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Multiple Modernities

I

THE NOTION OF “multiple modernities” denotes a certain view of the contemporary world—indeed of the history and characteristics of the modern era—that 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, at least in one reading of his work. They all assumed, even if only implicitly, that the cultural program of modernity as it developed in modern Europe and the basic institutional constellations that emerged there would ultimately take over in all modernizing and modern societies; with the expansion of modernity, they would prevail throughout the world.¹

The reality that emerged after the so-called beginnings of modernity, and especially after World War II, failed to bear out these assumptions. 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—in family life, economic and political structures, urbanization, modern education, mass communication, and individualistic orienta-

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tions—the ways in which these arenas were defined and organized varied greatly, in different periods of their development, giving rise to multiple institutional and ideological patterns. Significantly, 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. Many of the movements that developed in non-Western societies articulated strong anti-Western or even antimodern themes, yet all were distinctively modern. This was true not only of the various nationalist and traditionalist movements that emerged in these societies from about the middle of the nineteenth century until after World War II, but also, as we shall note, of the more contemporary fundamentalist ones.

The idea of multiple modernities presumes that the best way to understand the contemporary world—indeed to explain the history of modernity—is to see it as a story of continual constitution and reconstitution of a multiplicity of cultural programs. These ongoing reconstructions of multiple institutional and ideological patterns are carried forward by specific social actors in close connection with social, political, and intellectual activists, and also by social movements pursuing different programs of modernity, holding very different views on what makes societies modern. Through the engagement of these actors with broader sectors of their respective societies, unique expressions of modernity are realized. These activities have not been confined to any single society or state, though certain societies and states proved to be the major arenas where social activists were able to implement their programs and pursue their goals. Though distinct understandings of multiple modernity developed within different nation-states, and within different ethnic and cultural groupings, among communist, fascist, and fundamentalist movements, each, however different from the others, was in many respects international.

One of the most important implications of the term “multiple modernities” is that modernity and Westernization are not

identical; Western patterns of modernity are not the only “authentic” modernities, though they enjoy historical precedence and continue to be a basic reference point for others.

In acknowledging a multiplicity of continually evolving modernities, one confronts the problem of just what constitutes the common core of modernity. This problem is exacerbated and indeed transformed with the contemporary deconstruction or decomposition of many of the components of “classical” models of the nation and of revolutionary states, particularly as a consequence of globalization. Contemporary discourse has raised the possibility that the modern project, at least in terms of the classical formulation that held sway for the last two centuries, is exhausted. One contemporary view claims that such exhaustion is manifest in the “end of history.”² The other view best represented is Huntington’s notion of a “clash of civilizations,” in which Western civilization—the seeming epitome of modernity—is confronted by a world in which traditional, fundamentalist, antimodern, and anti-Western civilizations—some (most notably, the Islamic and so-called Confucian groupings) viewing the West with animus or disdain—are predominant.³

II

The cultural and political program of modernity, as it developed first in Western and Central Europe, entailed, as Björn Wittrock notes, distinct ideological as well as institutional premises. The cultural program of modernity entailed some very distinct shifts in the conception of human agency, and of its place in the flow of time. It carried a conception of the future characterized by a number of possibilities realizable through autonomous human agency. The premises on which the social, ontological, and political order were based, and the legitimation of that order, were no longer taken for granted. An intensive reflexivity developed around the basic ontological premises of structures of social and political authority—a reflexivity shared even by modernity’s most radical critics, who in principle denied its validity. It was most successfully formulated by Weber. To follow James D. Faubian’s exposition of Weber’s conception of modernity:

Weber finds the existential threshold of modernity in a certain deconstruction: of what he speaks of as the "ethical postulate that the world is a God-ordained, and hence somehow meaningfully and ethically oriented cosmos. . . ."

. . . What Weber asserts—what in any event might be extrapolated from his assertions—is that the threshold of modernity may be marked precisely at the moment when the unquestioned legitimacy of a divinely preordained social order began its decline. Modernity emerges—or, more accurately, a range of possible modernities emerge—only when what had been seen as an unchanging cosmos ceases to be taken for granted. Countermoderns reject that reproach, believing that what is unchanging is not the social order, but the tasks that the construction and functioning of any social order must address. . . .

. . . One can extract two theses: Whatever else they may be, modernities in all their variety are responses to the same existential problematic. The second: whatever else they may be, modernities in all their variety are precisely those responses that leave the problematic in question intact, that formulate visions of life and practice neither beyond nor in denial of it but rather within it, even in deference to it. . . .⁴

The degree of reflexivity characteristic of modernity went beyond what was crystallized in the axial civilizations. The reflexivity that developed in the modern program not only focused on the possibility of different interpretations of core transcendental visions and basic ontological conceptions prevalent in a particular society or civilization; it came to question the very givenness of such visions and the institutional patterns related to them. It gave rise to an awareness of the possibility of multiple visions that could, in fact, be contested.⁵

Such awareness was closely connected with two central components of the modern project emphasized in early studies of modernization by both Daniel Lerner and Alex Inkeles.⁶ The first recognized among those either modern or becoming "modernized" the awareness of a great variety of roles existing beyond narrow, fixed, local, and familial ones. The second recognized the possibility of belonging to wider translocal, possibly changing, communities.

Central to this cultural program was an emphasis on the autonomy of man: his or her (in its initial formulation, certainly "his") emancipation from the fetters of traditional political and cultural authority. In the continuous expansion of the realm of personal and institutional freedom and activity, such autonomy implied, first, reflexivity and exploration; second, active construction and mastery of nature, including human nature. This project of modernity entailed a very strong emphasis on the autonomous participation of members of society in the constitution of the social and political order, on the autonomous access of all members of the society to these orders and to their centers.

From the conjunctions of these different conceptions arose a belief in the possibility that society could be actively formed by conscious human activity. Two complementary but potentially contradictory tendencies developed within this program about the best ways in which social construction could take place. The first, crystallized above all in the Great Revolutions, gave rise, perhaps for the first time in history, to the belief in the possibility of bridging the gap between the transcendental and mundane orders—of realizing through conscious human agency, exercised in social life, major utopian and eschatological visions. The second emphasized a growing recognition of the legitimacy of multiple individual and group goals and interests, as a consequence allowed for multiple interpretations of the common good.⁷

III

The modern program entailed also a radical transformation of the conceptions and premises of the political order, the constitution of the political arena, and the characteristics of the political process. Central to the modern idea was the breakdown of all traditional legitimations of the political order, and with it the opening up of different possibilities in the construction of a new order. These possibilities combined themes of rebellion, protest, and intellectual antinomianism, allowing for new center-formation and institution-building, giving rise to

movements of protest as a continual component of the political process.⁸

These ideas, closely aligned with what were emerging as the defining characteristics of the modern political arena, emphasized the openness of this arena and of political processes, generally, together with a strong acceptance of active participation by the periphery of "society" in questions of political import. Strong tendencies toward the permeation of social peripheries by the centers, and the impingement of the peripheries on the centers, led, inevitably, to a blurring of the distinctions between center and periphery. This laid the foundation for a new and powerful combination of the "charismatization" of the center or centers with themes and symbols of protest; these, in turn, became the elemental components of modern transcendental visions. Themes and symbols of protest—equality and freedom, justice and autonomy, solidarity and identity—became central components of the modern project of the emancipation of man. It was indeed the incorporation of the periphery's themes of protest into the center that heralded the radical transformation of various sectarian utopian visions into central elements of the political and cultural program.

From the ideology and premises of the political program of modernity and the core characteristics of modern political institutions, there emerged three central aspects of the modern political process: the restructuring of center-periphery relations as the principal focus of political dynamics in modern societies; a strong tendency toward politicizing the demands of various sectors of society, and the conflicts between them; and a continuing struggle over the definition of the realm of the political. Indeed, it is only with the coming of modernity that drawing the boundaries of the political becomes one of the major foci of open political contestation and struggle.

IV

Modernity entailed also a distinctive mode of constructing the boundaries of collectivities and collective identities.⁹ New concrete definitions of the basic components of collective identities developed—civil, primordial and universalistic, transcendental

or “sacred.” Strong tendencies developed toward framing these definitions in absolutist terms, emphasizing their civil components. At the same time, connections were drawn between the construction of political boundaries and those of cultural collectivities. This made inevitable an intensified emphasis on the territorial boundaries of such collectivities, creating continual tension between their territorial and/or particular components and those that were broader, more universalistic. In at least partial contrast to the axial civilizations, collective identities were no longer taken as given, preordained by some transcendental vision and authority, or sanctioned by perennial custom. They constituted foci of contestation and struggle, often couched in highly ideological terms.

v

As the civilization of modernity developed first in the West, it was from its beginnings beset by internal antinomies and contradictions, giving rise to continual critical discourse and political contestations. The basic antinomies of modernity constituted a radical transformation of those characteristics of the axial civilizations. Centered on questions unknown to that earlier time, they showed an awareness of a great range of transcendental visions and interpretations. In the modern program these were transformed into ideological conflicts between contending evaluations of the major dimensions of human experience (especially reason and emotions and their respective place in human life and society). There were new assertions about the necessity of actively constructing society; control and autonomy, discipline and freedom became burning issues.

Perhaps the most critical rift, in both ideological and political terms, was that which separated universal and pluralistic visions—between a view that accepted the existence of different values and rationalities and a view that conflated different values and, above all, rationalities in a totalistic way. This tension developed primarily with respect to the very concept of reason and its place in the constitution of human society. It was manifest, as Stephen Toulmin has shown in a somewhat exaggerated way, in the difference between the more pluralistic

conceptions of Montaigne or Erasmus as against the totalizing vision promulgated by Descartes.¹⁰ The most significant movement to universalize different rationalities—often identified as the major message of the Enlightenment—was that of the sovereignty of reason, which subsumed value-rationality (*Wertrationalität*), or substantive rationality, under instrumental rationality (*Zweckrationalität*), transforming it into a totalizing moralistic utopian vision.

Cutting across these tensions, there developed within the program of modernity continual contradictions between the basic premises of its cultural and political dimensions and major institutional developments. Of particular importance—so strongly emphasized by Weber—was the creative dimension inherent in visions leading to the crystallization of modernity, and the flattening of these visions, the “disenchantment” of the world, inherent in growing routinization and bureaucratization. This was a conflict between an overreaching vision by which the modern world became meaningful and the fragmentation of such meaning by dint of an unyielding momentum toward autonomous development in all institutional arenas—economic, political, and cultural. This reflects the inherently modern tension between an emphasis on human autonomy and the restrictive controls inherent in the institutional realization of modern life: in Peter Wagner’s formulation, between freedom and control.¹¹

VI

Within modern political discourse, these stresses have been manifest in the intractable contention between the legitimacy of myriad discrete individual and group interests, of different conceptions of the common good and moral order, and the totalistic ideologies that flatly denied the legitimacy of such pluralities. One major form of totalistic ideology emphasized the primacy of collectivities perceived as distinct ontological entities based on common primordial or spiritual attributes—principally a national collectivity. A second has been the Jacobin view, whose historical roots go back to medieval eschatological sources. Central to Jacobin thought was a belief in the primacy

of politics, in politics being able to reconstitute society, transforming society through the mobilization of participatory political action. Whatever the differences between these collectivist ideologies, they shared a deep suspicion of open, public discussion, political processes, and (especially) representative institutions. Not surprisingly, they shared strong autocratic tendencies.

These various stresses in the political program of modernity were closely related to those between the different modes of legitimation of modern regimes—between, on the one hand, procedural legitimation in terms of civil adherence to rules of the game, and, on the other, “substantive” modes of legitimation, relying above all, in Edward Shils’s terminology, on various primordial, “sacred,” religious, or secular-ideological components.¹² Parallel contradictions developed around the construction of collective identities, promulgated by new kinds of activists—the national movements.

VII

Of special importance among these activists were social movements, often movements of protest. They transformed, in the modern setting, some of the major heterodoxies of the axial civilizations, especially those heterodoxies that sought to bring about, by political action and the reconstruction of the center, the realization of certain utopian visions. Most important among the movements that developed during the nineteenth century and the first six decades of the twentieth were the liberal, socialist, or communist movements; they were followed by two others, fascist and national-socialist, building on nationalist prejudices. These movements were international, even where their bases or roots lay in specific countries. The more successful among them crystallized in distinct ideological and institutional patterns that often became identified with a specific state or nation (as was the case with Revolutionary France and, later, with Soviet Russia), but their reach extended far beyond national frontiers.¹³

The contestations between these movements and others—religious, cooperative, syndicalist, or anarchist—were not sim-

ply ideological. They all took place within the specific confines of the modern political arena; they were affected as well by the modern political process, especially the continuing struggle over the boundaries of the realm of the political.

Patterns of contention between these social actors developed in all modern societies around poles rooted in the antinomies inherent in the specific cultural and political programs of modernity. The first was the extent of the homogenization of major modern collectivities, significantly influenced by the extent to which the primordial, civil, and universalistic dimensions or components of collective identity became interwoven in these different societies. The second pole reflected a confrontation between pluralistic and universalizing orientations.

These clashes emerged in all modern collectivities and states, first in Europe, later in the Americas, and, in time, throughout the world. They were crucially important in shaping the varying patterns of modern societies, first within territorial and nation-states, generating within them differing definitions of the premises of political order. They defined the accountability of authority relations between state and civil society; they established patterns of collective identity, shaping the self-perceptions of individual societies, especially their self-perception as modern.

As these contestations emerged in Europe, the dominant pattern of the conflicts was rooted in specific European traditions, focused along the rifts between utopian and civil orientations. Principles of hierarchy and equality competed in the construction of political order and political centers. The state and civil society were seen as separate entities by some. Collective identity, very often couched in utopian terms, was differently defined. The variety of resulting societal outcomes can be illustrated by the different conceptions of state that developed on the continent and in England. There was the strong homogenizing "laicization of" France, or, in a different vein, of the Lutheran Scandinavian countries, as against the much more consociational and pluralistic arrangements common to Holland and Switzerland, and to a much smaller extent in Great Britain. The strong aristocratic semifeudal conception of authority in Brit-

ain contrasted with the more democratic, even populist, views in other European countries.¹⁴

In the twenties and thirties, indelibly marked by the tensions and antinomies of modernity as they developed in Europe, there emerged the first distinct, ideological, "alternative" modernities—the communist Soviet types, discussed in this issue by Johann Arnason, and the fascist/national-socialist type.¹⁵ The socialist and communist movements were fully set within the framework of the cultural program of modernity, and above all within the framework of the Enlightenment and of the major revolutions. Their criticism of the program of modern capitalist society revolved around their concept of the incompleteness of these modern programs. By contrast, the national or nationalistic movements, especially of the extreme fascist or national-socialist variety, aimed above all at reconfiguring the boundaries of modern collectivities. They sought to bring about a confrontation between the universalistic and the more particularistic, primordial components of the collective identities of modern regimes. Their criticism of the existing modern order denied the universalistic components of the cultural program of modernity, especially in its Enlightenment version. They showed less missionary zeal in transcending purely national boundaries. Yet, significantly, though they repudiated the universalistic components of the cultural and political program of modernity, they sought in some ways to transpose them into their own particularistic visions, attempting to present these visions in some semi-universalistic terms—of which, paradoxically, race might be one.

By the middle of the century, the continual development of multiple modernities in Europe testified to an ongoing evolution. As Nilüfer Göle observed, one of the most important characteristics of modernity is simply its potential capacity for continual self-correction. That quality, already manifest in the nineteenth century, in the encounter of modern societies with the many problems created by the industrial and democratic revolutions, could not, however, be taken for granted. The development of modernity bore within it destructive possibilities that were voiced, somewhat ironically, often by some of its most radical critics, who thought modernity to be a morally

destructive force, emphasizing the negative effects of certain of its core characteristics. The crystallization of European modernity and its later expansion was by no means peaceful. Contrary to the optimistic visions of modernity as inevitable progress, the crystallizations of modernities were continually interwoven with internal conflict and confrontation, rooted in the contradictions and tensions attendant on the development of the capitalist systems, and, in the political arena, on the growing demands for democratization. All these factors were compounded by international conflicts, exacerbated by the modern state and imperialist systems. War and genocide were scarcely new phenomena in history. But they became radically transformed, intensified, generating specifically modern modes of barbarism. The ideologization of violence, terror, and war—first and most vividly witnessed in the French Revolution—became the most important, indeed the exclusive, citizenship components of the continuation of modern states. The tendency to such ideologies of violence became closely related to the fact that the nation-state became the focus of symbols of collective identity.¹⁶ The Holocaust, which took place in the very center of modernity, was the extreme manifestation and became a symbol of its negative, destructive potential, of the barbarism lurking within its very core.

VIII

In the discourse on modernity, several themes developed, none more important than the one that stressed the continual confrontation between more “traditional” sectors of society and the so-called modern centers or sectors that developed within them. So, too, there was an inherent tension between the culture of modernity, the modern “rational” model of the Enlightenment that emerged as hegemonic in certain periods and places and others construed as reflecting the more “authentic” cultural traditions of specific societies. Among the bearers of ideologies of traditional authenticity, and within the more traditional sectors of certain societies, there developed also an enduring ambivalence to modern cultures and their putatively universalistic, exclusivist premises and symbols and a continual

oscillation between cosmopolitanism and localism. These themes developed first within Europe itself; they continued, though in a different vein, with the expansion of modernity to the Americas and (especially) to Asian and African countries.

IX

The first radical transformation of the premises of cultural and political order took place with the expansion of modernity in the Americas. There, distinctive modernities, reflecting novel patterns of institutional life, with new self-conceptions and new forms of collective consciousness, emerged. To say this is to emphasize that practically from the beginning of modernity's expansion multiple modernities developed, all within what may be defined as the Western civilizational framework. It is important to note that such modernities, Western but significantly different from those in Europe, developed first not in Asia—Japan, China, or India—or in Muslim societies where they might have been attributed to the existence of distinct non-European traditions, but within the broad framework of Western civilizations. They reflected a radical transformation of European premises.

The crystallization of distinct patterns of modernity in the Americas took place, as Jürgen Heideking's essay shows, through a confrontational discourse with Europe—especially with England and France. While it was not common to couch these arguments in terms of differing interpretations of modernity, they were indeed focused on the advantages and disadvantages of institutional patterns that developed in the United States, distinctly different from those in Europe. Moreover, in this discourse the major themes relating to the international dimension of modernity were clearly articulated. Such confrontations became characteristic of the ongoing discourse about modernity as it expanded through the world. While this was also true of Latin America, there were important differences between the Americas, especially between the United States and Latin America. In Latin America, "external"—even if often ambivalent—reference points remained crucial, as the essay by Renato Ortiz in this volume makes clear. The enduring importance of

these reference points, above all in Europe—Spain, France, and England—and later the United States, were critical to the self-conception of Latin American societies. Such considerations became gradually less important in the United States, which saw itself increasingly as the center of modernity.

X

The variability of modernities was accomplished above all through military and economic imperialism and colonialism, effected through superior economic, military, and communication technologies. Modernity first moved beyond the West into different Asian societies—Japan, India, Burma, Sri Lanka, China, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia—to the Middle Eastern countries, coming finally to Africa. By the end of the twentieth century, it encompassed nearly the entire world, the first true wave of globalization.

In all these societies the basic model of the territorial state and later of the nation-state was adopted, as were the basic premises and symbols of Western modernity. So, too, were the West's modern institutions—representative, legal, and administrative. But at the same time the encounter of modernity with non-Western societies brought about far-reaching transformations in the premises, symbols, and institutions of modernity—with new problems arising as a consequence.

The attraction of many of modernity's themes and institutional forms for many groups in these societies was caused first by the fact that it was the European (later the Western) pattern, developed and spread throughout the world by Western economic, technological, and military expansion, that undermined the cultural premises and institutional cores of these ancient societies. The appropriation of these themes and institutions permitted many in non-European societies—especially elites and intellectuals—to participate actively in the new modern universal (albeit initially Western) tradition, while selectively rejecting many of its aspects—most notably that which took for granted the hegemony of the Western formulations of the cultural program of modernity. The appropriation of themes of modernity made it possible for these groups to incorporate

some of the Western universalistic elements of modernity in the construction of their own new collective identities, without necessarily giving up specific components of their traditional identities (often couched, like the themes of Western modernity, in universalistic, especially religious terms). Nor did it abolish their negative or at least ambivalent attitudes toward the West. Modernity's characteristic themes of protest, institution-building, and the redefinition of center and periphery served to encourage and accelerate the transposition of the modern project to non-European, non-Western settings. Although initially couched in Western terms, many of these themes found resonance in the political traditions of many of these societies.¹⁷

XI

The appropriation by non-Western societies of specific themes and institutional patterns of the original Western modern civilization societies entailed the continuous selection, reinterpretation, and reformulation of these imported ideas. These brought about continual innovation, with new cultural and political programs emerging, exhibiting novel ideologies and institutional patterns. The cultural and institutional programs that unfolded in these societies were characterized particularly by a tension between conceptions of themselves as part of the modern world and ambivalent attitudes toward modernity in general and toward the West in particular.

In all these societies, far-reaching transformations took place. These transformations, shaped in each society by the combined impact of their respective historical traditions and the different ways in which they became incorporated into the new modern world system, are admirably interpreted in Sudipta Kaviraj's essay. He analyzes the impact of Indian political traditions and of the colonial imperial experience in shaping the distinctive features of modernity as they crystallized in India. Similar analyses of China or Vietnam would indicate the specific modes allowing for "alternative," revolutionary universalistic notions of the modern program of modernity to spring forth from their civilizational contexts. The case of Japan is different; there, the conflation of state and civil society, the weakness of utopian

orientations, the absence of principled confrontations with the state among the major movements of protest, and the relative significance of universal and particular components all contributed to the creation of a modern collective identity different from that of all other societies.¹⁸

XII

The multiple and divergent instantiations of the "classical" age of modernity crystallized during the nineteenth century and above all in the first six or seven decades of the twentieth into very different territorial nation- and revolutionary states and social movements in Europe, the Americas, and, after World War II, in Asia. The institutional, symbolic, and ideological contours of modern national and revolutionary states, once thought to be the epitome of modernity, have changed dramatically with the recent intensification of forces of globalization. These trends, manifested especially in the growing autonomy of world financial and commercial flows, intensified international migrations and the concomitant development on an international scale of such social problems as the spread of diseases, prostitution, organized crime, and youth violence. All this has served to reduce the control of the nation-state over its own economic and political affairs, despite continuing efforts to strengthen technocratic, rational secular policies in various arenas. Nation-states have also lost a part of their monopoly on internal and international violence, which was always only a partial monopoly, to local and international groups of separatists or terrorists. Processes of globalization are evident also in the cultural arena, with the hegemonic expansion, through the major media in many countries, of what are seemingly uniform Western, above all American, cultural programs or visions.¹⁹

The ideological and symbolic centrality of the nation-state, its position as the charismatic locus of the major components of the cultural program of modernity and collective identity, have been weakened; new political, social, and civilizational visions, new visions of collective identity, are being developed. These novel visions and identities were proclaimed by a variety of new social movements—all of which, however different, have

challenged the premises of the classical modern nation and its program of modernity, which had hitherto occupied the unchallenged center of political and cultural thinking.

The first such movements that developed in most Western countries—the women's movement and the ecological movement—were both closely related to or rooted in the student and anti-Vietnam War movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s. They were indicative of a more general shift in many countries, whether “capitalist” or communist: a shift away from movements oriented toward the state to movements with a more local scope and agenda. Instead of focusing on the reconstitution of nation-states, or resolving macroeconomic conflicts, these new forces—often presenting themselves as “postmodern” and “multicultural”—promulgated a cultural politics or a politics of identity often couched as multiculturalism and were oriented to the construction of new autonomous social, political, and cultural spaces.²⁰

Fundamentalist movements emerged somewhat later within Muslim, Jewish, and Protestant Christian communities and have managed to occupy center stage in many national societies and, from time to time, on the international scene. Communal religious movements have similarly developed within Hindu and Buddhist cultures, generally sharing strong antimodern and/or anti-Western themes.²¹

A third major type of new movement that has gathered momentum, especially in the last two decades of the twentieth century, has been the particularistic “ethnic” movement. Witnessed initially in the former republics of the Soviet Union, it has emerged also in horrific ways in Africa and in parts of the Balkans, especially in former Yugoslavia.

All these movements have developed in tandem with, and indeed accelerated, social transformations of the most important kind, serving to consolidate new social settings and frameworks. To mention just two of the most important, the world now sees new diasporas, especially of Muslims, Chinese, and Indians, some analyzed in this issue by Stanley J. Tambiah. Following the collapse of the Soviet empire, Russian minorities have emerged as vocal forces in many of the successor states of

the Soviet Union and in the former communist East European countries.

In these and many other settings, new types of collective identity emerged, going beyond the models of the nation- and revolutionary state and no longer focused on them. Many of these hitherto "subdued" identities—ethnic, local, regional, and transnational—moved, though in a highly reconstructed way, into the centers of their respective societies, and often into the international arena as well. They contested the hegemony of the older homogenizing programs, claiming their own autonomous place in central institutional arenas—educational programs, public communications, media outlets. They have been increasingly successful in positing far-reaching claims to the redefinition of citizenship and the rights and entitlements connected with it.

In these settings, local concerns and interests are often brought together in new ways, going beyond the model of the classical nation-state, choosing alliances with transnational organizations such as the European Union or with broad religious frameworks rooted in the great religions of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, or the Protestant branches of Christianity. Simultaneously, we see a continuing decomposition in the relatively compact image offered by belief systems concerning styles of life, defining the "civilized man"—all connected with the emergence and spread of the original program of modernity.²² No one can doubt that significant and enduring shifts are taking place in the relative position and influence of different centers of modernity—moving back and forth between West and East. This can only produce increased contention between such centers over their degree of influence in a globalizing world.²³

XIII

All these developments attest to the decomposition of the major structural characteristics and the weakening of the ideological hegemony of once-powerful nation-states. But do they signal the "end of history" and the end of the modern program, epitomized in the development of different so-called postmodernities and, above all, in a retreat from modernity in

the fundamentalist and the communal religious movements, often portrayed by themselves as *diametrically* opposed to the modern program?

A closer examination of these movements presents a much more complex picture. First, several of the extreme fundamentalist movements evince distinct characteristics of modern Jacobinism, even when combined with very strong anti-Western and anti-Enlightenment ideologies. Indeed, the distinct visions of fundamentalist movements have been formulated in terms common to the discourse of modernity; they have attempted to appropriate modernity on their own terms. While extreme fundamentalists promulgate elaborate, seemingly antimodern (or rather anti-Enlightenment) themes, they basically constitute modern Jacobin revolutionary movements, paradoxically sharing many characteristics (sometimes in a sort of mirror-image way) with communist movements of an earlier era.²⁴ They share with communist movements the promulgation of totalistic visions entailing the transformation both of man and of society. Some claim to be concerned with the “cleansing” of both. It is the total reconstruction of personality, of individual and collective identities, by conscious human action, particularly political action, and the construction of new personal and collective identities entailing the total submergence of the individual in the community that they seek. Like communist movements they seek to establish a new social order, rooted in revolutionary, universalistic ideological tenets, in principle transcending all primordial, national, or ethnic units. In the case of earlier communist regimes, the proclaimed goals were to produce collectivities of “workers” and “intellectuals” that would embrace all mankind; in the case of Islamic fundamentalist regimes, the realm of Islam, as a new conception of the *ummah*, transcends any specific place, having broad and continually changing yet ideologically closed boundaries. Both the communist and the fundamentalist movements—mostly, but not only, the Muslim ones—are transnational, activated by intensive, continually reconstructed networks that facilitate the expansion of the social and cultural visions proclaimed by these groups. They are at the same time constantly confronted with competing visions. In all these ways, both their movements and

their programs constitute part and parcel of the modern political agenda.

There are, of course, radical differences in the respective visions of the two types of Jacobin (the communist and the fundamentalist) movements and regimes, above all in their attitudes to modernity and in their criticism. In their analysis of the basic antinomies of modernity, and in their interpretation and rejection of different components of the cultural and political programs of classical modernity, Muslim fundamentalists share, as Nilüfer Göle's essay shows, a preoccupation with modernity. It is their major frame of reference.²⁵

XIV

Attempts to appropriate and interpret modernity in one's own terms are not, however, confined to fundamentalist movements. They constitute part of a set of much wider developments that have taken place throughout the world, as Dale Eickelman's essay shows with respect to Muslim societies. Continuing the contestations between earlier reformist and traditional religious movements that developed in these communities, the tensions inherent in the new modern program, especially between pluralistic and universal values, are played out in new terms. Between utopian and more open and pragmatic attitudes, between multifaceted and closed identities, they all entail an important, even radical, shift in the discourse about the confrontation with modernity, in reframing the relationship between Western and non-Western civilizations, religions, and societies.²⁶

It is possible to identify significant parallels between these various religious movements, including fundamentalism, with their apparently extreme opposites—the various postmodern movements with which they often engage in contestation, arguing about hegemony among the different sectors of society. Thus, within many of these “postmodern” or “multicultural” movements, there have developed highly totalistic orientations manifest for instance in different programs of political correctness. Ironically, because of their great variety and their more pluralistic internal dynamics and pragmatic stance, we have

also seen certain “postmodern” themes emerge within fundamentalist movements. Beyond this paradox, these movements share an overarching concern about the relationship between the identities they promulgate and the universalistic themes promulgated by other hegemonic programs of modernity, above all the relationship between their purportedly authentic identities and the presumed Western, especially American cultural hegemony on the contemporary scene. Significantly, fear of the erosion of local cultures from the impact of globalization has led these movements to be suspicious of the emerging centers of a globalizing world, giving rise yet again to a continuous oscillation between cosmopolitanism and various “particularistic” tendencies.²⁷

XV

The continuing salience of the tensions between pluralist and universalist programs, between multifaceted as against closed identities, and the continual ambivalence of new centers of modernity toward the major traditional centers of cultural hegemony attest to the fact that, while going beyond the model of the nation-state, these new movements have not gone beyond the basic problems of modernity. They are all deeply reflexive, aware that no answer to the tensions inherent in modernity is final—even if each in its own way seeks to provide final, incontestable answers to modernity’s irreducible dilemmas. They have reconstituted the problem of modernity in new historical contexts, in new ways. They aim for a worldwide reach and diffusion through various media. They are politicized, formulating their contestations in highly political and ideological terms. The problems they face, continually reconstructing their collective identities in reference to the new global context, are challenges of unprecedented proportions. The very pluralization of life spaces in the global framework endows them with highly ideological absolutizing ideas, and at the same time brings them into the central political arena. The debate in which they engage may indeed be described in “civilizational” terms, but these very terms—indeed the very term “civilization” as constructed in such a discourse—are already couched

in modernity's new language, utilizing totalistic, essentialistic, and absolutizing terms. When such clashes in cultural debates intersect with political, military, or economic struggles, they can quickly become violent.

The reconstructions of the various political and cultural visions across the spectrum of collective identities on the contemporary scene entail a shift in the confrontation between Western and non-Western civilizations, between religions and societies, and also in the relationship of these confrontations to the Western cultural program of modernity. As against the seeming if highly ambivalent acceptance of modernity's premises and their continual reinterpretation characteristic of the earlier reformist religious and national movements, most contemporary religious movements—including fundamentalist and most communal religious movements—seem to engage in a much more intensive selective denial of at least some of these premises. They take a markedly confrontational attitude to the West, indeed to anything conceived as Western, seeking to appropriate modernity and the global system on their own, often anti-Western, terms. Their confrontation with the West does not take the form of wishing to become incorporated into a new hegemonic civilization, but to appropriate the new international global scene and the modernity for themselves, celebrating their traditions and "civilizations." These movements have attempted to dissociate Westernization from modernity, denying the Western monopoly on modernity, rejecting the Western cultural program as the epitome of modernity. Significantly, many of these same themes are also espoused, though in different idioms, by many "postmodern" movements.

XVI

The preceding analysis does not imply that the historical experience and cultural traditions of these societies are of no importance in the unfolding of their modern dynamics. The significance of their earlier traditions is manifest not least in the fact that among modern and contemporary societies, fundamentalist movements develop above all within the societies that took shape in the ecumene of monotheistic religion—Muslim, Jew-

ish, and Christian civilizations. In these contexts, the political system has been perceived as the major arena for the implementation of transcendental utopian visions. In contrast to this, the ideological reconstruction of the political center in a Jacobin mode has been much weaker in civilizations with “other-worldly” orientations—especially in India and, to a somewhat smaller extent, in Buddhist countries. There, the political order is not perceived as a forum for the implementation of a transcendental vision.²⁸

It is a commonplace to observe that the distinct varieties of modern democracy in India or Japan, for example, may be attributed to the encounter between Western modernity and the cultural traditions and historical experiences of these societies. This, of course, was also true of different communist regimes. What is less well understood is that the same happened in the first instance of modernity—the European—deeply rooted in specific European civilizational premises and historical experience.²⁹ But, as in the case of Europe, all these “historical” or “civilizational” influences did not simply perpetuate an old pattern of institutional life.

Nor is it happening on the contemporary scene, as if nothing more than a continuation of respective historical pasts and patterns is being perpetuated. Rather, these particular experiences influence the continual emergence of new movements and networks between different actors—judges, experts, parliamentarians, and others—cutting across any single society or civilization, maintaining a flow between them. The political dynamics in all these societies are closely interwoven with geopolitical realities, influenced by history, and shaped mostly by modern developments and confrontations. They make impossible any effort to construct “closed” entities.³⁰

Thus, the processes of globalization on the contemporary scene entail neither the “end of history”—in the sense of an end of ideological confrontational clashes between different cultural programs of modernity—nor a “clash of civilizations” engaging a secular West in confrontation with societies that appear to opt out of, or deny, the program of modernity. They do not even constitute a return to the problems of premodern axial civilizations, as though such a thing were possible. Rather,

the trends of globalization show nothing so clearly as the continual reinterpretation of the cultural program of modernity; the construction of multiple modernities; attempts by various groups and movements to reappropriate and redefine the discourse of modernity in their own new terms. At the same time, they are bringing about a repositioning of the major arenas of contestation in which new forms of modernity are shaped, away from the traditional forum of the nation-state to new areas in which different movements and societies continually interact.

Not only do multiple modernities continue to emerge—by now going beyond the premises of the nation-state—but within all societies, new questionings and reinterpretations of different dimensions of modernity are emerging. The undeniable trend at the end of the twentieth century is the growing diversification of the understanding of modernity, of the basic cultural agendas of different modern societies—far beyond the homogenic and hegemonic visions of modernity prevalent in the 1950s. Moreover, in all societies these attempts at interpreting modernity are continually changing under the impact of changing historical forces, giving rise to new movements that will come, in time, to reinterpret yet again the meaning of modernity.

While the common starting point was once the cultural program of modernity as it developed in the West, more recent developments have seen a multiplicity of cultural and social formations going far beyond the very homogenizing aspects of the original version. All these developments do indeed attest to the continual development of multiple modernities, or of multiple interpretations of modernity—and, above all, to attempts at “de-Westernization,” depriving the West of its monopoly on modernity.

XVII

These considerations bear closely on the problems raised in the beginning of this essay, which constitute the central foci of the essays gathered in this issue of *Dædalus*. They all contend, from a variety of perspectives and through a great range of cases, with the core characteristics of modernity. At the same time,

the studies presented here attest to the continually expanding range of possibilities in ideological interpretations, in constructions of the meaning of modernity, in institutional patterns of political and social life. All of this makes plain, as Nilüfer Göle shows, that one of the most important characteristics of modernity is simply, but profoundly, its potential for self-correction, its ability to confront problems not even imagined in its original program. The most important new problems today are probably those relating to the environment, to gender, and to the new political and international contestations discussed above. In coping with these problems, different contemporary societies can draw in ever more varied ways, as Tu Weiming notes, on the cultural resources of their respective civilizational traditions.

At the same time these very developments—above all the tendency toward constant self-correction characteristic of modernity—make all the more pressing the great difficulty of how to answer the question about the limits of modernity. It is not that such limits do not exist, but the very posing of this question puts the question within the discourse of modernity.

Illuminating and describing the essentially modern character of new movements and collective identities, charting courses somewhere beyond the classical model of the territorial, national, or revolutionary state, does not necessarily lead us to take an optimistic view. On the contrary; the ramifications are such as to make evident the fragility and changeability of different modernities as well as the destructive forces inherent in certain of the modern programs, most fully in the ideologization of violence, terror, and war. These destructive forces—the “traumas” of modernity that brought into question its great promises—emerged clearly after World War I, became even more visible in World War II and in the Holocaust, and were generally ignored or set aside in the discourse of modernity in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. Lately, they have reemerged in a frightening way—in the new “ethnic” conflict in parts of the Balkans (especially in the former Yugoslavia), in many of the former republics of the Soviet Union, in Sri Lanka, and in a terrible way in such African countries as Rwanda and Burundi. These are not outbursts of old “traditional” forces, but the

result of the ongoing dialogue between modern reconstruction and seemingly "traditional" forces. So, also, fundamentalist and religious communal movements developed within the framework of modernity, and cannot be fully understood except within this framework. Thus, modernity—to paraphrase Leszek Kołakowski's felicitous and sanguine expression—is indeed "on endless trial."³¹

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