



The traditional justification for studying the humanities has been that this study provides access to a canon of 'Great Works' with which every educated person should be familiar, and that these works constitute the major part of our human / Western / European / national heritage(s). This justification now appears increasingly problematic, precisely because of its elitist, Western, and nationalist presuppositions.

All Western educational institutions now face the problem of devising curricula for students who do not come from a traditionally-educated bourgeois background and/or feel excluded from the traditional humanities canon by reason of gender, race, ethnicity, or religion.

At the moments of reunion after ruptures in the communicative web of European cultures, scholars and intellectuals feel the need both to re-situate themselves on the common ground represented by works of major thinkers and to redefine their own country's contributions to this European heritage.

The concern all around the world for the discovery and definition of culturally located classical texts and cultural specificity (the Javanese heritage, Indian art, 'Japaneseness', and so on) has developed in dialogue with and reaction to Western constructions of 'the other'. An agenda for education in multicultural societies thus needs to be backed by historical research on the forms and functions of classical canons and of the disciplinary frameworks in which they have been preserved, rediscovered, and interpreted. The focus group of 1999/2000 at Collegium Budapest has developed an enquiry which combined theoretical, comparative and historical perspectives of the humanities. Some of its results are presented in this volume.

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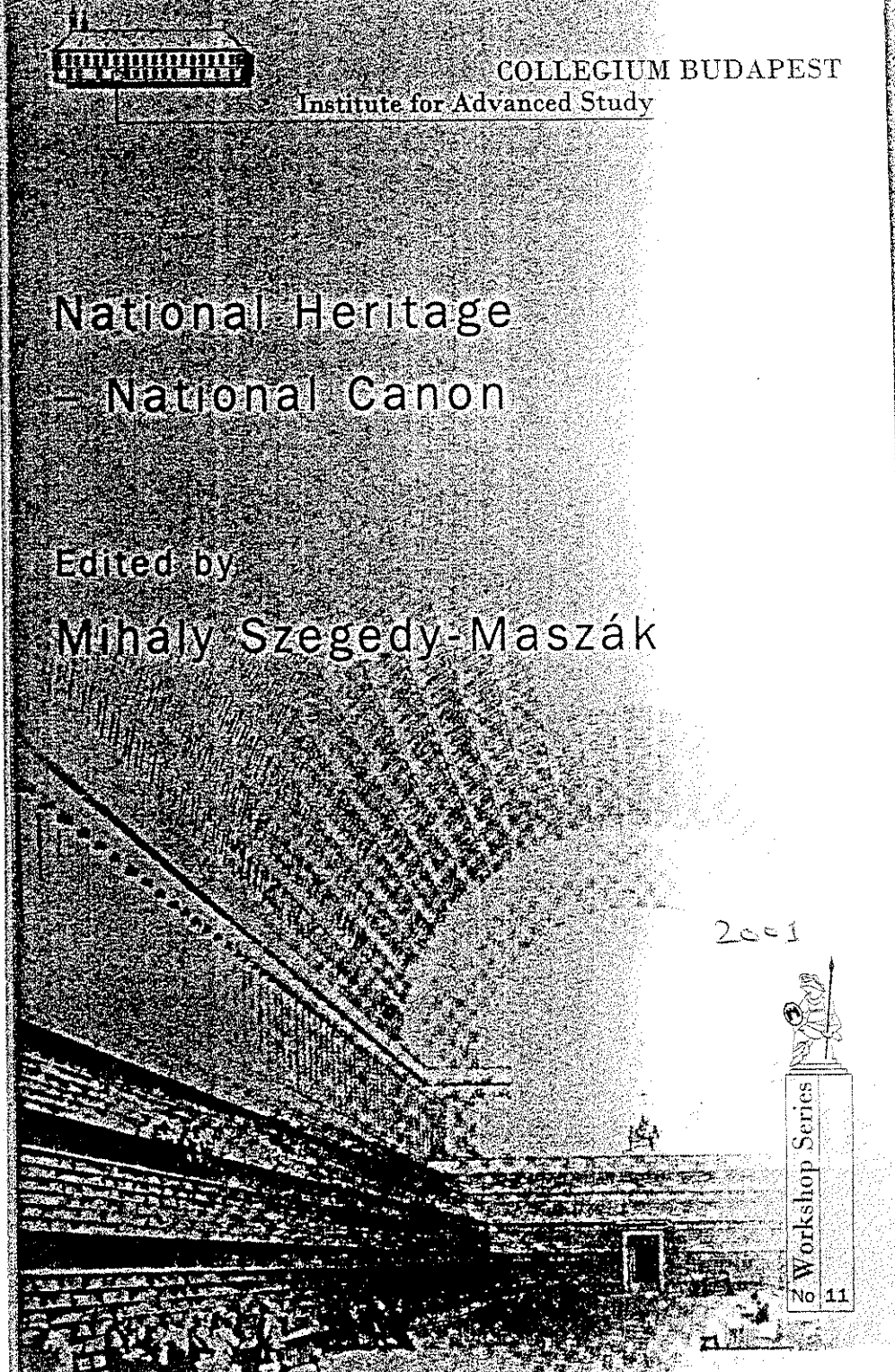
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Professor Li may continue his work; or, it may be left to others, perhaps the next generation of thinkers, to continue, change or redirect the project. There are signs now that this task is being taken up by some of the “new generation” post-socialist thinkers. Their discussions of culture, society and the globalised world include new reflections on the Confucianist tradition. Titles such as “The Modern Interpretation of the Potential of Confucian Ecology: on the Relation between ‘Man and Nature,’” and “On the Contemporary Significance of the Popularisation of Confucianism” in the millennial issues of the *Confucius Studies*, to name only a few, indicate the trend.²² These new concerns and tendencies seem to begin emphatically with an understanding of the entangled and negotiated nature of culture and history, and convey clear convictions of the importance of re-engaging cultural traditions for the well-being of the present and future, of re-establishing the link between *Wissen* and *Bildung* in a post-socialist setting. But above all else, they assert emphatically the necessity and significance of recouring cultural tradition as the setting up of “a court of human appeal”, a “rallying alternative” in face of the relentless insouciance of global marketisation.²³

²² *Confucius Studies*, ed. Liu, Weihua. Jinan: China Confucius Foundation. Vol. 57, No. 1, 2000, 4–14, 26–35.

²³ The paper was written in close consultation with Professor Sally Humphreys from the University of Michigan and with suggestions and advices from Professor Yoav Ariel of Tel Aviv University, besides being rigorously commented upon by my fellow Agorans, among them especially Shalini Randeria and Sebastian Conrad.

Beyond Sociology and Socio-Cultural Anthropology

The Place of the Non-Western World in a Future Social Theory

Shalini Randeria

If social science is an exercise in the search for universal knowledge, then the ‘other’ cannot logically exist, for the other is part of us – the ‘us’ that is studied, the ‘us’ that is engaged in studying.

Open the Social Sciences (1996), p. 57

This essay is an attempt to systematically outline a globalized social theory, and to delineate the role of knowledge from and about the non-Western world in it. A long-overdue emancipation of the social sciences from North American and West European parochialism would enable them to satisfy their own claims to universality by incorporating both the historical experiences and the social reality of the non-Western world into sociology and social theory. In fact, this claim to universality has been challenged both from the ‘outside’ and from the ‘inside’ by feminist theory and by representatives of ethnic minorities in the West. The political and epistemological challenge posed by these critiques must be taken into account by a conception of sociology capable of reflecting upon difference without reducing the world to islands of particularism. Transcending the dichotomy between sociology and socio-cultural anthropology, a future social theory must find an interactionist, relational ‘third way’ by means of which to move beyond the alternatives of ‘universal brotherhood’ and ‘universal otherhood’.

I would like to use some recent reflections on modernity in socio-cultural anthropology and post-colonial studies as tools with which to address these issues. If we merely add the knowledge of the non-Western world from these fields to existing universal theories of modernity, we run the risk of simply

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replicating familiar dichotomies between the West and the rest of the world at a higher level of complexity. Similarly, Western perspectives cannot be relativised by simply substituting so-called 'authentic' indigenous Indian or African theories, since these non-Western self-representations are inextricably intertwined with Western knowledge and Western self-representation of otherness, so that any definition of 'Indian' or 'African' more or less explicitly implies the West as the point of reference. Besides, the search for 'authentic' indigenous alternatives leads to the selective reevaluation, essentialisation, and romanticisation of traditions. But this reconstruction of traditions is itself a consequence of modernity, based as it is on the 'production' of internally homogenous national monocultures. Traditions are thereby attributed a genealogical 'purity' that sharply contrasts with the radical 'impurity' of complex historical processes of interaction (Randeria and Waligora, 1999).

Within the context of the theoretical approaches already discussed, I shall attempt to delineate the prospects and problems facing a pluralistic, multi-perspective social theory which takes non-Western societies seriously, not only as objects of sociological research and theory formation, but also—and especially—as sites of social-scientific knowledge production. This involves broadening the horizon of social theory by systematically including the contribution of scholars from these regions to the analysis of the cultural and historical constitution of Western concepts and theories. This would help us to interrogate, refine, and relativise the analytical constructs, theoretical premises, and methods of the social sciences, and to foster a common reflection on the urgent problems of our time.

The key problematic of the post-colonial perspective I am advocating is roughly as follows: How can the non-Western world be included in a future sociology which neither regards the 'others' as being 'outside' the European past and present, nor uses the difference to assign them an evolutionarily earlier and hierarchically lower place in the 'pre-history' of the modern West. I am concerned with a threefold problem of the representation of the experience of those parts of the world which have so far been marginal to Western social theory. How can these societies be presented and represented, and how can the contemporaneity of Western and non-Western modernity and its complex

entanglements and mutually constitutive character be understood? In other words, how can the non-Western world be incorporated into a science characterised by a self-conception based on the conviction that its object—that is, Western modernity—is historically unique, but also universal? How difficult this task is likely to be is illustrated by the following reply of Habermas to the question whether his theory could help socialist forces in the Third World, and whether these in turn could support the democratic-socialist movements of industrial countries: "I am tempted to say 'no' in both cases. I am aware of the fact that this is a Eurocentric limited view. I would rather pass the question" (Habermas, 1985, 104).

Unfortunately, the internationalisation of science is usually understood as an opening up towards Europe or the USA and treated as a networking problem (see Lackner and Werner, 1999, 18). I am, however, primarily interested in a substantive dialogue with the periphery. The resulting polyphony would enrich our understanding of our shared past, present, and future. Secondly—and more significantly—such a dialogue is important because ideas and institutions of European origin (such as modernity, civil society, secularism, nation-state, paradigms of development, democracy, human rights, and so on) have long escaped the Western monopoly of their definitions, having meanwhile spread to and been appropriated across the globe. Their trajectories of development, forms, effects, and institutional frameworks vary according to how they are domesticated locally, reconfigured, and historically and culturally embedded.

The first part of the paper, containing a brief review of the disciplinary division of labour in Western social sciences corresponding to the geographical divisions of the world, is followed by a second section addressed to theoretical and methodological debates in socio-cultural anthropology and 'post-colonial studies'. I shall also examine the status of development sociology and the disciplinary division between sociology and cultural sociology, where there are some signs of more permeable boundaries. The third section explores the significance of a post-colonial perspective and of socio-cultural anthropology in expanding sociological theories of modernity with respect to an interactional historical understanding of modernity, as well as its pluralisation and contex-

tualisation. Modernity as a social practice has been global for quite some time, even if the idea and category stems from Western history. As Carol Breckenridge has put it, “Modernity is now everywhere, it is simultaneously everywhere and it is interactively everywhere” (Breckenridge, 1995, 2). The post-colonial perspective retraces this relatedness to highlight the role of imperialism in shaping European modernity.

1. The Disciplining of Colonial Relationships

The appropriation and expropriation of those societies and cultures, which were regarded as radically ‘different’ from the European ‘self’, can be seen as historically parallel processes. The institutionalisation of the social sciences and the simultaneous expansion of European dominance reflects this imperial division of the world. Defining the world in terms of dichotomies, sociology established itself as the science of ‘modernity’, revolving around the European nation-state, and distanced itself from the disciplines concerned with the so-called ‘premodern’ non-Western world. The latter, divided into either illiterate ‘tribes’ or civilisations with ‘high cultures’ and ‘world religions’, were categorised as the subject of socio-cultural anthropology and oriental studies respectively.

Characteristic of these political and disciplinary boundaries is the “denial of coequality” (Johannes Fabian), which culminates in the term ‘non-Western’; that is, it implies a view in which societies and cultures are negatively defined by an absence of modernity. Thus, for instance, Max Weber’s epistemological interest in oriental civilisations within the framework of comparative sociology focused on explaining their inability to progress to modernity. The distinction between Western societies and cultures which have been imputed an originary modernity and an endogenous historical development as against those others which have been denied these characteristics and capability was already controversial in the nineteenth century. It has now been shown to be empirically untenable and has often been theoretically deconstructed (see Therborn, 1995). Nevertheless, disciplinary boundaries in the social sciences are still largely based on this distinction, and there is little evidence that these are being

overcome at the level of the organisation of either teaching or research in Germany.

The arbitrary and irrelevant nature of this dissection of the non-Western world in the Western academy can be illustrated using an example from India. The pluralism of legal orders and institutions and the problem of multiple competing sovereignties in contemporary Indian society would, in India, be a subject of sociological inquiry. In Germany, however, community councils of the lower castes and indigenous populations in India would be studied by ethnologists; the department of non-European history would be responsible for the analyses of colonial Anglo-Hindu law, which is still in force today; ‘religious’ texts that influenced colonial and post-colonial conceptions of law would be the domain of Indology; and development sociology would be interested in the modernisation of Indian law, to the extent that the World Bank was involved in it.

In the wake of the first wave of decolonialisation after 1945, the West was forced to redefine its relationship to the former colonies. Since the post-colonial countries attempted to become nation-states on the European model, they were partly accepted as a legitimate object of the various social scientific disciplines of modernity—such as sociology, political science, history, and economics—but remained on the marginalised fringes of these disciplines. Modernisation, a highly influential concept in politics and in social sciences, transferred the geographical difference to a temporal axis between ‘developed’ and ‘underdeveloped’ countries. In sociology, for instance, four-fifths of humanity became the object of a subdiscipline known as development sociology. Often there is as much emotional investment in the boundaries between academic disciplines as there is in the boundaries between nation-states. Now that the latter are becoming less significant, or are being restructured, it is time to rethink the boundaries between sociology and socio-cultural anthropology, going beyond the kind of partial and functional interdisciplinarity that in fact only serves to consolidate these disciplinary divisions.

In contrast to universalistic and positivistic paradigms in the social sciences, anthropology has always been noted for its emphasis on context and on local knowledge. With its insistence on localised knowledge ‘about somewhere’ and ‘from somewhere’, ethnographic research—as a branch of socio-cultural anthro-

pology—was often one of the few correctives to the Eurocentric and positivistic biases of the social sciences (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997, 35). The reflexive turn of socio-cultural anthropology (Clifford and Marcus, 1986) led to a redefinition of its subject matter. It not only fuelled discussion of problems of representation in the nexus of knowledge and power in ethnographic practice, but also led to the contextualisation of anthropology at the heart of the project of Euro-American modernity, with its historical links with colonialism (Marcus and Fischer, 1986). The earlier holistic view of culture as territorially rooted was gradually replaced by a processual and praxis oriented conception of culture as 'work in progress' (Hannertz, 1996), bringing it closer to 'cultural studies'. Once culture was no longer spatially embedded in the nation state, anthropology began to focus on transnational processes (for example, cultural globalisation and diaspora). Furthermore, the application of ethnographic methods to modern institutions of Western industrial societies (for example, anthropological studies of 'knowledge production' in laboratories, and of practices in multinational corporations and institutions of research funding) produced a further overlap between sociological and ethnological fields of research (Marcus, 1999).

Compared with an earlier tendency to exoticise and romanticize the 'far away field', recent ethnographies have started to examine the processes of marginalisation of 'out of the way places' in an interdependent world (for example, Tsing, 1993), focusing on historical and social relationships between the areas researched: for example, in ethnographic studies of the art of Australian Aborigines and in its exhibition in New York; in the 'migration' of the Tango from Argentina to Europe and Japan and back to Latin America; in the reception of Indian films as a blueprint of a different modernity in Africa; in administrative practices of the 'development industry' in Washington DC and in South Africa. It is becoming obvious that the 'global' is an integral component of the 'local' and cannot be located outside it.

Sociology can draw inspiration from the permeability of the boundaries between anthropology, with its focus on local field work, and 'cultural studies', with its focus on the analysis of discourse. Even the rigid methodological boundaries between these disciplines have relaxed. As a result, the 'field' is

explored through both archival work and participatory observation. The 'multi-sited' ethnography proposed by Marcus (1998) actually takes into account the fact that global integration paradoxically does not produce an intelligible whole, but an "increasing diversity of connections among phenomena once thought disparate and worlds apart" (Marcus, 1998, 68).

2. Shared Histories

The long, complex, and far-reaching processes of colonialism and cultural contact, as well as the cultural and academic practices associated with them and their long-term effects, are one of the important foci of 'post-colonial studies'. Together with 'cultural studies', contemporary socio-cultural anthropology, and historical anthropology, post-colonial studies challenges the dual classification of the contemporary world into modern and traditional societies. It shows that, while colonialism played a central role for colonised societies and peoples, it also had a sustained influence on the structures in the metropolises, the formation of the state there, and the development of its forms of knowledge (Cohn, 1996). It was this knowledge that gave rise to new definitions and dichotomies between the colonised and colonisers, between East and West, and between modern and traditional societies (Dirks, 1992). Moreover, colonial knowledge and practices of domination restructured and transformed societies all over the non-western world, contributing partially to the production of those very characteristics which were used to classify them as 'traditional' (Cohn, 1987).

'Connection matters' would be a concise if somewhat simplified description of an approach to overcome the binary oppositions central to sociology and history (Western world/non-Western world; societies with/without history; modern/traditional cultures), with their methodological nationalism and state centrism. After all, as more recent research shows, the colonies served in many respects as the experimental laboratories of European modernity, where administrative practices in the field of public hygiene and health, population censuses, and cadastral divisions were first tested. Advances in medicine and engineering were inspired by the possession of colonies and the drive to use this scientific knowledge to demonstrate British superiority (MacLeod, 1993; Drayton,

1995). After the collapse of the Empire, the civilising mission was continued in the field of development aid for the so-called 'Third World'. Interestingly, after 1945, Great Britain organised a new public administration for Germany based on its own colonial experience, even recruiting British civil servants returned from India for this purpose (Hopkins, 1997).

The fact that we are living in a 'post-colonial' world implies a preference neither for a specific methodology nor for a particular theory. Rather, the realisation that Western social scientific knowledge production is inseparably linked to the exercise of Western dominance (Said, 1978) supports the view that colonialism was constitutive of European modernity and its globalisation (Dirks, 1992). Furthermore, it has had a pervasive and sustained impact on current social reality and on the academic production of knowledge about it (Thomas, 1994). A post-colonial perspective which is sensitive to past and present entanglements and the resulting hybrids can be a useful corrective to the compartmentalisation of the world into nation-state societies on which much of modern history and social science is predicated.

What follows from such an approach for the possible development of sociology? Instead of the current methodological nationalism, a 'shared histories' perspective would foreground the past and present patterns of interaction between Western and non-Western societies, which have been interwoven for centuries. The specificity of current processes of globalisation and their various rhythms, dynamics, and trajectories in different regions of the world can be explored only against the background of colonialism and the empires as transnational formations. The idea of a de-territorialised world, the weakening of the nation-state's sovereignty, the informalisation and flexibilisation of work, the interdependence of long-distance events, and a cultural hybridity which are part of current debates on globalisation may be novel for European industrialised countries. Seen from the point of view of the periphery, they point to the ways in which the current phase of Western modernity is increasingly coming to resemble colonial and post-colonial modernities. Post-colonial societies were, and continue to be, risk societies "in which the individual and collective self failed and fails to create and control the conditions for regular and predictable reproduction" (Wong, 1999, 56).

It may be one of the ironies of history that, contrary to Marx's notion that the industrial societies show the others a mirror of their own future, the former colonies today reflect—at least partially—an image of the future of Europe. But since the West sees itself as historically unique, the current phase of globalisation is either viewed as a return of European feudalism by its critics or celebrated as a qualitatively new 'Global Age' (Albrow, 1996) by some of its advocates. This could be one reason why in Africa, South Asia, and Latin America the optimistic, celebratory mood of theories of reflexive modernisation is not usually shared by social scientists. They would rather pose, with Frederick Jameson (1991), the question whether the 'post-modern' structures of late capitalism have not in fact prevented the full realisation of the 'first' modernity in the so-called 'Third World'. Although reflexive modernisation questions a homogenous conception of modernity, and considers some of its elements to be on the verge of dissolution, it remains unclear to what extent it still assigns a paradigmatic status of historical primacy to Euro-American modernity (Giddens, 1990, 174–76). After all, reflexive modernisation continues to focus mainly on empirical evidence from Western industrialised countries alone.

3. Entangled Modernities

Sociological theories of modernity treat it as a European phenomenon whose genesis, progress, development trajectories, and ambivalences can be traced *sui generis* to the history of Western civilisation or to the respective European nation-states. The binary model underlying these theories accords Western modernity both analytical value and universal status, in contrast to which all other historical experiences are considered particular (Mamdani, 1996). Likewise, the histories of other societies are written in terms of their deviation from an idealised, unilinear Western trajectory of modernisation. This implies that the histories of non-Western societies cannot be understood in terms of their own specificities, but are represented negatively in relation to characteristics abstracted from European experience. However, the present of non-Western societies cannot be interpreted as the past of the West. In the same way, the present of the West cannot be seen as the future of all other societies.

Recent pluralistic approaches to modernisation examine multiple trajectories and forms of modernity either on the basis of Weber's various models of civilisation (Eisenstadt, 1987; Arnason, 1997) or, following Wallerstein, distinguish between them according to their distinct structural position in the world system (Therborn, 1995). The post-colonial perspective already outlined differs from the binary view of unilinear and universal theories of modernity. However, it also differs from pluralistic approaches, according to which civilisations or nation-states function as units of study. It stresses instead the need to connect developments in the metropolises and the colonies. Based on the fact of their mutual constitution and entanglement, metropolises and colonies are analysed within empires as transnational frameworks. For contrary to the amnesia of current social science theories, empires and not nation-states are the units in which different forms and patterns of modernity have taken shape in the course of a shared history. Colonial modernity can thus be seen as a part of the European modernisation process, both as one of its prerequisites and as one of its consequences. A reflexive theorisation of modernity must, therefore, include a consideration of the historical specificities of (post-)colonial modernities in different regions of the world. One must not forget, however, that the inherent violence of Western expansion, its links with racism and rationality (Gilroy, 1993), are just as much a part of the constitutive mode of modernity as is the terror of colonial modernity (Taussig, 1987).

In his essay 'Our Modernity' Partha Chatterjee describes the ambivalences of a modernity transmitted through colonialism in contrast to the Western experience thus:

whereas Kant, speaking at the founding moment of Western modernity, looks at the present as the site of one's escape from the past, for us it is precisely the present from which we feel we must escape. This makes the very modality of our coping with modernity radically different from the historically evolved modes of Western modernity. Ours is the modernity of the once-colonised. The same historical process that has taught us the value of modernity has also made us the victims of modernity.

(Chatterjee, 1997, 281)

Therefore, modernity outside Europe does not lead to a radical rupture with tradition, since only a reliance on tradition allows a conceptualisation of alter-

native models of one's own modernity. However, the search for emancipatory strategies—for example, towards a specifically Indian modernity—must include a dialogue not only with non-Western traditions, but also with alternative traditions and trajectories within Western modernity. As Alam (1999) and Santos (1995) have pointed out, the genealogy of modernity does not limit itself to the Enlightenment but includes those European traditions marginalised by the association of the hegemonic form of modernity with capitalistic expansion and power. In other words, the search for "another modernity" (Lash, 1999) must include "other Modernities" (Rofel, 1999) apart from the West, which position themselves variously in relation to Western modernity.

Taking into account the spectrum of local productions of modernity, it is possible to examine them ethnographically and comparatively. The focus of study thus shifts to the actions of various groups of actors, who were and remain involved in this complex process of interpretation, transmission, appropriation, and negotiation of modernity under very unequal conditions of power, as well as to new developments emerging from the process of interaction. Instead of representing (post-)colonial modernity as a mere derivation and imitation of the Western model, the encounter with the West can in fact be understood as a 'catalyst' (Raychaudhury, 1998). It leads to changes which neither preserve traditions nor merely imitate values, concepts, and institutions from the metropolis. For instance, Rofel's ethnography of post-Maoist China focuses on the symbols and practices used in factories to enforce or oppose modernity against the background of a socialist past, but always in the light of the new normality of Western modernity. Ong (1996, 1997), on the other hand, sketches the specific outlines of an alternative modernity by analysing the counter-discourses of the state and intellectuals in China, as well as in Singapore and Harvard University. A consideration of the divergent trajectories of (post-)colonial modernity and of the experiences of non-Western societies would lead to a pluralisation and contextualisation of modernity. Modernity would thus be interpreted as a contested terrain with varying local practices, discourses, and strategies. In my view, the role of anthropology would be the ethnographic study of these alternative forms of modernity, particularly at the level of day-to-day practice. A globalised social theory must take into account the diversity of

social formations and accept the coexistence of these interpretations in a complex and contingent world.

Conclusion

As mentioned at the beginning, the periphery does not enjoy any epistemological primacy. Nevertheless, it is specifically qualified, privileged, and handicapped as an area of relational knowledge production. The self-image of (post-)colonial societies was largely shaped by an awareness of their own relatedness (Randeria and Walligora, 1999), since it developed under global conditions from the very start. On the other hand, Western historical awareness was and remained largely self-referential, due to the assumption of its own historical and cultural uniqueness and to the equation of world history with that of the Western world (Wong, 1999, 55). The hegemony of Western knowledge production relegated all other theories to the status of 'local knowledge', if they were ever acknowledged by Western social sciences. Of course, scholars from the 'periphery' could never afford the luxury of this 'symmetry of ignorance' (Chakrabarty, 1992, 2).

The 'decentring' of Western perspectives envisaged here depends on a "decolonisation of imagination" (Pieterse and Parekh, 1995). Paradoxically, however, this is likely to be a far more difficult undertaking at the 'periphery'. As de Sousa Santos points out in the context of his exploration of the various epistemological foundations of this process in the North and the South: "As a product of empire, the South is the house of the south where the south is not at home" (Santos, 1995, 510). It is thus far more difficult for the South to find a language of its own in which to conduct a dialogue with the West. It is equally difficult for the South to negotiate a path between an all-embracing universalism and a cultural particularism which would enable it to view modernity as a shared future project.

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The Indian Discovery of Indian Civilisation

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Halbfass, in his classic study *India and Europe* underlined India's lack of such a concept in other civilisations at the conceptual level. In fact, the region's cultural inheritance excluded conceptualisation of cultures, including its own. India, unlike the Arabs, produced nothing comparable to Al-Biruni's *Tarikh al-Hind* [A history of India]. And unlike Herodotus, no historian of India ever established grand dichotomous paradigms such as Europe and Asia. The region's culture did not even produce a name for the people inhabiting it, although the names identifying people of particular regions. The word 'Hindu', as well as known, was the foreigners' denotation of the people inhabiting the subcontinent. The dominant Brahminical culture was content to describe its practices and ways, especially in matters of faith and right conduct, as *sanatana dharma* – the ancient or eternal way. In short, the culture contained no clearly defined perception of itself, past or present. Although the magisterial text *Manu Smriti* describing and prescribing the norms of right conduct for Brahminical India advised all mankind to come and learn the correct ways to live and act from the Brahmins of northern India, the pride implicit in that admonition implied no corresponding glorification of any civilisation in its totality or any part thereof that such a thing existed.

The concept of an Indian civilization owes its origins to foreign observers such as like the historians Alexander brought with his conquering armies and later to observers such as Al-Biruni. Protagonists of Indo-Islamic culture such as Abul Fazl also record their perception of and responses to a culture they considered distinctive to the region. But such perception became an essential component of the Indian elite's worldview only in the nineteenth century when it became integral to the Western-style education introduced in the country and

Mihály Szegedy-Maszák (ed.), *National Heritage – National Canon*, proceedings of the Forum 'Humanities in Historical and Comparative Perspective: Roots and Margins of the European and Reactions to it', Collegium Budapest, 1999/2000, pp. 191–198.