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Social Sciences and the Modern: Reassessing Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe*

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Abstract

This article seeks to situate *Provincializing Europe* by Dipesh Chakrabarty within a broader set of reflections on the relationship between Europe and modernity. In doing so, it encourages a reading of the work that goes beyond the framework of postcolonial debates triggered by decolonization, and instead considers intellectual and political traditions emerging from other contexts. It highlights how these earlier debates helped shape the arguments and conceptual tools of *Provincializing Europe*, thereby inviting a reading of the book within configurations that are not primarily those of the political radicalism, with which it is often—though inaccurately—associated.

Key words: Modernity; Postcolonial Studies; Modernization Theories; Critics of Eurocentrism

This paper begins with the premise that, contrary to the implications of many interpretations, Dipesh Chakrabarty's seminal work, *Provincializing Europe* (hereafter *PE*), should not be read as an outright rejection of the social and human sciences that form the foundation of modernity.[1] Rather than seeking to invalidate Western scientific systems, *PE* explicitly affirms their continued relevance, including within non-Western postcolonial contexts. The book's primary critique is directed not at these scientific systems per se, but at their instrumentalization within modernization debates and the way they have been uncritically adopted in various attempts to replicate Western modernity in the Global South.

Although Chakrabarty explicitly states that *PE's* main goal is to reassess the issue of Europe's epistemic legacy through an examination of what lies at the core of the political-scientific nexus of modernization theories, namely the historicist assertion "first in Europe, then in the rest," relatively little attention has been paid to the implications of this claim for our understanding of the book. In this regard, *PE* is best situated within the broader intellectual

discourse on modernity, modernization theories and the various epistemological and political models they have promoted. Albeit Chakrabarty and the Subaltern Studies are usually understood as the direct followers of the decolonization and the political/intellectual discussion it prompted—a commonsensical view that has been promoted by some major theoreticians of the postcolonial movement themselves—the papers argues that it is also useful to approach *PE* from a different perspective and see it as being part of a larger and older history of the reflections on modernity.[2]

To develop this argument, the paper contextualizes *PE* within a set of early and contemporary debates concerning the relevance of Western scientific modernity to non-Western societies. It demonstrates that these debates have produced multiple theoretical responses, of which *PE* represents only one. In other words, *PE* should be understood in relation to a range of competing theoretical perspectives that have both shaped and constrained its central line of reasoning. As will be shown, *PE* advocates for a conception of "coeval modernities," a framework that gains meaning only when examined in relation to alternative conceptions of modernity. Accordingly, this paper is less an analysis of *PE* in isolation than an exploration of the preceding and contemporary debates that have informed the issues it addresses.

The article thus demonstrates that the "coeval" modernity advocated by *PE* benefits from being compared to two other types of modernity, which we refer to as "global" and "alternative/multiple." Before doing so, it provides a brief history of the debates on the critique of Western modernity, starting with the reflections that took place in Japan in the mid-20th century, highlighting both their failure and their significance for the continuation of these discussions.

1. Reassessing modernity and modernization

Although this paper focuses less on *PE* itself and more on the broader debates in which it is situated, it is useful to begin by examining its characterization of Western social sciences and modernity. Chakrabarty explicitly states that the book's primary critique is not directed at European and North American human sciences per se, which he regards as essential for understanding contemporary postcolonial societies: "*Provincializing Europe* both begins and ends by acknowledging the indispensability of European political thought to representations of non-European political modernity."[3] That *PE* is not concerned mainly with the inadequacy of western knowledge in itself begs the question of what its main theoretical goal is. Here again, Chakrabarty is quite explicit: *PE* seeks "to engage the form of thought that made it possible to postulate such a Europe (i.e. 'as the original home of the modern'). At issue (is) a particular strand of developmentalist thought that I call *historicism*."[4] Later, he adds that "Historicism is

what made modernity or capitalism look not simply global but rather as something that became global *over time*, by originating in one place (Europe) and then spreading outside it."[5] In other words, *PE* should be understood as a contribution to debates on the nature of modernity and the role of the West within it. Is modernity inherently tied to the West, or should it be conceived as a plurality of distinct modernities, with the Western model being only one among many? As shall be soon clear, Chakrabarty argues for a pluralization of modernity—a perspective that recognizes Indian modernity as constituted by multiple, "coeval" historical temporalities.[6]

This is evident in Chakrabarty's well-known distinction between History 1 and History 2, which underscores the idea that the globalization of Western capitalism is not a seamless, integral process but rather a disjunctive one. In the Indian context, capitalist modernity coexists with other temporal layers that it neither fully eradicated nor can entirely suppress.[7] Chakrabarty does not dismiss the significance of capitalism and modernity in contemporary India; on the contrary, he has emphasized their continued relevance—and even their paradoxical desirability—in other writings.[8] Rather, his argument is that Indian modernity is not merely a replication of the Western model but is instead hybrid. More precisely, because it consists of the coexistence of multiple historical temporalities, it is *coeval*. This perspective carries significant implications not only for our understanding of global history but also in epistemological terms. If modernity in India is coeval, then Western social sciences are both necessary and insufficient: they provide valuable analytical tools for examining the transformations brought about by the diffusion of European modernity, yet they remain inadequate in capturing the countervailing tendencies that resist this very process of modernization.

As previously stated, this paper does not aim to address all these issues. Instead, it seeks to situate Chakrabarty's distinctive conception of modernity within the broader discourse on the nature of modernity on a global scale. Intellectual works and theories derive their significance not only from their internal coherence but also through their relational positioning within a larger network of texts—whether past or contemporary—that they seek to challenge, contradict, or draw inspiration from.[9] In short, texts are shaped by historical and theoretical contexts. However, while Chakrabarty is neither the first nor the only scholar to engage with the question of modernity in the postcolonial world, *PE* does not always explicitly articulate its relationship to these broader debates. Yet, as the remainder of this paper will demonstrate, it is useful to distinguish Chakrabarty's concept of "coeval modernity" in *PE* from other conceptions of modernity, which can be categorized as "global" and "plural." Before doing so, the paper examines how the largely unsuccessful debates on Western modernity that took place in wartime Japan significantly influenced discussions on the trajectory of modernity in non-Western contexts.

2. Overcoming modernity?

Chakrabarty, as mentioned earlier, is far from being the first theorist to take an interest in the questions raised by the diffusion of modernity beyond Europe. In the scientific and intellectual domain, one can easily observe that the first challenges to modernity were contemporaneous with its earliest encounters. However, it was in Japan, in 1942, that the first coordinated and systematic attempt was made to "overcome modernity" (*kindai no chōkoku*—近代の超克) and to assert the possibility of being "modern without being Western."[10]

We will not delve into the details of these debates, as they fall outside the limited scope of this article. Let us simply note that they brought together, within the framework of a seminar and the publications that followed, specialists from various disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, as well as philosophers grouped under the banner of the Kyoto School. The latter theorized the idea of "overcoming modernity" and sought to position Japanese thought within global philosophy, highlighting the alternatives it could offer to Western paradigms.[11]

However, these initial debates were, overall, a failure. Politically, first, the 1942 seminar took place amid World War II, with the thinkers of the Kyoto School becoming complicit in Japan's imperialist and militarist policies.[12] Their initial attempt to make the distinct voice of Japanese thought heard transformed into a call to promote a Japanese universalism, which coincided with the military government's expansionist projects in Southeast Asia and even convinced some actors within Indian nationalism.[13] Irrevocably tainted by its connections with Japanese ultra-nationalism, the idea of transcending modernity was discredited following the fall of the Axis powers. As a result, decades later, Japanese intellectuals would continue to be skeptical of challenges to a Western modernity that had since become associated, for them, with democracy and humanism.[14]

Furthermore, these debates were also an intellectual failure. Beneath the voluntarist title of "overcoming modernity" often lay the complex, if not paradoxical, realization that modernity had already completely transformed Japan. Even if this modernity were precisely defined (which was far from being the case during the seminar), the very idea of transcending it appeared problematic, as did the notion of returning to a Japan that many participants acknowledged as being irreversibly Westernized.[15] In short, this debate highlights difficulties that would become recurrent in such endeavors: while the recognition of the epistemic violence of the West is widely shared, concrete paths toward emancipation seem difficult to map out. In the case of the Kyoto School, as many commentators have pointed out, attempts to deconstruct Western centrality were fraught with deep contradictions. Takeuchi Yoshimi, a privileged witness to these debates, spoke of the "double structure of the war" (both anti-American and imperial), which blinded Japanese intellectuals to the true issues of their time. Others argued that, far from overcoming modernity,

it was rather the Japanese thinkers who were overcome by modernity; that their work reinforced the very East-West dichotomy they claimed to overcome; or that their attempts to overturn the power dynamics between the West and its peripheries were ultimately doomed by their reliance on modern scientific categories of thought.[16]

Thus, if the Japanese debates of 1942 were significant for the issues at hand in this paper, it is perhaps paradoxically because they closed off one possible path of anti-Western critique: rather than a hypothetical transcendence of modernity, the discussion would shift towards plural visions of modernity itself. The focus would no longer be on doing without the West but on finding ways to circumvent it, on modernizing without merely replicating it identically—in short on reintroducing flexibility and diversity into a modernity long thought of as homogeneous. It is within this broader set of debates that Chakrabarty's work would later be situated, alongside competing conceptions of modernity.

3. Globalizing (Western) Modernity

The first set of theories we will examine falls under what we call the theories of global modernity. By this, we refer to a series of debates that have emerged around the globalization of Western capitalism. In these discussions, which began in the 1950s, being modern means being part of the socio-political framework of the capitalist economy, such that modernity in non-Western worlds can be understood in terms of their ability to integrate those very networks.

Japan, which we have just discussed, provides a perfect transition into these early debates. With the failure of the seminar on the overcoming of modernity, conditions were set for a more cautious line of questioning about modernity in non-Western contexts. Added to this were the economic achievements of the country, which, within a few years, rose to the status of a major economic power. In this context, several intellectuals—initially Japanese and American—sought to understand what the Japanese case revealed about a modernity that the West no longer seemed to have sole claim over. This reflection culminated in the 1960 conference held in the city of Hakone, where academic debates benefited from the extensive support of American diplomacy, American foundations, and the Ford Foundation.[17] These institutional ties ensured the orchestrated dissemination of "modernization theories," which aimed to promote a capitalist modernity outside the West—seen by the United States and its allies as a means to counter Moscow in the context of the Cold War.[18] It is precisely against the theoretical premises of these theories that Chakrabarty would later position his analyses in *PE*.

Substantively, the reflections that began in the 1960s and extended roughly until the economic crises of the 1990s sought to make sense of Japan's economic development, sometimes described as a "miracle".[19] For a long time, Japan provided the only example of a non-Western

society capable of rivaling European and North American countries—or even, as some later works suggested, surpassing them.[20] These analyses sought to understand why, as the title of one of the key works in this field put it, "Japan has succeeded."[21] Japanese capitalist modernity was seen as the result of the successful adoption of capitalism since Emperor Meiji (1868–1912), culminating in a unique organization of labor characteristic of Japanese society.[22]

The key issue here is to demonstrate how Japan managed to become modern like the West, ultimately following a trajectory of growth pioneered by Europe and later the United States, without deviating significantly from it.[23] As we can see, this is precisely the idea that Chakrabarty will critique through the concept of historicism. In this sense, these debates bring full circle a cycle of questioning that began with the onset of the Meiji era, when the Japanese asked themselves what their country "lacked" compared to the West, which had enabled the latter's rise to power.[24] By demonstrating Japan's ability to be as modern as the West, these debates provided one possible answer to what had been a persistent question. What is also noticeable, here, is that these discussions hesitated to fully embrace the idea of an alternative modernity, as the replicability of Japan's experience was far from certain: did Japan pave the way for others, or should it be considered an isolated and exceptional case—an idea supported by a significant segment of academic and cultural sectors?[25]

The economic development of Southeast Asia in the 1960s and 1970s would provide a partial answer to this question, as several countries—Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Singapore—achieved growth rates that brought their economies closer to those of Western nations.[26] Later, when Thailand, Indonesia, and Vietnam began their economic takeoff, the image of a "flying geese" formation, formulated by the Japanese sociologist Akamatsu Kaname, became popular: just as a lead goose guides the others in a structured formation, Japan was seen as having shown the way to its Asian neighbors.[27] Beyond the metaphor, this idea reflected a broader belief that, in the final decades of the 20th century, Asia would be in a position to challenge the West's monopoly on power and exercise a form of hegemony in the following century, as argued by the Singaporean scholar Kishore Mahbubani.[28] The globalization initiated by Europeans—particularly that of the capitalist system—would thus reach its conclusion in a kind of cunning of reason, in which the very tools deployed by the West to ensure its dominance over the world would ultimately lead to its own displacement.

However, such an approach risks confining the debate—and non-Western countries—to a capitalist modernity of American orientation, without any alternative. To be modern is to be like the West—that is, to modernize according to a set of criteria established by the central figures of these theories, like the sociologist Talcott Parsons (democracy, individualism, rationalization, capitalism, etc.).[29] Is there no other way to escape Euro-American hegemony than to appropriate and replicate what ensured its dominance, then? Would this not, in turn, risk further Westernizing

oneself while believing to be achieving emancipation? In short, with those theories, all differences between, for instance, the United States, Thailand, and Tunisia risk being erased and relegated to the status of exotic remnants of a past destined to disappear.

It is against such reductionism that the debate on alternative and coeval modernities will be structured. One of Chakrabarty's key ideas is precisely to deny capitalism the all-encompassing capacity attributed to it by modernization theories: capitalism is never totalizing, and therefore, there exist margins or spaces of resistance to it in the societies of the Global South. In doing so, Chakrabarty also engages—though in a less direct manner—with thinkers who could be described as both critical and in favor of maintaining a research agenda on global capitalism. This includes scholars from non-Western contexts, such as Ravi Palat, who seeks to reexamine Asia's place in global capitalist relations through the lens of World-System theories.[30] Against the narrative of capitalism smoothly diffusing from the West to Asia, Palat highlights the persistence of power relations and the role of conflicts in structuring a world-system in which several Asian countries actually occupy a semi-peripheral position. This does not mean that Asia's current rise within global capitalism is insignificant (World-System theorists were, in fact, among the first to take an interest in China's new centrality).[31] Rather, it is essential to reintegrate these transformations into a long history of capitalism—one that, while now fully Asian, was originally European.

In a similar vein, the sociologist and sinologist Arif Dirlik (1940-2017) proposed a reinterpretation of history aimed at bringing forth the concept of *Global Modernity*.[32] By examining the connections that gradually developed from the 13th century onwards between the Chinese empire, Central Asia, the Indian subcontinent, and Europe, he demonstrates how various modernities and capitalisms emerged in different places and imperial contexts (Mongol, Safavid, Ming and Qing, Tokugawa, etc.).[33] His "polymorphic modernity" is characterized by the diversity of trajectories and possibilities: economic and societal developments followed multiple paths, with Europe holding no privileged position for a long time. However, this polymorphism was progressively reduced as Europe imposed its modernity as *the* modernity. Lateral possibilities were thus closed off from the 16th century onward, leaving no other option but to exist within a space whose coordinates were now defined by the West.

In this regard, Dirlik's perspective seems close to Chakrabarty's, as both conceive of capitalism as global and yet non-totalizing. However, significant differences remain: Chakrabarty sees modernity's plurality as a feature of contemporary capitalism, while Dirlik considers it to belong to a bygone past. Furthermore, Dirlik criticizes Chakrabarty's postmodern and hermeneutic reading of history, advocating instead for a materialist perspective, which led him to write a polemical text against Chakrabarty and the postcolonial studies.[34]

4. Alternative/multiple modernities

A second set of studies on modernities consists of what we propose to call "alternative" or "multiple modernities." They take as their starting point certain premises of modernization theories while decisively diverging from them. To understand this, we can return to the seminal figure of the English Language modernization theories, Talcott Parsons, and more specifically to his reading of Max Weber. Parsons, who had translated Weber (albeit in a problematic manner) considered his analyses as capturing the rationalization processes typical of the modern era.[35]

Under the pen of the American sociologist, Weber appeared as the champion of a Western modernity, where capitalism, democracy, and individualism are harmoniously intertwined. He also emerged as the thinker of Western specificity: modernity is Western because modernity and capitalism were the products of processes originating in a novel relationship to the world inaugurated by ascetic Protestantism.[36] However, it was precisely this idea—that modernity was necessarily tied to the West—that would come under scrutiny.

To understand this, we must briefly examine Weber's argumentation. When Weber undertook the project of highlighting the elective affinities between Protestant asceticism and the spirit of modern capitalism, he did not limit himself to a study centered on Europe and North America. According to him, understanding why capitalism emerged in the West required a counterfactual demonstration of why it did not emerge within other religious or cultural traditions. In other words, Weber sought to demonstrate his argument rigorous and complete only if he could both establish a positive link between modernity and Protestantism and prove that no similar connection existed in other world religions. This led him to embark on an extensive comparative study of the economic ethics of world religions: he meticulously documented several non-Western cultural contexts and published studies focusing on ancient Judaism, Taoism, and Confucianism.[37]

For the questions that concern us here, this monumental work had two important consequences. *Substantively*, Weber demonstrated that modern capitalism was linked to the West. However, *formally*, he introduced a way of thinking about modernity by tracing its cultural and religious roots. More than the substantive content of his work, it was precisely the form of these correlations that interested the participants in the debate on alternative modernities. It became possible to oppose Weber's conclusions by mobilizing his conceptual framework against him: in short, to challenge the Weberian idea of a specifically Western modernity by showing how other religions and cultures had produced their own forms of modernity. Confucianism, Taoism, Islam, Jainism, and Hinduism thus became functional equivalents of Weber's Protestantism, each claiming to have generated its own distinctive modernity. Consequently, modernity was

irreversibly pluralized and detached from the homogenizing framework of modernization theories.

This perspective is evident in the opening lines of *Multiple Modernities*, where Shmuel Eisenstadt writes: "The notion of multiple modernities [...] stands in opposition to the vision of 'classical' modernization theories that prevailed in the 1950s and, in fact, to the classical sociological analyses of Marx, Durkheim, and (to a large extent) even Weber—at least a certain reading of his work."[38] With this nuance ("a certain reading of his work"), Eisenstadt clearly indicates that the challenge is to use Weber against the interpretation given by Parsons. Indeed, within this plural reading of modernities, Weber is mobilized precisely to demonstrate that different cultures and religions have modernized along their own paths.

The early stages of these debates, as previously mentioned, can be traced back to discussions on the modernization of Japan and the Asian "Tigers." A close reading of the studies published in the 1950s and 1960s reveals that, at the margins of modernization theories, several authors began questioning the cultural and religious roots of the Asian economic miracle. This is particularly striking given that many of these scholars were former students of Parsons who distanced themselves from their master's orthodox interpretation.[39] As one of them put it in the title of his work, the goal was to understand the "cultural roots of modern Japan."[40] Compared to modernization theories, this evolution was twofold: modernity was no longer conceived solely in socio-economic terms (that is, as the combination of capitalism and a rational process of social differentiation) but also included a cultural dimension, deeply rooted in the historical trajectories of different societies. Additionally, modernity was no longer singular but plural—marked by multiple trajectories and even different definitions of what constitutes the modern.

Once the link between modernity and the West was severed, the debate on alternative modernities opened a research program as diverse as the cultural contexts or religions considered as possible explanatory factors in the emergence of distinct modernities: Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism, Jainism, Islam, or Confucianism.[41] These discourses consistently interpret modernity in light of cultural specificities. Contemporary Turkey, for instance, became a case study of a modernity distinct from that of Europe, as illustrated by middle-class women who are both capitalist and religious, analyzed by Nilüfer Göle.[42] Similarly, Tu Weiming envisioned a Confucian modernity, which he hoped could give capitalism in Asia a more human and ecological face than the one observed in the West.[43]

On the surface, such alternative or plural modernities appear very similar to the concept of "coeval" modernity advocated by Chakrabarty. In both cases, there is a clear effort to break away from the notion that Western modernity has spread unilaterally and universally. Rather than a single, dominant modernity, there exist multiple modernities—or at the very least, hybrid forms of modernity—shaped by the reconfigurations of capitalism as it encounters diverse cultural

contexts. However, significant differences remain in comparison with *PE*'s perspective, as we will now highlight in our concluding remarks.

Concluding Remarks: Coeval modernities

In contrast to the previous debates on modernities that we have termed "global" and "multiple/alternative," how should we situate the idea of a "coeval" modernity promoted, among others, by Chakrabarty? The first point to note is that it operates at a higher level of abstraction. Here, the question of *difference* becomes central to thinking about modernity—a point that was more or less acknowledged in previous debates but now takes on a central role. It is not merely a matter of demonstrating the potential or actual existence of different modernities, as theorists of multiple modernities have already argued. More fundamentally, it is about recognizing that modernity is inherently marked by difference, that it never fully coincides with itself, and that it is always plural.

This disjunction at the heart of modernity is central to the work of a thinker close to Chakrabarty, Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, to whom it is necessary "to think with a difference—a difference that would destabilize the universalist idioms, historicize contexts, and pluralize experiences of modernity."[44] However, acknowledging the plural nature of modernity does not imply declaring its end: "Modernity is inescapable,"[45] he writes, positioning himself against certain radical currents of postmodernism that foresee the dual erasure of the West and its modernity. On the contrary, Gaonkar calls for a deliberate engagement with Western modernity and its theorists: "Whoever elects to think in terms of alternative modernities (irrespective of one's location) must think with and also against the tradition that stretches from Marx and Weber through Baudelaire and Benjamin to Habermas, Foucault, and numerous Western or Western-trained thinkers."[46] In short, even though modernity has spread beyond the West and pluralized itself by grafting onto multiple contexts, the West remains a reference point in this process.

Yet, "being a reference point" does not mean that modernity remains the same. On the contrary, as we have seen, Gaonkar states that modernity is shaped by and through difference. This is why he assigns a central role to culture, calling for a clearer distinction between social modernization on the one hand and cultural modernity on the other. The former largely corresponds to the core concerns of modernization theories (capitalism, science, industrialization, secularization, etc.). However, whereas these theories see a convergence and homogenization of the world, Gaonkar asserts that the specific structuring of cultural contexts prevents any uniformization, instead unfolding modernity into as many modernities as there are national, local and micro-level cultures. In short, capitalism (or processes of bureaucratization, secularization, etc.) does not manifest in the same way in England as in India, nor even in

Calcutta or Bombay, nor among the working class or the middle classes of Bombay, and so on—"modernity is not one, but many,"[47] Gaonkar concludes.

Having reached this conclusion, one might nevertheless ask what distinguishes these coeval modernities from the alternative or plural modernities examined by Nilüfer Göle or Tu Weiming. While there are indeed continuities between these two categories, the idea of coeval modernities seems to go further in its pluralization of the modern and the theoretical implications of such pluralization. With Göle and Tu, one might say, there exist alternative modernities (Western, Islamic, Confucian, etc.), each endowed with coherence and integrity, coexisting discretely alongside one another. Speaking of coeval modernities, by contrast, entails thinking through the fundamental entanglement of different modernities, which precludes any claim to totality.

This allows us, at the end of the long theoretical trajectory of this paper, to finally return to Chakrabarty. His historical work, as we have seen, acknowledges both the profound transformations experienced by Indians with the spread of capitalism under the Raj, and the seemingly paradoxical persistence of a distinct cultural domain that appears to run counter to modernity. Nineteenth-century Indian workers, for example, were simultaneously subjected to a new organization of labor, a product of capitalist modernization, and continued to invoke and live daily among local deities.

The coexistence of Adam Smith and the god Krishna is striking. One could, as many colonial and postcolonial scholars have, interpret this as the survival of the archaic within the modern, as a sign of India's failure to modernize or to be fully modern (that is, like the West). However, this is an interpretation that Chakrabarty rejects. That Hindu gods remain a part of the world of workers, even to the point of being invoked during protests against employers or colonial authorities, signals that alongside the temporality of capitalist modernity, another temporality is at play—that of the Hindu cultural deities, at once older and equally present (contemporary, or coeval, in other words).

PE generalizes this idea through the distinction between History 1 and History 2, which we have previously discussed. The persistence of a temporal layer termed History 2 is by no means a sign of archaism or an incomplete modernity. Rather, it denotes the coexistence of different histories, leading Chakrabarty to argue that the time of modernity is necessarily non-integral, disjunctive, never self-coinciding and fundamentally "out of joint." This finally clarifies what is at stake in *PE*. It is not about opposing European social sciences, which remain indispensable for making sense of a capitalist modernity that is now Indian (and Chinese, Egyptian, Nigerian, etc.) as well as Western. Rather, it is about recognizing that social sciences, as products of the modern era, are somewhat inefficient for analyzing phenomena that fall outside the framework of this modernity. Far from being the anti-Western manifesto it is

sometimes portrayed as, *PE* is, in fact, a nuanced reflection on the significance of Western knowledge within a modernity structured by differences.

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Notes

[1] The reception and interpretation of Chakrabarty's work have been numerous and varied. A comprehensive analysis falls beyond the scope of this article but for useful overall indications see Conference 2021. For the sake of clarity, however, we propose a provisional classification into three broad categories. The first reflects a scholarly and historiographical engagement with *Provincializing Europe*, taking seriously albeit critically the theoretical and methodological implications of Chakrabarty's approach to history. This category includes, among many others, contributions such as Dietze 2008 or, in a more polemical tone Bayart 2010 or Dirlik 2010. The second category encompasses the virtually infinite dissemination of allusive references to the notion of "provincializing Europe," where the concept is evoked—often positively but without detailed discussion, in support of broader postcolonial critiques of Western epistemic and political structures (Roulleau-Berger 2021). Finally, a third set of interpretations invokes the provincialization of Europe in a much looser or fully indirect fashion, typically within arguments aimed at defending Western values perceived to be under threat from contemporary relativism: see Roza 2020 or Buruma and Margalit 2004.

[2] See Guha, *A Subaltern Studies Reader, 1986-1995* and Said, "Foreword."

[3] Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 22.

[4] Ibid., XIV.

[5] Ibid., 7.

[6] Ibid., 8 and 16.

[7] Ibid., 47.

[8] See Chakrabarty, "Planetary Crises and the Difficulty of Being Modern."

[9] For a discussion on the internal vs. social analysis of ideas see Hauchecorne/Matonti, "Actualité de l'histoire sociale des idées politiques."

[10] Souyri, *Moderne sans être occidental*.

[11] Calichman, *Overcoming Modernity*, XIV.

[12] See Heisig, *Philosophers of Nothingness*.

[13] See Sakai, "Modernity and Its Critique" and Chakrabarty, "Planetary Crises."

[14] See Brisson, "L'Occident/L'Orient comme enjeux épistémiques."

[15] Calichman, *Overcoming Modernity*, 28.

[16] See Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, Osaki, *Nothingness in the Heart of Empire* and Shimizu, *The Kyoto School and International Relations*.

[17] See Conrad, "The Colonial Ties Are Liquidated."

[18] See Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future.*

[19] Johnson, *MITI and the Japanese Miracle*.

[20] See Vogel, *Japan as number one*.

[21] Morishima, *Why Has Japan "Succeeded"?*

[22] See Kamata, *Japan in the Passing Lane* and Gibney, *Miracle by Design*.

[23] See Rostow, *The stages of economic growth*.

[24] See Barshay, *The Social Sciences in Modern Japan*.

[25] On the culturalist discourse on Japan exceptionalism see: Turner, "Religion, state and Japanese exceptionalism."

[26] See Vogel, *The Four Little Dragons*.

[27] For a critical reassessment of these debates see Rigg, "Of miracles and crises."

[28] See Mahbubani, *The Asian 21st Century*.

[29] See Parsons, *Social System*.

[30] See Palat, *Pacific-Asia and the Future of the World-System*.

[31] See Arrighi, *Adam Smith in Beijing*.

[32] See Dirlik, *Global Modernity*, chap. 5.

[33] See Dirlik, "Revisioning Modernity."

[34] See Dirlik, *The Postcolonial Aura*.

[35] See Tribe, "Talcott Parsons as Translator of Max Weber's Basic Sociological Categories."

[36] See Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

[37] See Weber, *The Religion of China* and Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*.

[38] Eisenstadt, *Multiple Modernities*, 1.

[39] See Bellah, *Tokugawa Religion* and Jacobs, *The Origin of Modern Capitalism and Eastern Asia*.

[40] See Bellah, *Tokugawa Religion*.

[41] See Ahmed/Ahmed, "'Weber's hypothesis';" Saran, "Hinduism and economic Development in India;" Gellner, "Max Weber, Capitalism and the Religion of India;" Jackson, *Capitalism Magic Thailand*; Iwasawa, "Shinto

Economic Ethics;" Nevaskar, *Capitalists without capitalism*; Göle, "Snapshots of Islamic Modernities;" Göle, *The Forbidden Modern* and Tu, "Implications of the Rise of 'Confucian Asia'."

[42] See Göle, *The Forbidden Modern*.

[43] See Tu, "Implications of the Rise of 'Confucian Asia'."

[44] Gaonkar, *Alternative Modernities*, 14.

[45] Ibid., 1.

[46] Ibid., 15.

[47] Ibid., 17.