over the last two decades, globalization and attendant concepts – most importantly, postcolonialism – have provoked reinterpretations of modernity among theorists and historians globally.¹ Such reinterpretations question the centrality assigned to Euro/America in the making of modernity, stress forces of resistance and autonomous development in societies formerly viewed as objects of Euro/American modernity, and underline the possibility of multiple or alternative modernities. The late 19th and early 20th centuries are particularly worthy of attention in assessing these arguments, as this was a period that has been credited by various authors as a period of globalization in its own right. The essays in this collection are exemplary of such reinterpretation.

I would like to take up in this discussion some problems in these reevaluations of modernity, focusing on differences between a contemporary period of globalization and its antecedents in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These differences also serve to caution us against tendencies to read the earlier period in accordance with the needs and the perspectives of the present. It is not particularly novel to discover, in this earlier period, resistances to Euro/American modernity, calls for alternative paths of development, and even the repudiation of the capitalist economy that dynamized modernity. This was, after all, a period of colonialism, and the near universalization of nationalism, which called for both development after models provided by Euro/America, and resistance to such models in the search for national identity. What is problematic is to assign to these responses meanings that are informed by the experience of contemporary conflicts over modernity; in which the repudiation of Eurocentric notions of modernity tend to outweigh by far the resignation to Euro/American hegemony that marked the earlier period. While they may provide genealogies of the present, or antecedents to contemporary efforts to formulate alternative modernities, I suggest below, these earlier responses were

shaped by a modernity that still in many cases lay in the future. By contrast, it is this hegemony that is in question in the present situation of Global Modernity, marked by conflicting claims on modernity which themselves are post-modern, drawing upon native pasts that already have been worked over by modernity. The contradictions presented by this situation are essential to grasping its differences from an earlier period of which it is both a product and a negation. It makes sense, for the same reason, to distinguish a period of Euro/American centred globality from a contemporary period of Global Modernity.

The implications are not just analytical but political. Efforts to confront modernity in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were quite open to radical ideologies of the left and the right, themselves of Euro/American origin, that offered critiques of capitalist modernity. Nationalism itself appeared as one such ideology, and served in many cases as the medium for the transmission globally not only of ideologies of the right, but also of radical socialist visions of one kind or another that looked past capitalism to the possibility of different kinds of modernity. These ideologies were informed by universal assumptions concerning human futures that had a common origin in the European Enlightenment. The repudiation of Eurocentrism has led also to the questioning of the universalist premises of these ideologies for their complicity in Euro/American colonialism and hegemony, and to the search for alternative futures in culturally conceived native pasts (traditions modernized, we might say). There is an ever-present danger in the culturalist preoccupation with Eurocentrism of a slide into identification of native pasts with their most conservative and particularistic interpretation. Such conservatism, with retrograde political and cultural consequences, increasingly would seem to have the political field to itself as earlier radical ideologies have lost their appeal out of their supposed association with Eurocentrism, reinforced by their abandonment even by regimes that briefly adopted them as their foundational political ideologies.

1. Globalization Then and Now

Roland Robertson has divided globalization in history into five phases: the «germinal phase» (15th to the mid-eighteenth centuries), the «incipient phase» (mid-eighteenth century to the 1870s), the «take-off phase» (1870s to the mid-1920s), the «struggle-for-hegemony phase» (mid-1920s to the late 1960s), and the «uncertainty phase» (1960s to the 1990s).² His depiction as «the uncertainty phase» of the last period, when globalization as paradigm came into its own, is an interesting point to which we shall return; of more immediate relevance here is the coincidence of globalization in this «outline» with the history of the «capitalist

Robertson is not alone in endowing this particular period with formative significance. Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson, in their critique of the concept of globalization, point to this same period as a baseline against which to evaluate contemporary claims to globality, and conclude that at least in terms of the volume and intensity of economic activity between nations and regions of the globe, it is difficult to argue that the last quarter of the 20th century represents more of a condition of globality than the last quarter of the 19th. Most interesting may be the conclusions of a New York Times article from May 1999, of necessity less thorough in scholarship but quite well-informed in the expertise it draws upon, that suggests that in terms of trade, financial investments and transactions and labour flows, the peak of globalization «occurred a century ago, making the twentieth century memorable in economic history mostly for its retreat from globalization. In some respects, only now is the world economy becoming as interlinked as it was a century ago.»

Similar evidence may be found in the realms of consciousness and culture. From the Suez to the Panama canals, the second half of the nineteenth century witnessed the undertaking of grand projects intended to link together different parts of the world. The American railroad tycoon Edward Harriman visualized a railroad line that would encircle the world, and to that end organized an expedition to Alaska in 1899 to investigate the possibilities of building a bridge across the Bering Straits (with imported Chinese and Japanese labour) that would be a first step in his project. Organizers of world fairs, prominent cultural/commercial phenomena across Europe and the United States for nearly a hundred years following the Crystal Palace Exhibition in London in mid-nineteenth century, viewed the fairs as «encyclopedias of the world» that brought together not just peoples and artifacts of the whole world but the world’s knowledges as well. It is also to this period that we owe the great museums that sought to bring within their walls for preservation and research the world, its many presents and its pasts.

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3 Ibid., 59.
4 P. Hirst and G. Thompson, Globalization in Question: The International Economy and the Possibilities of Governance (Cambridge, 1996), especially chapter 2. The purpose of this volume, I should note, is not just to draw abstract comparisons between the present and the past but, rather, to deny the novelty of globalization to argue that the nation-state, and social policies enacted through the state, are still relevant presently. Hirst and Thompson are careful to point out that their arguments are directed against «extreme» globalizers who see in globalization the end of the nation.

5 N. D. Kristof, «At This Rate, We’ll Be Global in Another Hundred Years», The New York Times, 23 May 1999, «The Week in Review».


If such is indeed the case, we might ask, why then did «globalization» have to wait for the end of the twentieth century to emerge to the forefront of consciousness as a new way of comprehending the world? Or, more precisely (if we focus not on the term but its substance), does globalization have the same effect and the same meaning at all times? That globalization has a history does not in and of itself refute the novelty of contemporary processes of globalization. Neither does it prove that globalization is an inevitable evolutionary process, as is recognized by the New York Times article which suggests that the twentieth century may have represented a retreat from late nineteenth century globality. Is globalization then a conjunctural phenomenon, that derives its meaning at any one historical conjuncture from the moments that go into the making of the conjuncture, which are not merely technical or economic but also political and cultural? Since globalization at every moment of its history involves not only integration but also differentiation, how does difference, and the conceptualization of difference, enter into the consciousness of globality – which may be the most pertinent question in our understanding of globalization as paradigm?

Comparison with late nineteenth century globality may be quite revealing in dealing with at least some of these questions. But such comparison, to be meaningful, needs to account for forces not just of integration but also of differentiation. Comparisons of the kind cited above, while they may serve to refute the claims to novelty of contemporary globalization, nevertheless are limited by the very ideological claims that they seek to deconstruct; namely, claims that presuppose globalization as global integration. Integration, however, is only one aspect of the problem, the other being the particular form in which difference is articulated.

While we may perceive in both periods common globalizing forces of capital, there are nevertheless immense technological differences between the two periods that distinguish the one from the other both in the scope and configurations of globality, and the momentum of its processes. What I would like to take up here, however, are the political and cultural differences. The processes of economic globalization in the late nineteenth century coincided with the global diffusion of nationalism and colonialism, whereas contemporary globalization is not only post-colonial, but also post-national (in the sense both of following upon global reorganization of societies into nations, and also proliferating assaults on the nation-state). Culturally speaking, if we are to characterize the late 19th century as a period of intense globalization, we need also to note that this globalization was almost synonymous with the globalization of Euro/American norms. It is not that there was no recognition of difference at the time, but difference was hierarchized in a temporality in which Euro/American economic, political, social and cultural norms represented the teleological end of history. While these assumptions by no means have disappeared from contemporary conceptualizations of globality, they now have to contend with alternative claims to modernity that draw on alternative
historical trajectories. This break-down of Eurocentric hegemony is crucial to grasping globalization as a paradigm.

Nationalism and colonialism in historical hindsight were at once products and agents of a Eurocentric globalization. This is quite evident in the case of colonialism which followed from Euro/American expansion over the world, and also served to bring the colonized within a Euro/American orbit economically, politically and culturally. It is less evident in the case of nationalism, especially the emergence of the nation-state which, in its territorial presuppositions, seems to contradict the imperatives of globalization. A number of observers, prominent among them Robertson, have suggested, however, that the nation-state itself was a product of the prior emergence of inter-state relationships, which more or less forced nationhood on a previously diverse set of political systems, ranging from the tribal to the imperial. The global spread of the nation-form from the second half of the nineteenth century in turn contributed further to processes of globalization in two ways. First was the diffusion globally of the juridical principles regulating not only relationships between states but also relationships between states and their constituencies. Second was the erasure in the name of national cultural homogeneity of local differences within the nation. That these processes took different paths in different places, and remained incompletely realized, should not distract us from the revolutionary role that they have played in the course of the twentieth century.

Nationalism and colonialism, even as they contributed to globalization, also divided the globe in new ways into national and colonial spaces, which represented a decline not just from globality, but, more precisely, a Eurocentric globality. They did not, therefore, undercut the vision of a Eurocentric end to history either among the proponents or the opponents (especially the socialist opponents) of a capitalist world order. The 19th century, especially the second half of the 19th century, coincides with the emergence of the social and cultural sciences as we have known them, including history. A hierarchical ordering of global differences informed not only the division of labour among the emerging social sciences, but their content as well; as the peoples of the world were placed in the new order of knowledge according to their presumed distance from Euro/Americans, and their potential for living up to universal political and cultural norms for which the reference was contemporary Euro/American «civilization». The price of failure to live up to those norms would be not just marginality but physical and/or cultural extinction.

More than any other realm, it is the world of culture, and cultural assumptions about knowledge, that points to radical differences between the worlds of the present and the late 19th century, that are not to be captured by statistics on trade, investment and labour flows. The scientists and even the environmentalists like John Muir whom Edward Harriman gathered to accompany him on his expedition to Alaska were there to gather botanical, zoological and cultural artifacts because
they were convinced that progress (of the kind envisioned by Harriman) would lead to the extinction of much that was in Alaska. The World’s Fairs of the 19th and 20th centuries gathered peoples from around the world in their exhibits, but there was no question whatsoever about the hierarchies that shaped the exhibits. The organizers of those Fairs were so assured of the supremacy of Euro/American capitalist modernity (with colonialism as its most cogent evidence) that it would have been impossible for them to imagine that a hundred years later the descendants of Geronimo and Sitting Bull, who were put on exhibit in different fairs, would be demanding the return of ancestral bones with which the scientists of the age were stuffing their museums. They had no need to think global (any more than they did multicultural), because they were convinced that those around the globe who did not respond to the demands of reason and progress would soon go out of existence.

There is a wide range of answers to the question of the emergence of globalization as a paradigm at the end of the 20th century; most of them technology driven, and focused on the unification of the globe: from Marshall McLuhan’s «global village» to the view of the earth from outer space to the internet. Answers that address only issues of global unity seem to me to be lacking, however, in their failure to address the simultaneous phenomenon of global fragmentation, and render globalization into little more than an advanced stage of modernization. One answer that is often ignored, that seems to me to clamour for a hearing, is that the awareness of globalization is at once the product of a making of a Eurocentric order of the world, and of its breakdown, which now calls upon our consciousness to abandon the claims of Eurocentrism while retaining consciousness of globality, which would have been inconceivable without that same order. It was necessary, before globalization in this contemporary sense could emerge to the forefront of consciousness, for a Euro/American globality to lose its claims to universality as the end of history – which is evident in our day most conspicuously not in the economic sphere where those claims may still be sustained, but in the realms of culture and knowledge, which display a proliferation of alternatives to Eurocentrism. The latter, ironically, are voiced most strongly in societies empowered by success in the capitalist economy, the very products themselves of capitalist globalization. The cultures and the knowledges that they proclaim draw upon native pasts, but by no means point to a return to those pasts, as the pasts now revived are pasts that have been re-organized already by a consciousness of a century or more of social and political transformation; they are, in other words, not just postcolonial and postnational, but perhaps even postglobal, as cultural contention and competition is played out presently on a terrain that itself presupposes an uncertain globality.
2. Global Modernity

I understand the term global modernity in the singular, as a «singular modernity», to use Fredric Jameson’s phrase, that is nevertheless productive of contradictory claims on modernity for which it has come to serve as a site of conflict. My insistence on the singularity of global modernity arises out of a recognition of some validity to arguments for globalization, and the global commonalities it implies. At the same time, global modernity as concept is intended to overcome a teleological (and ideological) bias embedded in the very term globalization for global commonality and homogeneity. It recognizes as equally fundamental tendencies to fragmentation and contradiction that are also products of globalization, and of past legacies that find exaggerated expression in their projection upon a global scene. 

Globalization in this perspective implies not just some naive expectation of a utopianized global village or, conversely, an undesirable global hegemony, depending on perspective, but a proliferation of boundaries globally, adding new boundaries to already existing ones even as modernity is globalized. Notions of multiple or alternative modernities, in rendering into units of modernity traditions that are themselves the very products of modernity, in fact universalize the claims of modernity by appropriating them as endowments of otherwise vastly different and complex pasts. These claims often are also oblivious to the historicity of the present, and assume that present differences or commonalities may be read into the future, which is quite problematic. The long historical struggle against colonialism and unequal power relations has given way over the last two decades to conflicts over modernity, informed by national or civilizational cultural presence in globality even as nations and civilizations are rendered more tenuous in their existence by the globalizing pressures of an expanding transnational capitalism. This is also what renders the past – colonial modernity – quite relevant to the understanding of the present, with intensifying struggles to reconfigure the relationships of power that have shaped the world as we confront it today.

The globalization of modernity needs to be comprehended not just in the trivial sense of an originary modernity reaching out and touching all, even those who are left out of its benefits, as in the ideological deployments of globalization, but more importantly as a proliferation of claims on modernity. Traditions so-called no

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8 I stress this point in order to distinguish the argument here from approaches to global modernity in the plural, as in the case of the essays included in the collection, *Global Modernities*, ed. M. Featherstone, S. Lash and R. Robertson (Thousand Oaks / Calif., 1995), or in the special issue of *Daedalus*, «Multiple Modernities», edited by S. N. Eisenstadt: *Daedalus* 129, 1 (2000). The former volume renders «global modernities» into a stand-in for globalization. The *Daedalus* volume recognizes the singular origins of modernity, but some of the contributions nevertheless stress differences based on culture over the commonalities of modernity. These approaches are problematic, I think, precisely because of their tendency to sweep under the rug issues of the colonial in modernity in the name of globalization. For «singular modernity» see F. Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (London, 2002).
longer imply a contrast with modernity, as they did in modernization discourse. Nor are they the domain of backward-looking conservatism, except in exceptional instances – such as the Taliban, for instance. They are invoked increasingly to establish claims to alternative modernities (but only rarely, to alternatives to modernity). They point not to the past, but taking a detour through the past, to an alternative future. They have taken over from a now defunct socialism – even in formally «socialist» societies, such as the People’s Republic of China, the task of speaking for those oppressed or cast aside by a capitalist modernity, and pointing to different possibilities for the future.

The irony is that these claims to difference in most cases presuppose a commonality where assumptions of progress and development are concerned in a fetishization of development – i. e., developmentalism – for which the sole model is capitalist development, with some local modifications the future of which remain highly uncertain. The contradictions they present are very real and significant culturally and politically. Bolstered by success in development, assertions of cultural difference proliferate, breaking down the universalist presuppositions of Eurocentric models of modernity. But the cultural assumptions of claims to difference are themselves subject to disintegrative forces in their very mobilization in the cause of development, as development produces social and cultural forces, including cosmopolitan classes, that are not easily containable within imagined cultural crucibles. This is what I have in mind when I refer to the universalization of the contradictions of a capitalist modernity; not just between societies but, more importantly, within them. If this indeed is the case, contemporary arguments over universalism versus particularism, homogenization versus heterogenization, and even postcolonial notions of hybridization, Third Spaces, etc., are largely off the mark, and hinder, rather than help, analysis. First, because such arguments tend toward an either/or approach to these questions, avoiding the possibility – quite visible globally – that both tendencies may be at work, not in some facile process of hybridization, or the substitution of hybrid spaces for essentialized spaces of old, but in the proliferation of spaces and the contradictions they present.

Secondly, the focus on Eurocentrism in such arguments, where they avoid the question of capitalism, restrict analysis to the level of abstract cultural, national, or civilizational values, ignoring the very significant transformations at work in the globalization of technological values and attendant cultural practices, that are very much bound up with the universalization of capitalism, however it may be modi-

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9 I have discussed this in a number of places for the case of China, most notably in «Confucius in the Borderlands: Global Capitalism and the Reinvention of Confucianism», Boundary 2 22, 3 (1995), 229–273. For an illuminating discussion of the manner in which assumptions of modernity were internalized in Indian history, see G. Prakash, Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India (Princeton/N. J., 1999). Prakash’s discussion is particularly relevant here for his deployment of «colonial modernity» in addressing this issue.
fied otherwise to suit localized needs. The claims of Eurocentrism to universality may be dead. We may hardly say the same of the capitalist civilization which was the historical creation of Europe and North America, which now rules the world even where its origins may have been forgotten, or ignored. We need to take seriously the distinctive claims to different pasts and different futures in what someone like Guéhenno perceives the «resurgence of histories» suppressed under the regime of modernity. But neither can we ignore that the cultural endowments which justify such claims have been infused thoroughly with the everyday values of production and consumption that are characteristic of capitalist society, in the invention and propagation of which Europe and North America still play key roles, even when they no longer provide directly the agents who propagate those values. The globalization of production and consumption through transnational agencies, most important among them transnational corporations still based for the most part in Euro/America, is in the process of creating a «transnational capitalist class» that shares not only similar occupations but similar education and lifestyles as well.¹⁰ One of the most important developments of recent years is the transnationalization of University education, not just with the increased attendance in First world universities of elites from the Third World, but the export from the First World to the Third of both models of education, and of actual university campuses.¹¹ The relationship is not itself new; but it is not insignificant that what once was undertaken by missionary activity is now conducted directly by an educational apparatus (educational institutions, educational consultants, publishers), that is not only under the direct sway of corporations, but increasingly model themselves after corporate management, and play a strategic part in the technologization and marketization of education itself.¹² Multiculturalism, itself invented by transnational corporations, appears in this perspective as a way of managing difference within a context of commonality (without which difference would be meaningless).


¹¹ This development needs much closer attention. For one illuminating discussion, see K. Olds, «Articulating Agendas and Traveling Principles in the Layering of New Strands of Academic Freedom in Contemporary Singapore», in: Global Ideas: How Ideas, Objects and Practices Travel in the Global Economy, ed. B. Czarniawska and G. Savon (Copenhagen, 2005), 167–189. In 2003, the leadership of Beijing University (one of the premier educational institutions in the People’s Republic of China) created a furor with plans to transform the university, including changing instruction to English. For a collection of the debates that ensued, see Qian Liqun and Gao Yuandong (eds.), Zhongguo daxuuedu wenti yu gaige [Problems and Reform of Higher Education in China] (Tianjin, 2003). See also Dai Xiaoxia, Mo Jiahao and Xie Anna (eds.), Gaodeng jiaoyu shichanghua [Marketization of Higher Education] (Beijing, 2004); and Wang Xiao, Quanqiuhua yu Zhongguo jiaoyu [Globalization and Chinese Education] (Chengdu, 2002).

¹² The University of Liverpool in the UK announced at the end of October 2005 that it was establishing a campus in the PRC jointly with Xi’an Jiaotong University, that would concentrate on technological subjects. According to a report, interestingly, the campus is to be located in Suzhou Industrial
Thirdly, therefore, debates over issues of culture are increasingly meaningless to the extent that they take as their units nations, civilizations, or so-called «cultures». The increasing visibility of a transnational capitalist class would suggest different locations for culture. This class may partake of local characteristics, but it is unified also by participation in a common organization of the political economy, a common education, and common life-styles that not only provide them with a «thirdspace» of their own, but also distance them from their immediate environment – sometimes behind locked gates in emulation of American life-styles. The same may be said of other social groupings. Notions of gender are increasingly globalized, as women, depending on class, engage in similar cultural practices globally, or gather together to struggle against the ravages of globalization. Migrant tradespeople and migrant workers, at the other end of the social scale, come to partake of a common culture, as they move back and forth across boundaries of nation and continent, contributing to the appearance of globalization, but also profoundly transforming societies both of departure and origin. The point in all of this is not global homogenization or assimilation to global roles, but a question of material and cultural contexts that are at once products of these processes, and launch societies in new directions, creating new kinds of unities as well as new kinds of fractures. Any exploration of contemporary global processes needs to be attentive to this question of the «location of culture,» to borrow Homi Bhabha’s felicitous term (against his intentions),\(^{13}\) that is no longer associated with nations or civilizations, in spite of all the apparent evidence presently of conflicts between so-called Christian, Islamic, Confucian, etc., civilizations or nations, which serve more as mobilizing ideas than as descriptions of life at the everyday level in the societies so depicted. Such conflicts need to be taken seriously, as mobilizing ideas do come into play as important historical forces, but they should not blind us to the complexities presented by simultaneous forces making for global commonality, on the one hand, and the many other dimensions of global fractures, on the other. I might add that globalization appears here as only one dimension of a historical process that has many other dimensions – an add-on to existing forces of the many dimensions of localization that has the power to reconfigure those forces, but gets reconfigured itself in the process. Such are the contradictions of global modernity.

If I may summarize briefly here what I take to be the outstanding features of «Global Modernity», there are four aspects to it that distinguish it as a concept both

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from an earlier period of modernity, and globalization. First, Global modernity is in many ways the contemporary resting place of globalization. Stated differently, globalization as we have known it – driven by capitalism – is not something that is happening that has yet to fulfill its promise, or something that is about to happen. It already has happened. And the result is Global Modernity. True, «Empire» as Hardt and Negri have identified it is very much a fact of Global Modernity, with the United States as a supreme military power claiming global sovereignty for itself while on occasion denying to others even their claims to national sovereignty.14 But this is an Empire ridden with contradictions; which open up the spaces for alternatives to its rule. Within these spaces there are appearing challengers to Empire, legitimized not only by modern ideals of democracy, justice and popular sovereignty, but also by the revival of past legacies; which are not merely residues from the past, but represent legacies that already have been worked over by modernity; in other words, they are postmodern. The conflicts between these legacies are over alternative claims to modernity, and as they are divided by such claims, and conflicting interests, they are also grounded in a common terrain defined by a globalized capitalism.

Despite enormous differences in power, levels of material development, and incorporation within a global capitalist economy, secondly, Global Modernity is characterized by temporal contemporaneity, which distinguishes it from an earlier Eurocentric modernity. It was only about two decades ago that Johannes Fabian published his classic critique of Anthropology, *Time and the Other*, where he argued that the denial of «coevalness» to the Other was fundamental to the Eurocentric teleology of modernity.15 Already in the early 1980s, Europe's East Asian «Others» were claiming possible superiority in the development of capitalism. Modernization discourse had drawn a clear line between tradition and modernity, and rendered their relationship into a zero-sum relationship: the more modern, the less traditional. East Asian «tigers», so-called, already felt empowered by their success in the capitalist economy to claim that the «Confucian» tradition they drew upon was a force not of backwardness (as it had been earlier) but of success, a claim that was backed by their cheer-leaders in Europe and North America. At about the same time, the Iranian revolution of 1979 brought forth claims about the modernity of Islam. One by one, societies globally have revived or proclaimed the compatibility of their traditions (or cultural legacies) with modernity, and made it the basis for their claims to alternative modernities. The advanced-backward distinction has not disappeared from mutual perceptions between nations, «cultures» and «civilizations», but is overdetermined increasingly by differences within the same population, including the fundamental structural differentiation of those who are on the

pathways of global capitalism and those who are not. Global Modernity by no means represents the «death» of the nation-state or of nationalism. On the contrary, the last few years have witnessed both a proliferation of nationalisms, and a strengthening in the power of the state vis-à-vis the population. The transformations associated with globalization have been of a different kind, in the abandonment by states of their responsibilities to large sectors of their populations, and a shift of attention from national surfaces to global nodes in the pursuit of development (not to be confused with obliviousness to national borders).

The globalization of capitalism, thirdly, has reconfigured global relations. The tripartite spatialization of the world produced during the Cold War years was internalized in modernization discourse. The fall of the Second World of socialism, and the appearance of new centres of capital from the 1960s has ended up scrambling this neat geographical spatialization, also raising questions in the process about nations as viable units of the economy, politics or culture. What is called globalization is in reality a conglomeration of phenomena that occur at different scales, from the global to the regional to the national to the intra-national and the local. This spatialization is complicated further by the persistence of earlier spatializations, such as the colonial spaces to which I have referred above, as well as spaces of indigeneity. There are presently First Worlds in the Third (e.g., Shanghai), and Third Worlds in the First (e.g., New Orleans). Global Capitalism moves along networks, with global cities at its nodes. This has also meant the shift of economic activity from surfaces to networks. Suffice it to say here that as capital (and associated) organizations move along the networks, those who are not on the networks, or are outside of the network economy, fall through the cracks, and feel the effects of the global economy only by its inductive effects on their livelihood. The majority of the world’s population is now in a process of marginalization or, as some anthropologists have put it even more strongly, «abjection – being thrown down and thrown out of the global».

Fourthly, it is not entire spaces that are being left out of the global economy (which exposes eloquently the ideological basis of globalization), but also entire groups of people across national boundaries. Class structuration, in other words, has gone global with the appearance of a «transnational capitalist class», and comparable class, gender and ethnic formations at different scales. This renders misleading those arguments that continue to take nations and civilizations as their units. Such arguments ignore the transnationalization and translocalization (to be distinguished from globalization) of economic, social and cultural formations. Differences that are taken to be differences between nations and civilizations are, more often than not, also differences within the same society that are hidden from

16 J. R. Friedman, «Ambivalence, Abjection, and the Outside of the Global: On Statementality», 5, unpublished paper. I am grateful to Prof. Friedman for sharing this paper with me.
sight when the focus is on the inside/outside of national and civilizational boundaries. Classes, genders and ethnicities, as well as organizational formations of one kind or another – from NGOs to transnational corporations to professional organizations – are as much the «locations of culture» as are nations and civilizations, complicating both social formations and cultural configurations. It is these complications that make it difficult to speak of imperialism, or of cultural homogenization or heterogenization. Where all this may end up is hardly predictable at this point as capital itself (not to speak of states) seems to have lost all vision of the future, beyond the manipulation of existing differences for purposes of immediate power and profit. It is for the same reason that it is meaningless to speak of «alternative modernities», as if cultural revivalisms of the present may be read teleologically into the future. It is this state of affairs, with a surplus of history but deficit of future that the concept of Global Modernity seeks to capture. It may be for the same reason that most of our contemporary vocabulary of «posts» refer primarily to the past, without the courage or the hope to name the future.

Global modernity appears at one level as the end of colonialism, a product of decolonization that has enabled the surge into modernity, as alternatives to colonialist modernity, of the formerly colonized. On the other hand, it may be viewed also as the universalization and deepening of colonialism, in the internalization into societies globally of the premises of a capitalist modernity that was deeply entangled in colonialism, to which there is now no viable alternative. This ambiguity opens up the possibility that what we are witnessing presently – from the transnationalization of capital to human motions to cultural conflict – is not so much decolonization as the reconfiguration of colonialism as capital is globalized, necessitating the incorporation in its operations of new states that are crucial to global management, and a voice for the classes of its creation who provide the personnel for that management. It is remarkable that the destructuring and deterritorialization of earlier regimes of coloniality, rather than put an end to colonialism, has intensified colonial conflicts – now rephrased as conflicts over globality, «many globalizations» in the phraseology of a recent volume. Earlier colonial structurings of power, including its mappings of both the physical and the social worlds, are still visible in the palimpsest of global geopolitics. They provide both the context and the horizon of global politics even as formerly marginalized states and the subalterns of colonial capitalism enter the fray.

17 P. L. Berger and S. P. Huntington (eds.), Many Globalizations: Cultural Diversity in the Contemporary World (Oxford / New York, 2002). The title refers to the multiplying efforts in the contemporary world to project national / civilizational values on the global scene. In other words, we are all imperialists now, though we may not be equally good at the undertaking!
3. Our Ways of Knowing

Postcolonial criticism, itself very much a product of Euro/American centred colonial modernity, has been obsessed with the question of an urgent need to rescue modernity from its subjection to its Eurocentric legacy, and to bring into its interior the legacies of civilizations and traditions marginalized or suppressed in an earlier modernization discourse. In a fundamental sense, this is also what globalization is about as a cultural phenomenon, as it makes room for the recognition of cultural challenges to the universalistic claims of values and knowledges that have their roots in the history of European modernity. These challenges themselves are post-Eurocentric, however, as they presuppose a history in the shaping of which Europe and North America have played a crucial part. They are limited, furthermore, by their complicity with a globalized capitalist civilization which may no longer be identifiable directly with Euro/America, but which is a powerful force in the universalization of values and knowledges that bear upon them the marks of their Euro/American origins. Recognition of these contradictions is essential to grasping globalization both as an end to universalism, and as a producer of new universalisms. Rather than a resolution of the problems of modernity, globalization represents most importantly the articulation of the cultural contradictions of capitalism.

Ours is a time of reversals when traditions and ideologies that were assigned by modernization discourse to the dustbin of history have made a comeback with a vengeance, empowered by reconfigurations in global relations, and legitimized by the repudiation of Eurocentrism. A case in point is the Confucian revival in contemporary China. In his seminal work on Chinese modernity published in the 1960s, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate*, Joseph Levenson argued that Marxist historicism had resolved a problem that had plagued Chinese intellectuals ever since the encounter with the Modern West had forced a parochialization of Confucian values from their once universalistic status into the circumscribed endowment of a national past; an endowment, moreover, that was inconsistent with the struggle for modernity. Continued attachment to Confucianism despite loss of faith in its intellectual validity represented for Levenson a tension between history and value. Confucianism, necessary as the historical source of a Chinese national identity, had to be overcome if China was to become a nation.

While not a Marxist himself, and not particularly sympathetic to the Chinese Revolution, Levenson nevertheless sought to understand the source of the appeals of Marxism; which he found in the ability of Marxist historicism to resolve this fundamental tension in Chinese intellectual life by relegating Confucianism into the museum, salvaging Confucius for the nation, but also rendering him irrelevant to the living present. As he put it,

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«Confucius […] redeemed from both the class aberration (feudal) of idolization and the class aberration (bourgeois) of destruction, might be kept as a national monument, unworshipped, yet also unshattered. In effect, the disdain of a modern pro-Western bourgeoisie for Confucius cancelled out, for the dialecticians, a feudal class’s pre-modern devotion. The Communists, driving history to a classless synthetic fulfillment, retired Confucius honorably into the silence of the museum.»

It may be one of the profound ironies of our times that this situation has been reversed since Levenson wrote his analysis: Confucius has been brought out of the museum once again, while it is the revolution that is on its way to being museumified; not by feudal worshippers of Confucius, but by the bourgeoisie who once disdained Confucius, and the Communist Party that remains in power as the beneficiary of that revolution. Levenson’s analysis, and his evaluation of what the revolution had achieved in resolving the tension between the past and the present, was informed by a teleology of modernity; that the claims of the values of ancient civilizations must inevitably be relegated to the past with the victory of modernity as represented by the modern nation. If the pasts of those civilizations have been resurrected once again, it is not only because of the passing of revolutions, but more importantly the questioning of this teleology that has come to the fore as globalization has replaced modernization as a paradigm of contemporary change.

The passing of the Chinese Revolution, as of socialist revolutions in general, may be attributed to their particular failings. Similarly, advocates of the Confucian revival may attribute the revival to the particular virtues inherent in Confucianism. While there may be something to be said for such views, they suffer from a debilitating parochialism that fails to account for a larger historical context where it is not just socialist revolutions that are relegated to the past but the very idea of revolution, and it is not just the Confucian tradition that is at issue, but the return of traditions in general. Nor do such views explain attempts to articulate Confucianism to values of entire regions, such as East and Southeast Asia, or of an entire continent, such as Asia. Further complicating the situation are conflicts that attend these efforts. For all the talk about Asia and Asian values over the last few years, the idea of Asia remains quite problematic, and so do the ideological and cultural sources from which Asian values are to be derived. The most visible competitor to the Confucian revival may be the Islamic revival that has also become visible during this same period; but the period has also witnessed a Hindu revival in India, and right-wing nationalists in Turkey, echoing East Asian nationalists and their Euro/American cheerleaders, have resurrected earlier Pan-Turanian utopias to assert that the twenty-first century will be a Turkish century. In other societies in

Asia, Buddhism continues to hold sway. It is difficult to avoid an inference that all these revivals, coinciding temporally, are products of the same world situation, though they obviously have local inflections depending on social context and ideological claims.

These reversals have been accompanied by challenges to modernity’s ways of knowing. The last twenty years have witnessed calls for the «sinicization» and «islamicization» of sociology. There has been a revival in the People’s Republic of China of the so-called «national studies», which advocates a return not only to the epistemologies but the methodologies of classical studies. The attacks on history and science of thinkers such as Vandana Shiva, Ashis Nandy and Vine Deloria, Jr., gain a hearing in the most hallowed organs and institutions of Euro/American learning. While the effect of such criticism is felt most deeply in the humanities and the social sciences, as abstract a field as mathematics is under some pressure to recognize «ethno-mathematics» as a legitimate area of study. Even US foundations have joined the chorus of criticism against the equation of modernity with Western ways of knowing.  

In a different political vein, it is this situation that prompted Samuel Huntington to conclude that with socialisms out of the way, the major problem of the present was not a problem of conflict between nations but a «clash of civilizations».  

It is important to underline two aspects of Huntington’s argument here. First, that the civilizations he referred to, while they represented long-standing cultural traditions, were not relics of the past but were products of modernity that were empowered by their claims on modernity. Second, that to impose the values of the modern West on these societies would not only not work, but also represented a kind of imperialism.

Huntington’s argument resonates with contemporary cultural claims on modernity in many non-Western societies. It is also echoed, if with greater circum-


pection, in recent efforts to revise modernization discourse. In his introduction to a special issue of Daedalus, entitled «Multiple Modernities», the distinguished analyst of modernity and editor of the issue, S. N. Eisenstadt, writes that the idea of «multiple modernities»

«[...] goes against the views long prevalent in scholarly and general discourse. It goes against the view of the «classical» theories of modernization and of the convergence of industrial societies prevalent in the 1950s, and indeed against the classical sociological analyses of Marx, Durkheim and (to a large extent) even of Weber [...] that the cultural program of modernity as it developed in Europe and the basic institutional constellations that emerged there would ultimately take over in all modernizing and modern societies [...] The actual developments in modernizing societies have refuted the homogenizing and hegemonic assumptions of this Western program of modernity. While a general trend toward structural differentiation developed across a wide range of institutions in most of these societies [...] the ways in which these arenas were defined and organized varied greatly [...] giving rise to multiple institutional and ideological patterns. These patterns did not constitute simple continuations in the modern era of the traditions of their respective societies. Such patterns were distinctively modern, though greatly influenced by specific cultural premises, traditions and historical experiences. All developed distinctly modern dynamics and modes of interpretation, for which the original Western project constituted the crucial (and usually ambivalent) reference point.»

What provokes immediate questions concerning the «multiple modernities» idea is the concomitant ascendancy in contemporary conceptualizations of modernity of globalization as a new paradigm for grasping the reconfiguration of power in the contemporary world. Globalization suggests inescapably that, for all its divisions around issues of culture, the world as we have it shares something in common; which is conceded in the quotations above in Eisenstadt’s reference to an «original Western project» that continues to serve as a «reference point» globally. I have argued myself in a number of places that the discourse of globalization differs from that of modernization by relinquishing a Eurocentric teleology to accommodate the possibility of different historical trajectories in the unfolding of modernity. But that still leaves open the question of what provides this world with a commonality which, if anything, is more powerful in its claims than anything that could be imagined in the past.

It is possible that fear of intellectual reductionism, or functionalism, or simply sounding like a Marxist when Marxism is supposedly discredited, makes for a reluctance to stress the context of current discussions of modernity within the

22 S. N. Eisenstadt, «Multiple Modernities», Daedalus
political economy of contemporary capitalism. And yet, this context is important to grasping not only arguments for globalization, but also the hearing granted to assertions of cultural difference. I would like to underline «the hearing» here, for while cultural differences have been present all along, what distinguishes our times from times past is a willingness to listen to invocations of cultural legacies not as reactionary responses to modernity, inimical to its achievement, but as the very conditions of a global modernity. Especially pertinent to the discussion here is the challenge to Eurocentric conceptions not of modernity but of capitalism that became audible in the late seventies and early eighties with the emergence of East Asian societies as a new center of capitalist power, that remapped the geography of capitalism but also, in its very de-centreing of capitalism, signaled the arrival of a global capitalism. Viewed in this perspective, «multiple modernities» may signify either the proliferation of modernities (in its multiplicity), or its universalization (with the multiplicities as local inflections of a common discourse, but also as its agents).

There is a second problem, however, that points to mappings of the world that are in conflict with arguments for globalization, that calls for attention to a different dimension. The idea of «multiple modernities» is reminiscent of multiculturalism on a global scale, that reifies cultures in order to render manageable cultural and political incoherence; diversity management on a global scale, so to speak. How else to explain the continual slippage in the analyses above into the language of nations and civilizations against the recognition of the internal incoherence of the entities so described? Arguments for «multiple modernities», no less than arguments for globalization, state their case in terms of cultural differences that are aligned around spatialities that are the products themselves of modernization: nations, cultures, civilizations, and ethnicities. Whether or not these are fractures along «primordial identities» of one kind or another may be debatable, but one thing is for sure: that the way contemporary discourses substitute them for earlier mappings of the world contribute themselves to their reification as categories of classification. The notion of «multiple modernities» contributes to this end, in identifying «multiplicity» with boundaries of nations, cultures, civilizations and ethnicities. It is essentially a conservative idea, that responds to claims on or against modernity in the contestation over global power.

What an idea of multiple modernities ignores is that the question of modernity is subject to debate within the cultural, civilizational, national or ethnic spaces it takes as its units of analysis; which may be justifiable when viewed from a global perspective, but appears quite differently when viewed from the inside. The problem of Eurocentrism, its foundation in capitalism as a dynamic force, and attendant problems of modernity are not simply problems between nations and civilizations, but problems that are internal to their constitution. The most important difference between now and then is not the appearance of challenges to Eurocen-
Thus a distinguished Chinese academic and a leader in the «national studies» movement, writes that Chinese tradition must itself be-reinterpreted to accord with the demands of the age, but it contains fundamental ideas that can contribute to the solution of fundamental problems of our age. If the emergence of civilizations marked the beginning of the first millennium, BC, he suggests, the cooperation of «civilizations» may signal the beginning of a second axial age. See Tang Yijie, «Zai jingji quanqiuhua xingshi xiade Zhonghua wenhua dingwei» [The establishment of Chinese Culture in the Age of Economic Globalization], Zhongguo wenhua yanjiu [Chinese Culture Research] 30 (2000, Winter), 3.

On the other hand, a consideration of these questions compels a somewhat more complicated approach to the question of the relationship between globalization and universalism. Globalization may be a consequence of the disintegration of universalism, and in turn has opened up spaces for rethinking alternative ways of knowing. On the other hand, it is too easy in the enthusiasm or despair over globalization to overlook that globalization also serves as an agent of spreading the epistemological assumptions of Eurocentrism, which acquire progressively more compelling power as capitalism is globalized. The social sciences and the humanities as we have known them are not merely «European» or «American», but are entangled in a social system of which capitalism has been the dynamic formative moment. The globalization of capitalism has given additional force to the ideology of development, or «developmentalism», which forces all societies under the threat of extinction to acquire the technologies of knowledge that contribute to this end. These knowledges are no longer just «European» or «American», but are internal to societies world-wide which provide the personnel for the global institutions of capital.

This is not to suggest that other, non-European, traditions may not serve as reservoirs of values and knowledges with which to amend and enrich modern ways of knowing; but, for better or worse, that is not the same as taking modernity out of the picture by an act of will, least of all by intellectuals who are better prepared by their education to participate in Euro/American dialogues on modernity than to serve as representatives of their so-called cultural traditions. We need to remember also that the present is witness not just to revivals of traditions, but also to an enthusiastic embrace by elites globally of the promises of technological modernity. Even the re-assertion of traditions often takes the form of articulating those traditions to the demands of a global capitalism. Where there is a stubborn clinging to imagined traditions against the demands of modernity, as in the case...
for instance of the Taliban in Afghanistan or the Iranian Revolution in its more extreme phases, the result is not acceptance but isolation. On the other hand, those native scholars who have sought to «sinicize» or «islamicize» sociology quickly find out that this could not be accomplished without a simultaneous «sociologization» of Chinese values or of Islam. The very process of nativization reveals the impossibility of sustaining reified, holistic notions of those traditions, which have already experienced the transformations of modernity, and themselves come to serve as sites of conflict between different social interests and different visions of the modern.

It is possible, with some cynicism, to argue that this preoccupation with cultures and civilizations are expressions of intra-elite conflicts within a globalized political economy. What is pertinent here is that this very possibility distinguishes the world of Global Modernity from earlier periods of globalization. It is not merely the complicity of global elites in imperialism and colonialism that is at issue here, but their very integration into global rule as part of the capitalist world economy, and of its organizational and cultural prerequisites and products. The participation of these elites in the global political economy, ironically, also creates the conditions for the decentring of capitalism and modernity, and legitimizes claims to alternative and multiple modernities. It is not very mysterious why such a situation should create pressures to re-read the past to provide the present with a legitimizing genealogy of its own. For the same reason, a critical historiography, while it needs to overcome historical interpretations resigned to the hegemony of Eurocentric ways of reading the past, must also be cognizant at all times of the pitfalls that await the revival in the name of alternative modernities of traditions that serve new interests – and also cover up in the process their very origin in the Eurocentric modernity they seek to challenge.

24 See Ma Liqin, «Lun shuli yanjiude Zhongguohua» [Sinicization of Research in Alienation], in: Shehui-

Globalisierung gestern und heute. Überlegungen zur gegenwärtigen Lesart von Antworten auf die Moderne im späten 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert


La globalisation – aujourd’hui et hier. Réflexions sur la lecture actuelle des réponses – la modernité autour de 1900

La critique actuelle de l’eurocentrisme doit être historicisée. Le statut hégémonique du paradigme de la globalisation crée le besoin de reconceptualiser l’histoire contemporaine comme une histoire de la globalisation. Cette perspective risque de projeter dans le passé la critique actuelle de l’eurocentrisme. La globalité de la fin du 19ème siècle, par exemple, résultait de l’expansion globale du nationalisme et du colonialisme. À l’époque, la critique de l’eurocentrisme allait de pair avec l’acceptation de quelques présupposés centraux de la modernité occidentale, telle l’universalité de l’État-Nation. La critique actuelle de la modernité globale se fonde sur des visions concurrentes de la modernité; elle s’accompagne de la résurgence de traditions (elles-mêmes inventions de la modernité) qui semblaient caduques. Cette distinction a d’autant plus d’importance qu’elle attire l’attention sur les changements des rapports de force, à la fois entre les sociétés et à l’intérieur d’une classe capitaliste transnationale en pleine expansion.

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