Modernologies
Contemporary Artists Researching
Modernity and Modernism

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MACBA
MUSEU D'ART CONTEMPORANI DE BARCELONA

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Foreword

The title of this exhibition as well as the catalogue that accompanies it makes us think about two basic premises. The first involves the fact that we can now discuss modernity academically as both a historic period and an ideological project. This creates a new field of study that may not yield scientific knowledge but does produce objective conclusions. The second tenet is that modernity is now a plural topic of study: in other words, we speak of different modernities, in terms of both their composition and their expressions.

Modernologies also contributes to a paradigmatic debate during the transition from the twentieth century to the twenty first: a debate that involves the question as to whether the historical period of modernity along with its ideological and aesthetic canons has ended, as many claim, or if, as others argue, we are still immersed in the modern. The works of a young generation of artists — mostly from Central Europe, especially the Anglo-Saxon and Germanic regions — have made us reflect on what, at the beginning of this new century, moves the spirit behind the political, cultural, ideological and aesthetic evolution of the past three hundred years (if not more). The modern project is manifest in different ways and from different perspectives, and it is evident that these do not coincide in time. Similarly, there is no consensus on the roots, trunk and branches of the ins and outs of modernity.

While aesthetic modernity is not an expression of the other facets of the modern project, it does depend on that project. And the art of the last sixty years, as we have seen, is not only — or we could say, 'is no longer' — the result of aesthetic intentions and projects. It entails motivations and consequences that go beyond the problem of beauty, though one of modernity's concerns is to rid artistic practice of the monopoly on aesthetic production. The confluence of art and daily life, as forwarded by theorists and artists since the end of the nineteenth century, involves the intervention of design as we now know it. Like advertising, fashion, architecture and graphic design, the industrial production of objects could have embraced the idea of beauty. In conjunction with the obstinate efficacy of industrial production and the mass media, design took art everywhere, obliging it to invent new ecosystems to inhabit. The search for these ecosystems and for the grammatical links between them is the concern of the recent historical revision manifest in the works of some thirty artists from diverse contexts. In this way we are putting to the test art's capacity to bring together apparently unrelated historical narratives and traditions, and make them coexist. Is it still possible to think of a universal language, one immune to the impositions of authorities or beliefs? How can we conceive of the universalist spirit of modern artistic practice, the idea of the *tabula rasa*, beyond economic globalisation and its consequences? Can we really recognise how

‘the other’— who is both producer and recipient — contributes to the very notion of the modern project? Is it feasible to speak of post-colonialism when we are witnesses to present-day colonisations?

At the same time, *Modernologies* moves us towards a genealogy of the interest of contemporary artists in what lies at the root of art’s autonomy, one of the defining features of modern art. This autonomy is based on the premise that the artist is no longer commissioned to create a work; the work is therefore not an instrument of something beyond the artist’s production, but rather reflects solely the author’s own desire and purpose. Contemporary art is the heir to modern art, but it has overcome certain guiding principles of modernity. In 1968, Roland Barthes published ‘The Death of the Author’, in which he described a radical shift in the very essence of cultural productions. The work does not culminate in the limits of the artistic object or product; instead, it lies in the hands of the recipient. Though the author disappears, authorship does not: what disappears is authority — that authority that certain institutions had hoped to inherit. The institutionalisation of the avant-garde and the different returns-to-order disguised as fashions or as dominant tastes, ‘official’ art and public art policy, obliges us to once again question the modern spirit as well as its opponents or antagonists. ‘Machine made’ and ‘handmade’ are no longer exclusive categories; in times of clear unsustainability, industry is more suspicious than liberating. And artists question their role: should they produce more images to be tossed into the great river of excess information and consumption, or should they put forth the antidotes and the tools for resistance, understanding, comprehension and action?

Bartomeu Marí
Director
Museu d’Art Contemporani de Barcelona

Introduction

Through a selection of artistic undertakings, this project sets out to explore modernity as a promising sociopolitical movement that was aspiring to cultivate a universal language. It was predicated on industrialisation and technology, on the principles of human rights and democracy, on the right to self-determination, on the principle of education for all, on secularisation and Enlightenment philosophy, and above all on the underlying notion of progress and continual development. Art disengaged from the immediate functional relationship with its former patrons, the Church and the aristocracy, and instead became committed to the ideology of autonomy. As part of this movement, the arts were accordingly required not only to portray modern life in appropriate forms but also to explore the utopian potential of modernity, along with the destructive, regressive facets of revolution and upheaval. Modernism attempted to represent the experiences and ramifications of modernity through artistic forms — and in so doing almost even became postmodern.

Such promises of a better and more alluring world are juxtaposed with considerations problematising modernity as concept and project, defining a fundamental critique of its rhetoric and conditions. Modernity was neither induced by Western imperial projects, nor by colonialism in particular, but these proved constitutive for its development, forming the ‘darker and hidden face’, as Walter D. Mignolo proposes in this ‘European narrative’. Jacques Rancière, in turn, postulates an ‘aesthetic regime of art’, the prevailing ‘indifference’ of which goes back to the democratic principle of a radical demand for equality. Moreover, Bruno Latour asserts that we ‘have never been modern’ because the strict dichotomy governing nature and society in the scope of modernity never came to be resolved. And Jürgen Habermas is well known for his conceptualisation of modernity as an unfinished project.

Modernity is a popular topos for analyses and reflections of a largely controversial nature. As such, numerous theories have been put forth about both the beginning and the end of modernity, which has marked a process of radical change in all spheres of life. While early formulations of ‘modern life’ can be recognised in Romanticism, primarily in its literature, the events decisive for the development of modernity in political as well as aesthetic contexts are considered to be, according to art historian T. J. Clark, the French Revolution and the first public exhibiting of a painting on the occasion of the public viewing of Marat’s murdered body in Paris. The emergence of totalitarian regimes in Europe, especially in Germany during National Socialism and the Holocaust, signify the decline of modernity in individual, societal and political domains. The end of modernity has long had a specific point of reference: architecture theorist Charles Jencks established a precise moment in

time for the ‘death of modern architecture’, namely 3:32 pm on 15 July 1972. At this very instant, the Pruitt-Igoe residential blocks in St Louis were being demolished, and the collapse of modernity was thereby conceded, so to speak, literally making room for the ‘language of postmodernity’. Since the collapse of both World Trade Center towers in New York City on 11 September 2001, a picture of the actual costs of modernity, of the relationship between globalisation and violence, has become apparent for some. Non-synchrony and divergent conceptions — both in the definition of modernity as epoch, as style, as societal form, as model of production and in the insight gained through postcolonial studies — have led in recent years to a consensus on the notion of ‘multiple modernities’.

It seems to be no accident that artists of a younger generation are, in their works, increasingly dealing with the legacy and the promises of modernity and modernism, with the failure of the utopia — that they are searching for possible redefinitions and actualisations and are indeed posing questions about the state of the modernity of our society. This has come about in light of the re-emergence of reactionary thinking in society and politics, of a renewed functionalisation of art by the market strategists employed by global corporations, which in turn use their economic imperialism to relegate economically disadvantaged countries back to pre-modern conditions, and of the all-commanding role still played by the art market today despite recent symptoms of crisis.

Modernologies aims to critically investigate individual approaches to this artistic exploration, with the point of departure here always remaining the perspective of the respective artists on this topic area. Unfolding before us, therefore, is a kind of map composed of new viewpoints and narratives about modernity and modernism, yet most notably about the constitution of our modernity and the immanent conflicts and contradictions therein.

In the accompanying publication, this project of a ‘mapping of the critique of modernity’ is extended in two directions through essays by Cornelia Klinger and Walter D. Mignolo, with the first exploring the ideology of aesthetic modernity including the principles of autonomy, authenticity, and alterity, and the second delving into interrelationships between modernity and coloniality. The latter topic is one that continues to determine the content and appropriation of those conventional concepts still governing museums and collections today. Augmenting the many images and relevant texts on the artists and their works, several of the artists themselves have expressed their current stances on the subject matter at hand in short statements compiled and edited by André Rottmann.

Sabine Breitwieser
Curator of the exhibition

Modernologies – Or What Makes Contemporary Artists Investigate Modernity and Modernism

Sabine Breitwieser

‘It is neither inner experience, nor the fundamental structures of scientific knowledge. It is also not a group of historical contents elaborated elsewhere, treated by historians and received as ready-made facts. Actually, in this historical-philosophical practice, one has to make one’s own history, fabricate history, as if through fiction, in terms of how it would be traversed by the question of the relationships between structures of rationality which articulate true discourse and the mechanisms of subjugation which are linked to it. This is evidently a question which displaces the historical objects familiar to historians towards the problem of the subject and the truth about which historians are not usually concerned.’

— Michel Foucault, ‘What is Critique?’ [1]

I. Which questions should be asked

Point of departure for this exhibition is an obvious artistic interest in — and associated practice of — the exploration of modernity. Over the past three decades, this thematic focus has not only been found in numerous examples of artistic production, but also in related discourse, exhibition projects and publications. Countless and very diverse undertakings have been dedicated to the attempt to apprehend, to grasp, modernity and its ramifications. In the last ten to fifteen years, this aim has once again been pursued by a younger generation of artists in an especially intensive manner. The referencing of events and the appropriation of forms and symbols of modernity — be it photographic documents of modern buildings (often in ‘exotic’, remote locations and usually in a state of neglect or even devastation), the revisiting of geometric abstractions or the recycling of symbols of modern popular culture — seem to have, in recent years, become part of an established formal canon in contemporary art, yes, even almost a platitude of artistic methodologies. Not seldom has the impression arisen that artists are calling for the return to earlier utopian ideas, thereby slipping into a state of nostalgia — without, however, calling into question the issue of failure that has frequently been proclaimed in postmodernity, namely the apparent dishonouring of onetime promises of modernity. Or without having questioned the implications of this ‘aesthetic regime of the arts’, which — in the words of the oft-quoted Jacques Rancière — ‘is the true name for what is designated by the incoherent label “modernity”... [which] in its different versions... [is] the concept that diligently works at masking the specificity of this regime of the arts and the very meaning of the specificity of regimes of art’.[2]

What is it that, at first glance, moves contemporary artists to be less apt to commit themselves to the role of innovators and founders of totally new movements, forms and ideas through their work, declining to assert themselves as

1 Michel Foucault, ‘What is Critique?’, in Sylvère Lotringer and Lysa Hochroth (eds.), *The Politics of Truth*, New York: Semiotext(e), 1997, pp. 55–56.

2 Jacques Rancière, «Von den Regimen der Künste und der mäßigen Relevanz des Begriffs der Moderne», *Die Aufteilung des Sinnlichen. Die Politik der Kunst und ihre Paradoxien*, Berlin: bbooks, 2008. p. 41. English version: ‘Artistic Regimes and the Shortcomings of the Notion of Modernity’, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, New York: Continuum, 2004, p. 24.

reformers in the art world? Instead they have been more inclined to assume the role of re-interpreters and translators of already existing rhetorics of modernity, to operate as critics of its historicisation, reappropriating the grammar of modernism, albeit with new explorative aspects. How is the relationship of artists to the promises and forms of modernity represented, and in which manner can this historical epoch be critically reflected in artworks, or even become subject to a re-evaluation?

In the *Documenta Magazine,* no. 1 entitled 'Modernity?', in allusion to Charles Baudelaire and T. J. Clark and addressing the question 'Is Modernity our Antiquity?', Canadian artist and art critic Mark Lewis describes in his essay of the same title the allure exerted on him by a small, modernist apartment building in a park on the outskirts of Vancouver. Even though he has 'taken hundreds of photographs and hours of video footage', he is still not sure whether he is 'any closer to knowing what to do with this building' than when he 'first saw it five years ago'.[3] He notes that his 'fixation or compulsion' with the building didn't begin until he had moved away to England, where hard-to-find modernist architecture enjoyed a 'rather battered and neglected' reputation, and that he had ended up becoming a 'foreigner in my own town' of Vancouver. Continuing to reflect on his point of interest, Lewis ultimately comes to the conclusion that it is indeed the disintegration and decay of 'these recently past forms' that entices him, remarking how 'the artistic signs and images of emerging and developing modernity are rapidly becoming historical', and that we therefore 'can no longer fully identify with them'.[4]

This is not the appropriate moment to enter into a more detailed discussion on Lewis's analysis of his initial question and on other considerations put forth by him, for, while certainly of substantive significance, in my opinion these do not demonstrate pivotal relevance to the exhibition project at hand. Expounding on his stance furthermore appears, in my view, almost too symptomatic to facilitate the freezing of a particular depiction sketched by modernity. In contrast, I would at this point like to turn to other explorative questions, such as, for instance, the reasons behind the composition of the building rendered by Lewis, which is 'almost already an image' comprised of 'cubic forms, the mixed and contradictory volumes that are created through compelling and vital montage' — touching on that which, in his opinion, 'these buildings already articulate against their respective backgrounds', for which reason he felt compelled to make it the subject of a photographic study. Of significant interest here is the question as to which people used to live in this modernist apartment building, and what meaning these forms originally held and what they stand for today — as well as why the utilisation of the building is no longer feasible today, and what induced those responsible to block the once '"exclusive" views of the surrounding ocean and mountains' with new buildings, which were 'built in front of the simpler modern structures of the nineteen-fifties and sixties'.[5]

Another example of modernist architecture — specifically an abandoned socialistic structure from the 1960s in Leipzig — inspired Austrian artist Dorit Margreiter to create her multipart installation *zentrum* (2006). She by no means allows herself to engage in, or be seduced into, documenting the building, which had fallen victim to dilapidation and soon faced demolition, in its aesthetic as such. Margreiter instead brings up questions about the role of aesthetic media in relation to the manifestations of modernism. Which aesthetic strategies does the modernist design of this one-storey building represent? And which social and political concepts was it thus supporting or propagating? By example of the neon lettering '*brühlzentrum*' (Brühl centre) on the building, the artist strives to typify these questions through

3 Mark Lewis, 'Is Modernity our Antiquity?', *Documenta Magazine*, no. 1, Cologne, 2007. Available online at http://magazines.documenta.de.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

a work-in-progress. Through a digital colour video, Margreiter also time and again demonstrates, on a case-by-case basis, the preparations for her production, the application of reflective foil onto the no-longer-functional neon tubes that cover the large letters. The video documentary of the nocturnal activation of this mise-en-scène, where the modernist lettering was once again briefly brought to light with the aid of two camera spotlights, is copied by Margreiter into analogue format and presented in the exhibition space as a grainy 16 mm black-and-white film in an endless loop. Margreiter configures the typography *zentrum*, which is openly available on the Internet, more as a continuation of the modernist lettering than as a copy or homage. What makes this artistic exploration of modernity so productive is that here the memory of a societal process of reformation, one that is dying out, is continuing to be maintained through a revival of earlier symbols. Reinstating the role of aesthetic media in this process — namely that of abstract film, involving design and typography and the transgression of media — also opens up perspectives for future options such as, for example, those presented by the Internet today.

In an approach fundamentally similar to that of Mark Lewis, British artist Runa Islam selected — for her 35 mm film installation *Empty the pond to get the fish.* (2008) — a means for her exploration of a forsaken modernist building in which the mind and the photographic camera repeatedly frequent the object in question. Yet evidently she, in the concrete realisation, meticulously adhered to critic and filmmaker Alexandre Astruc's 1948 prediction that cinema would 'gradually break free from the tyranny of what is visual, from the image for its own sake, from the immediate and concrete demands of the narrative, to become a means of writing just as flexible and subtle as written language'.[6] Astruc called for a new era of cinema, the era of the 'camera-stylo', a more complex demand than previous ones that had called for a 'language' of cinema. In her film study on the deserted building designed by the modernist Austrian architect Karl Schwanzer, Runa Islam in fact does, with her film camera, 'write ideas directly on film without even having to resort to those heavy associations of images that were the delight of silent cinema.'[7] In Islam's filmic staging of this former pavilion at the 1958 World Expo in Brussels, which was later adapted as the 'Museum of the 20th Century' in Vienna, the anti-narrative experiences, however, a process of renewal with the film camera as main protagonist in that the modernist film method is being translated back into the visual and the building itself is metamorphosing, so to speak, into the film apparatus.

II. Modernologists

The improvised dwellings along with the creativity of those having survived the great earthquake, which levelled to the ground large sections of Tokyo and its vicinity in the 1920s, are what inspired Japanese architect and anthropologist Kon Wajirō (1888–1973)[8] to start applying his archaeological method, previously used only on ruins of ancient cities, to the present. Similar to 'modernus' (from the Latin *modo*) being known to mean 'now', 'current' or 'recent', Wajirō defined his *kōkogaku* (archaeology) as *kōgengaku* or *Modernologio*,[9] as a new method that he applied to all facets of present-day life in parallel to the reconstruction of the city — and, what's more, ultimately to everyday modern life in general. Wajirō solely investigated the *visible* — buildings, clothing, objects — and instigated studies covering topics ranging from the gender-specific frequenting of toilet facilities, to circulation routes in floor plans of Japanese flats, to even include behavioural patterns in shopping areas.

6 Alexandre Astruc, «Die Geburt einer neuen Avantgarde: die Kamera als Federhalter» in Theodor Kotulla (ed.), Der Film. Vol. 2, Munich: Piper Verlag, 1964. English version: 'The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: La Camera-Stylo', in *The New Wave*, Peter Graham (ed.), Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968, pp. 17–23. Cited in James Monaco, *How to Read a Film*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 409. Many thanks to Werner Kaligofsky for this pointer.

7 Ibid., p. 410.

8 The exhibition title I selected, *Modernologies*, goes back to a reference made by artist Florian Pumhösl. In his work *Modernology (Triangular Atelier)* (2007), the space of which was newly produced for this exhibition after documenta 12, Pumhösl in his title is citing Kon Wajirō's established methodology of *Modernologio*.

9 See Tom Gill, 'Kon Wajirō, Modernologist', *Japan Quarterly*, April–June 1996, pp. 198ff.

This scientific method is not intended to epitomise the artistic practice of the works and projects introduced here. But what they do have in common is a critical investigation and questioning of certain moments and aspects of modernity and modernism, especially in view of their current significance. While modernity is characterised by the detachment of the arts from the sciences, here we are tracing a concept of artistic practice that — as Florian Pumhösl has worded it for himself — can be understood 'as an open alternative to museology… as a vessel for the cultural transfer of symbols'[10] that virtually accommodates our utilisation-geared society through appropriation, through the cross-referencing of other areas. The focus of this project is also reflected in the words of Serge Guilbaut, who lectured at the 'Modernism and Modernity' conference in Vancouver in 1983: 'Instead we concentrated on one area which seemed to be the keystone of any modernist procedure: its critical/subversive stance, the negative side of a new culture which based its realizations on a coefficient of resistance to the prevailing system.'[11]

Constituting the focus of this exhibition project is a selection of artists with works and projects that delve into the conditions, constraints and consequences of modernity and modernism, including their historicisation, and that accordingly field questions pertaining to the present and the future. In addition to the formulation of pure critique, suggestions for redeterminations will be put forth, and sometimes even ideas for possible actualisations of individual issues in connection with virulent topic areas will be hashed out. In fact, some artists even proceed as if they were researchers of modern life, thus providing us with an up-to-date picture of the world and of how it to-date represents itself to us through its modernity-related conflicts and contradictions. This naturally also includes those conflicts that have become, as it were, inscribed within artistic practice in relation to the ideology of modernity, especially regarding the claim to autonomy, and that have attained the status of myth. This has been described as 'the endless repetition of these scenes of martyrdom and interment of our radical aspirations' by Andrea Fraser in connection with her video installation *Soldadera* (1998/2001). Against the arranged setting of a split projection screen and respectively allocated film scenes showing the dual role embodied by Fraser, both as an insurgent farmer and as a curator at The Museum of Modern Art in New York, Fraser problematises the arising conflicts not only as the experiencing of failure due to external parameters but above all within a 'structure of internal conflicts' of modernism and the avant-garde that artists are experiencing.[12]

In actuality, the image of the modern artist, or even of the scientific researcher, does not always fit to the myth of modernity, and those failing to equate with conventional ideas on revolutionary, utopian visions or with the formal canon will have no place in popular historiography. In her project *Zofia Stryjeńska* (2008), Paulina Olowska — implementing enlarged, black-and-white reproductions (in the medium of painting) of paintings by the eponymous Polish artist, Stryjeńska (1891–1974) — struggles against the classification of her works from the 1920s and 1930s as naive and folkloric. As an artist in the third generation after Stryjeńska, Olowska puts up for discussion a totally new evaluation of her work, that is, of the criteria of modernism as such. In recent years a marginalisation based on criteria of gender-related or geographic background has become a point of focus in numerous projects aiming to close gaps in the social and geographic world map with 'other modernities', inviting criticism based on the underlying hegemonic mindset. Armando Andrade Tudela introduces his vocabulary of a — as he terms it — contemporary

10 See Florian Pumhösl in pp. 186–191 of this volume.

11 Serge Guilbaut, 'The Relevance of Modernism', in Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, Serge Guilbaut and David Solkin (eds.), *Modernism and Modernity: The Vancouver Conference Papers*, Halifax: The Press of Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1983 (2004 edition), p. XIII.

12 See Andrea Fraser in pp. 84–89 of this volume.

'Peruvian modernism' as a typology of Constructivist small-scale sculptures and objects made of everyday materials, including asphalt, polycarbonate, rattan wickerwork and a *Tropicalismo* record cover, and confronts us with photographs of the abstract, geometric symbols on Pan-Americana Highway trucks. In so doing, rather than working on a redetermination of the morphology of sculpture or of painting, he is instead venturing a 'homeless abstraction' (Clement Greenberg), as it were, the abstraction of a new socio-geographical localisation.

'But is not the artist as translator at the same time an accomplice?'[13] — this question was put forward by Gerd Blum and Johan Frederik Hartle in a research project on the methodology of a conceptual critique of modernity employing instruments of modernity, of 'retro-modernism' as they call it, which is founded on a 'complicity of capitalistic modernity and artistic modernism'[14], expressing its discontent through references to 'surveillance, capital investment, and war' and therefore ultimately being characterised as 'modernisme noir'.

Alice Creischer and Andreas Siekmann actually speak of a 'militant investigation'[15] in reference to one of their open projects created through various collaborative constellations, where individual pages of the *Atlas Gesellschaft und Wirtschaft* (Atlas of Society and Economy), developed in 1929–30 by philosopher of science and economist Otto Neurath together with artist Gerd Arntz, were 'updated'. Here they primarily address topic areas that go hand in hand with the globalisation and privatisation of the public domain. As part of a workshop in the scope of the exhibition, for example, a new page is being created on the development of soy farming as a current translation of the issue, taken from the historical page, of the role of natural rubber in the nineteenth century. In their artistic practice, Creischer/Siekmann reference the political potential of abstraction and 'a leftist, revolutionary self-conception' that was related to these pictorial statistics in terms of the ethics of rationalisation, technology and modernity.

In approaching a critique of modernity employing instruments of modernity — that is, by means of abstraction, rationality, seriality — the application of new media must also be considered here in the sense of a belief in technical progress. In this context, Walter Benjamin's analyses of 'technological reproducibility' warrant mentioning, according to which the 'whole social function of art is revolutionized. Instead of being founded on ritual, it is based on a different practice: politics.'[16] Of general interest here is the reality of modern space, of modernity — a claim that, according to André Bazin, cinema can assert, as opposed to the theatrical stage, which we can equate with the exhibition space. To once again bring up an example already touched on above from a different but related field: the filmmakers of *Nouvelle Vague* not only contributed as critics through their text contributions in *Cahiers du Cinéma* to the development of a theory of critical practice, they also belonged to the first generation of cineastes whose work was substantiated in the history of cinema and in film theory. Their films, especially those by Jean-Luc Godard, were not only practical examples contributing to the theory but themselves often constituted theoretical essays. Ten years after Alexandre Astruc, they realised — similar to how Runa Islam revisited this as mentioned above — his filmic visions and '[f]or the first time, film theory was being written in film rather than print'.[17]

III. Modern times

'Not until modernity once and for all abandons the relational determination of the respectively new, present-day, and current will the age of modernity attain a sense

13 *Modernisme Noir: Revisionen der Moderne in der zeitgenössischen Kunst*, seminar by Gerd Blum and Johan Frederik Hartle in the summer of 2008 at the Academy of Fine Arts Münster. My thanks are extended to Hildegund Amanshauser for bringing this research project to my attention.

14 Gerd Blum, Johan Frederik Hartle, 'Modernisme noir. Revisionen des Modernismus in der zeitgenössischen Kunst' in Christoph Bertsch, Silvia Höller (eds.), *Cella. Strukturen der Ausgrenzung und Disziplinierung*, Academy of Art in Rome, 2009, Studienverlag Innsbruck, Vienna, Munich, 2010, p. 97 (forthcoming).

15 See Alice Creischer and Andreas Siekmann in pp. 58–65 of this volume.

16 Walter Benjamin, *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technische Reproduzierbarkeit*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1963/1977, p. 19. English version: *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2008, p. 25.

17 James Monaco, *How to Read a Film*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 409.

of contour as an age. The epoch that roused the concept of the epoch becomes tangible in and of itself, meaning it reflects upon itself, namely upon the conditions of its potentiality.'[18] Philosopher Cornelia Klinger goes on to reflect upon the dynamic and constitutive role of time: 'The modern age is no longer simply a different, new time, but rather it has developed, as compared to the foregoing one, an alternate conception of time, of its progression and context.'[19] Consequently, for the first time a historical consciousness has emerged — a reflection on times past, on *the* history, which just as *the* revolution or *the* progress has 'advanced to the collective singular' as superordinate to instances of the individual. On the other hand, as Frederic Jameson has in turn determined, the state of '"[m]odernity" always means setting a date and positing a beginning'.[20] Hence, characterising the temporal and historical context of the exhibition and the perspectives and narratives of the modern, modernism and modernity that it explores, as analysed here, also proves essential in this case. In my methodology, in which I sequentially set several temporal anchor points, I address Jameson's suggestion of operating less from a scientific than from a sociological concept of modernity and, in fact, with 'narrative options and alternative… possibilities'[21] for storytelling (or 'historytelling'). It should be mentioned here that I am in this respect fundamentally guided by his conceptual differentiation between '*modernity* as the new historical situation, *modernization* as the process whereby we get there, and *modernism* as a reaction to that situation and that process alike'.[22]

The oldest artistic contribution to the exhibition stems from the year 1960. It deals with an architectural model used to illustrate the (yet unrealised) project of an *Auto-Destructive Monument* by Gustav Metzger. Headlined with 'Modern art will fall to bits', London's *Daily Express* reported that 'Gustav Metzger has devised something most people will applaud — a form of modern art which will disintegrate within a certain period of time'.[23] In 1959 the artist, who is also an activist for anti-nuclear and environmental issues, had already published his first *Manifesto Auto-Destructive Art*, followed a year later by his second, in which he advocated an art depicted (in excerpts) as follows: 'Not interested in ruins, (the picturesque)… demonstrates man's power to accelerate disintegrative processes of nature and to order them… mirrors the compulsive perfectionism of arms manufacture — polishing to destruction point… the transformation of technology into public art.' And finally an art that 'contains within itself an agent which automatically leads to its destruction within a period of time not to exceed twenty years'.[24] Likewise about twenty years after he (as a twelve-year-old) and his brother emigrated from Nuremberg to England, Gustav Metzger put to words his take on art for the modern industrial society, and it couldn't be more radically phrased: 'an attack on capitalist values and the drive to nuclear annihilation.'[25]

Viewed from a different perspective, the exhibition's most dated work is actually from 1913, that is, from the period preceding the October Revolution, shortly before the First World War: a photograph of the avant-garde artist group мишень (The Target Group or Donkey's Tail Group) from Moscow that is frequently used to represent the group and depicts six group members, five of whom are male. On what is supposed to be the caption on the adjacent wall label, Austrian artist Anna Artaker juxtaposes this photograph with the names of other female artists in the group: Aleksandra Ekster, Liubov Popova, Olga Rozanova, an 'unknown' artist, as well as Varvara Stepanova and Nadezhda Udaltsova. The historicisation of modernity facilitated by image production confronts us here with the phenomenon of marginalisation,

18 Cornelia Klinger, 'Modern/Moderne/Modernismus', *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe*, vol. 4, *Medien – Populär*, Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2002, p. 147.

19 Ibid., p. 130.

20 Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present*, New York and London: Verso, 2002, p. 31.

21 Ibid., p. 32.

22 Ibid., p. 99 (emphasis added).

23 John Rydon, 'Modern art will fall to bits', *Daily Express*, London, 15 March 1960.

24 Gustav Metzger, 'Manifesto Auto-Destructive Art (Second Manifesto, 1960)', in Sabine Breitwieser (ed.), *Gustav Metzger: History History*, Vienna and Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2005, p. 104.

25 Metzger, 'Auto-Destructive Art, Machine Art, Auto-Creative Art (Third Manifesto, 1961)', in Sabine Breitwieser, *Gustav Metzger*, p. 113.

namely the exclusion of others, in this case of numerous female artists, who have only seldom (or even never) been granted entrance into the canonised historiography of modernity. The open series of works *Unbekannte Avantgarde* (Unknown Avant-garde, 2008) by Artaker at present encompasses ten artist movements and groups — including Dada (1922), Bauhaus (1926), CoBrA (1949), along with the Situationist International (1960) and the Austria Film Coop (1968) — thus perpetuating various chapters of modernity inasmuch as it makes visible its blind spots, hereby contributing to a rewriting of history.

Postcolonial theorists place the dawn of modernity in the sixteenth century, linking it, in other words, with the 'invention' (Enrique Dussel) of America and of colonisation, which made it possible for the hegemonic countries in Europe to make use of the newly discovered continent, its resources, and residents for their expansionist political objectives. The 'darker and hidden face of modernity', as Walter D. Mignolo calls it, without which the glamorous, reformist side would never have existed, is the reason why coloniality is to be viewed as 'constitutive'[26] for modernity. Dussel introduced the notion of 'trans-modernity', with which the interaction and the imbalance of power are emphasised, and which, at the same time, is also said to be more strongly geared toward a global future spawning different formulations of modernity. The extent to which regions located outside of the European hubs of power, like North Africa, were used by colonial powers as testing fields for modernisation projects and modernist fantasies is brought to light by the research and exhibition project *In the Desert of Modernity: Colonial Planning and After* (2008–09), initiated by Marion von Osten in collaboration with architects, artists, activists, theorists and filmmakers. This project particularly illustrates the level of reciprocal dependence and influence that existed — how European architects, in the course of their work in North Africa, appropriated the local flavour of shantytown architecture, such as the so-called *bidonvilles*, into their own work, integrating it into modern concepts like those of the *Habitat* and thereby finding a way to further develop their own visions. These structures were in fact housing a high percentage of migrants, so it can therefore be assumed that their migration-related experiences, indeed their entire background, were inscribed in the development of colonial modern architecture.[27]

It has long ceased to be a secret that the success story of American Abstract Expressionism was tied to the Cold War and to specific political strategies for the establishment and safeguarding of the hegemonic position assumed by the United States. Serge Guilbaut's critically revamped and hence redrafted history of American modernity in the 1950s[28] not only harbours a reference to a spy thriller in its title but also reads as such. Exclusion factors that were exerted through the success of this campaign related not only to Paris as the former art centre of the world but also more closely to the reception and recognition of art, barely present if at all, in the countries behind the Iron Curtain since the years following the Second World War. The extent to which the former socialist countries themselves contributed to the repression and forfeiture of their own history is conveyed by Croatian artist David Maljkovic's longtime interest in the project on socialist modernity in former Yugoslavia, based on the example of sculptor Vojin Bakić. The project entailing a re-evaluation of socialist modernism — in particular of the correspondence between the universalism of modernism and the universalism of a societal emancipation — is shared by the artist with the curator collective WHW (What, How and for Whom) of Zagreb, with Maljkovic detailing it as follows: 'I was not interested so much

26 See Walter D. Mignolo's essay on this topic in this publication.

27 The research project *Arizona* by Austrian-Bosnian architect and artist Azra Aksamija, which deals with the transformation of the eponymous black market on the road to Sarajevo into a city with a self-created social and economic hierarchy, takes up (though against a completely different background) similar issues. See Sabine Breitwieser (ed.), *Designs for the Real World*, Vienna and Cologne: Walther König, 2002.

28 Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1983.

in the phenomenon of modernism in Yugoslavia and Croatia in a general sense, my motivation was to attempt to create new platforms on the ruins of existing grounds.'[29] In his new 16 mm film *Retired Form* (2008), Maljkovic shows us one of Bakić's geometric steel sculptures that was erected in 1968 at the Dotrscina memorial park in Zagreb commemorating the victims of the Second World War. The figure of Bakić represents an ambivalent position, for he is, on the one hand, considered to be an authentic, modernist sculptor who broke ties with social realism and fought for the independence of art, but he also operated as a 'state artist' in the service of socialist ideology. With the re-emergence of nationalism and anti-communism in the 1990s, Bakić's sculptures were no longer valued and consequently came into disrepair or were even destroyed. In Maljkovic's film, the large geometric sculpture glistens in renewed splendour, and several elderly people wearing recreational attire — a clear reference to a generation from the era of former Yugoslavia — are gathering around the sculpture while it is circled by the zooming movie camera, with the dramatic close-ups picturing the environment mirrored therein.

An event in time that was decisive for the current formation of our modernity is the fall of the Iron Curtain, with a solely prevalent socio-economic logic having become established in 1989, in a newly 'de-bordered' space, in connection with the law of functional differentiation. Globalisation, neocolonialist systems, world-wide migrational movements and questions pertaining to the management of this new, comprehensive centrality were in a process of emergence. After such radical changes, it is not only people from formerly socialist countries that are longing for an evaluation of our fundamental societal form, for the establishment of 'new platforms'. When in reference to the decline of the Soviet imperium the 'meridian of modernity shifting one last time to the East'[30] is spoken of, this statement once again makes plain how crucial working toward a dissolution of the still-common Eurocentric conception of the world remains. With the events of 11 September 2001 a new picture (and one no less impressive) came to join the already familiar representative image of the inception of postmodernity, the demolition of the Pruitt-Igoe residential blocks in St Louis on 15 July 1972, namely a picture depicting the real price of modernity: the collapsing towers of the World Trade Center in New York, which marked the commencement of a new era of the globalisation of violence. In his famous essay on the 'The Spirit of Terrorism', French sociologist Jean Baudrillard postulates a thesis on this 'symbolic event', asserting that we find ourselves in a 'fourth and only truly World War', so to speak, since 'it has as stakes globalization itself', and that 'these people' have 'assimilated all of modernity and globalization, while maintaining their aim to destroy it'.[31] The term 'crisis' has, at least since the global financial crisis materialised in the fall of 2008, become the newly unifying word of a global populace, or actually since Argentina stepped out as 'pioneer' with its financial collapse of 2001–02. The chronology of modernity — evidenced by what can, for once, be viewed as a phenomenon of failure, or alternately as an indeed strongly altered understanding of 'progress', namely more in the sense of 'cognisance' about the actual expiry of the prevailing 'world system' (Immanuel Wallerstein) — as of now seems to be emerging under completely new symbols.

While 'coloniality' has been recognised as constitutive for modernity, Henri Lefebvre as a sociologist, philosopher and urban researcher views the role of the crisis as similarly compelling: 'Modernity, the shadow of the Revolution, absent here and incomplete there, no longer functions without crisis. Contradictions move

29 David Maljkovic in an email to the author, 25 March 2009.

30 For more information, see Thomas Assauer's article 'Piraten der neuen Welt' (Pirates of the New World) at http://www.zeit.de/2001/40/200140_terrorismus.xml (accessed 6 May 2009).

31 Jean Baudrillard, *L'esprit du terrorisme*, Paris: Galilée, 2002, p. 28. The Spirit of Terrorism', Rachel Bloul (trans.), *Le Monde*, 2 November 2001. Also available online at http://www.egs.edu/faculty/baudrillard/baudrillard-the-spirit-of-terrorism.html (accessed 26 May 2009).

through it and it constitutes their work in default of a radically revolutionary negativity which, according to the initial Marxist project, would have metaphored life itself. More: these crises multiply, grow closer together and become the general rule, the norm.... these crises seem to constitute our Modernity. They are integral to its consciousness, to its image, to its apologetic project.'[32]

With her sculptures of recent years tying into her material fetishism from the DIY world of consumption, Isa Genzken presents us with a world that is equally utopian and apocalyptic. While in the 1980s and 1990s her projects appropriating 'public sculpture' (manifest elements of constructions, such as windows, latticed reinforcements, et cetera) followed a technical-rational logic, she has recently deviated from her usual approach and now, in the twenty-first century, is carrying out her projects in accordance with altogether different principles. In her sculptures — made of decoration materials that are extremely diverse, optically captivating, and both inexpensive and ephemeral — we find ourselves confronted, as Benjamin Buchloh has phrased it, 'with the prime calamities of sculpture in the present: a terror that emerges from both the universal equivalence and exchangeability of all objects and materials... To have the self succumb to the totalitarian order of objects brings the sculpture to the brink of psychosis',[33] becoming a 'schizo-sculpture'. The *Oil* sculpture ensembles from 2007 for the 52nd Venice Biennale, or *Ground Zero* from 2008, are determined by order and by chaos in equal degrees, by large numbers and details, by perfection and chilliness, by symbols of mobility and by translocation, but also by upheaval and revival. Could the decimated zone of the World Trade Center (ever since designated 'ground zero', synonymous with the site of a bomb explosion), the construction areas of which Genzken has obviously filmed from the perspective of one of the remaining buildings, function as one of these platforms?

IV. From the concept of a universal language to the production of space, to politics of display

After at least three decades of intensive discussion, both thematically and formally speaking, repeatedly flaring up regarding the legacy of modernity and of modernism, including the sometimes severe criticism of this category and its related content and also the state of our modernity, in *Modernologies* the current field of artistic research is discussed based on several select contributions. In this context it should once again be made clear that it is not a 'new formalism', nor a 'return to abstraction', being considered here. Neither is the focus *per se* being placed on the pointing out of 'unrevealed modernisms', still in effect today through subaltern concepts of modernity, in countries whose protagonists have up to now had marginalised roles assigned to them in view of these issues. On the contrary, it is a question of a fundamental charge of scrutinising the (reciprocal) conditions and limitations of modernity, of exposing ambivalences, of making an attempt at calling attention to new readings of the rhetoric of modernity and the grammar of modernism.

The works shown in the exhibition are spatially arranged according to three aspects — 'concept of a universal language', 'production of space' and 'politics of display' — whereby the sections on these three topic areas are also dialogically and overlappingly pursued in the works between and outside of these areas. Some works are positioned in zones of transition, flanking the topics, as it were, or taking on a concatenating role.

Before the ticket-only area starts, with the visitors still finding themselves in a semi-public zone in the entrance space, an initial 'platform' is presented: *grid*

32 Henri Lefebvre, 'Theses on Modernity', in Buchloh et al. (eds.), *Modernism and Modernity*, p. 11.

33 Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, 'All Things Being Equal', *Isa Genzken: Ground Zero*, London: Hauser & Wirth, 2008, p. 16.

one: Von Hochhaus zu Hochhaus (grid one: From High-rise to High-rise, 2008), a website installation by the group Labor k3000, with a selection of videos taken by residents of their everyday life in mass housing developments in Europe and North Africa, assembled at www.this-was-tomorrow.net. The tangible accessibility of the videos, which are sometimes backgrounded with hip-hop music and are played by clicking on a map highlighted by city names, effectively calls to attention the utopian potential of the exhibition. Time will tell whether visitors, for instance the skaters who can usually be found gambolling on the square in front of the museum, will actually be able to use this platform or even show interest in trying it out. In close spatial relation to Isa Genzken's installation at the last Venice Biennale, some of the videos appear as if they were facilitating a reactivation of a *mise-en-scène* proposed by Genzken. Likewise assigned to public space, both optically and conceptually, is the project *Existenzminimum* (Existential Minimum, 2002) by Catalan artist Domènec, comprised of a sculpture, a video showing the sculpture 'in action' in a public park, and a flyer with a construction manual and a chronology. Its protagonists are Mies van der Rohe along with Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, with the former having designed a monument in Berlin commemorating the latter two. Domènec reproduces the monument, destroyed by the Nazis in 1935, on the scale of a minimal housing unit, the topic of the 1929 CIAM Congress in Frankfurt, in a way similar to that of prefabricated furniture production. He is thus, using his self-provided referencing device, alluding to the ambivalences and inconsistencies of modernity in respect to its aesthetic and political ideologies.

The approach of defining, from a scientific basis, generally authoritative standards leads us to the concept of modernism, to creating a universal language in the form of abstract aesthetic symbols and forms. How autonomously can such forms actually develop and which content vitalises them? And how do these forms, when brought into new contexts, in turn evoke completely different meanings? These and other explorative questions have already been deliberated above in connection to the practice of artists such as Andrade, Creischer/Siekmann, Maljkovic, or Margreiter. For many years the artist John Knight, who resides in Los Angeles, has been exploring the field of abstract symbols, artistic authorship and autonomy *vis-à-vis* branding, corporate design, as well as anonymous symbols in the form of discursive, hybrid objects. With his project involving *Logotypes* (1982) — large-scale wood reliefs in the form of the artist's initials covered by posters advertising travel agencies (only one of the placards promotes a bank) — he enlivened at the documenta 7 in Kassel a site both hybrid and transitory, namely the walls of the individual landings in the Fridericianum stairwell. By contrast, his wood and mirror reliefs from the *Mirror Series* (1986) appear as icons of an anonymous world of consumption devoid of products, whose image or product has obviously become the consumer him/herself mirrored therein. The reliefs are hung slightly beneath the customary horizontal axis, making identification for the viewer more difficult.

Space is formed by society and it in turn shapes society. In his thesis on the 'production of space',[34] Henri Lefebvre touches on the conflict 'between a space that is increasingly becoming an exchange value and a yet inhabited space that only has use value to the extent that the exchange value has failed to succeed in totally destroying or making it disappear'.[35] Ângela Ferreira's study tracing *Maison Tropicale* (Tropical House, 2007) by Jean Prouvé — fashioned in aluminium light-weight construction and sent to French colonial countries to be erected — is dedicated to the history of the three prototypes of this building in Africa, which,

34 Henri Lefebvre, *La production de l'espace*, Paris: Anthropos, 1974. English version: *The Production of Space*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1991.

35 Henri Lefebvre, 'Die Produktion des städtischen Raums', *An Architektur 01, Material zu: Lefebvre, Die Produktion des Raumes* (July 2002), p. 12. Also available online (in German) at http://www.anarchitektur.com

though actually used by satisfied local residents, were nevertheless transported away several years ago in containers to be sold in Europe and North America to collectors at premium prices.

The 'capitalist space', according to Lefebvre, is, for the perspectival space familiar to us from the Renaissance, the 'place of deterioration'.[36] The work of Henrik Olesen on the scientist Alan Turing, inventor of the binary code and of the computer, who was compelled to have his homosexuality treated by psychiatry and by hormones, which ultimately led to his suicide, lends a strong bio-political perspective to Lefebvre's theses. In the multipart installation *How do I make myself a body* (2008) composed of collages and objects, Olesen confronts us with the regulation of the body according to societal stipulations. Questions of 'how to govern one's own body and mind' were deemed[37] by Michel Foucault and others to have been among the most fundamental issues of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, educing his definition of a critical stance and a definition of critique: 'the art of not being governed quite so much.'[38] Olesen's modernist drafts of fictive bodies based on quotations by fine artists and poets allow a multiplied, sexualised body to materialise, the image of a postmodern body.

Many of the projects presented in this exhibition are concerned with the conflicts but also with the correlations between the architectural and the socio-political space of modernity, for instance Gordon Matta-Clark's legendary action and installation *Window Blow-Out* (1973), or Dan Graham and Robin Hurst's photo-text essay *Private 'Public' Space: The Corporate Atrium Garden* (1987) — one of the winter gardens documented in the latter was, by the way, located in the ground zero vicinity. Katja Eydel has been exploring, in a comprehensive photographic study, *The Invention of Turkey* (2005/06) and the architectural expressions of that which has been widely considered to be a modern model country in the Orient. Stephen Willats has been working together with residents of tower blocks since the 1970s in investigating and reflecting on their everyday reality in these buildings that are, despite having long been stigmatised and subject to demolition, nevertheless appreciated for their many advantages as living space. *How do we know what home looks like?* (1993), asks Martha Rosler in the scope of a project involving various artist contributions about Le Corbusier's *Unité d'Habitation* in Firminy in Southern France. In her video she pursues the current needs of the residents and the improvements made to the flats by the residents themselves, featuring colourfully patterned wallpaper, murals on the walls and other 'normalisations' to the interior design.

Other artistic works engage in questions of the representation of protagonists (individuals or groups) in the history of modernism, as has already been outlined above citing some examples (Artaker, Fraser, Olowska and others), in attempts to contribute to a process of reorientation. The artist collective Klub Zwei (Simone Bader and Jo Schmeiser) has reviewed the history of the Phaidon Press, a Viennese pioneer of modern books on the visual arts whose path led it to England due to the anti-Semitic persecution of its owner. Associated with this methodology of artistic critique is likewise the project on the *Retroavantgarde* (2000–09) in the formerly socialist countries as has been charted by the Slovenian group IRWIN for over ten years, with recourse to the famous model by Alfred Barr, founding director of New York's Museum of Modern Art, yet with completely different representatives. This 'politics of display' is picked up by Louise Lawler as well in her longtime photographic investigations of modernist art, which she has presented in a select few

36 Ibid.

37 Foucault, 'What is Critique?', op. cit., p. 44.

38 Ibid., p. 45.

installations from the mid-1980s in front of abstract wall paintings representing statistics on expenses for military and for social programmes or on weapon stocks. Or Marine Hugonnier's exploration of Mallarmé's legacy of modernity, of his volume of poems *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* (A roll of the dice will never abolish chance), the empty surfaces of which she interprets as being 'social emancipatory space', conceives as an invitation to be used, and therefore — totally contrary to the gesture ventured by Marcel Broodthaers with the crossing out of text passages — actually fills them with pictures from the Internet (including, by the way, a portrait of Alan Turing). Mathias Poledna constellates inside vitrines small thematic exhibitions with covers from the Folkway label, a record company that was aiming for a universal archive, namely the creation of an encyclopaedia of the 'entire world of sound'. The artist time and again presents these records through his film installations, in alternating contexts. He introduces his new film, which has been created for this exhibition, as a 'portrait of a group of objects', a multipart 'bar-set' that was designed by Adolf Loos for the long-standing company J. & L. Lobmeyr in Vienna.

In their works, artists thematise the exhibition as a medium of modernism and as such often operate in a role similar to that of curators. One of these is Christian Philipp Müller, who in the early 1990s was already intensively dedicating his attention to, for instance, Le Corbusier's work, trying to address the 'dead-ends of modernism' under the title of *Vergessene Zukunft* (Forgotten Future, 1992). His complex exhibition project deals with, among other things, the Philips Pavilion for the 1958 World Expo in Brussels, which was designed as a multimedia *Gesamtkunstwerk* by Le Corbusier, Iannis Xenakis and Edgar Varèse for the *Poème électronique* — in a reversal of their profession-specific roles that was not only uncommon for modernity. Included in the comprehensive scenario that Müller is presenting us with here are Nicolas Schöffer and his conceptions of 'hygiene', films about homosexuality — such as *Anders als Du und Ich* (Different than You and Me, 1957) by Veit Harlan, in which homosexuality is considered an enemy stereotype along with modern art — as well as the Cold War as historical framework. After numerous projects that focused on modernity in non-Western countries, Florian Pumhösl has now consciously abstained from the mere methodology of reference. With his afore-cited *Modernologio* — a multipart, variable wall system that references two historical exhibition designs by Murayama Tomoyoshi, the *Triangular Atelier* (2007) and a composition with black walls — he showcases, along with historical publications, his Walter-Dexel-like *verre églomisés* 'Abstraktionen zweiter Ordnung' (Abstractions of a Second Order), as André Rottmann suggested he term it. Christopher Williams is one of the few artists, as is evident from the multiple references, whose works are represented in various sections. His photographs avoid the superficial and assert an essential function in this exhibition — due to the aesthetic complexity inherent in Williams's works in connection with the questions thus posed regarding authorship, autonomy, production process, technology and design, archivation, display — in interconnecting the different topic areas; 'modernity as modality', as Helmut Draxler fittingly phrases it in his text on Williams.

A Sculpture Turning into a Conversation (2006) — this endeavour, which corresponds to the title of a lecture performance held by Falke Pisano, returns us to autonomous, abstract sculpture and possible shifts in meaning in varying contexts. Pisano's works also bring us back to the topic of this exhibition: the critical reflection on modernity and modernism as explored through different artistic practices.

The (re)staging of modernity in the form of a performative act, as a reading on the various conditions for the reception of modern art, here naturally takes on, in analogy to the reception of modernity, an important role in general. I guess it is not a coincidence that the project *Ricostruzione: Disertori/Libera: Towards a Historical Fable about Modernist Architecture and Psychology* (2008) by Tom Holert and Claudia Honecker, mentioned here in conclusion, originates from an art historian/theorist and a filmmaker — two of those who in effect have been less committed to aesthetic production and more to the research of and reflection on aesthetics.

V. Conclusion

This project represents a kind of map for the critique of modernity composed of artistic works, one that is naturally still incomplete. Yet as this map unfolds before us, it offers a multidimensional portrayal that is, from time to time, repeatedly subjected to a fresh point of view in the form of a dynamic process facilitated by the critique finding expression there, the proposed adaptations, redeterminations, analyses and so forth.

'Modernity is dated: industrial society, with the abstraction paradoxically produced by material production',[39] states Henri Lefebvre in his *Critique of Everyday Life*, continuing: 'By contrast, post-industrial society will be characterized by the production of an exchange of non-material goods, which are nevertheless more concrete: information, services, and so on.'

In closing, I would like to evoke the words of Raymond Williams, who in his 1987 (later to be published) lecture 'When was Modernism?' noted: '...the innovations of what is called Modernism have become the new but fixed forms of our present moment. If we are to break out of the non-historical fixity of post-modernism, then we must search out and counterpose an alternative tradition taken from the neglected works left in the wide margin of the century... to a modern *future* in which community may be imagined again.'[40]

39 Henri Lefebvre, 'Critique of Everyday Life', *Critique of Everyday Life: From Modernity to Modernism (Towards a Metaphilosophy of Daily Life)*, vol. 3, London and New York: Verso, 2005, p. 92.

40 Raymond Williams, 'When was Modernism?', *The Politics of Modernism*, London: Verso, 1989, p. 35.

Autonomy – Authenticity – Alterity: On the Aesthetic Ideology of Modernity[1]

Cornelia Klinger

The possibility of defining 'modernity' more precisely arose in the 1970s, when its limits began to become clear. A *temporal* limit became conceivable once the outlines of a 'postmodernism' *beyond* 'the modern' turned up (regardless of the concrete content or meaning of the concept 'postmodern'). *Spatial* limits emerged when a modernity *outside* Western modernity put in an emphatic appearance in post-colonial discourse. On the one hand, historisation of modernity, and its geographical and geopolitical localisation, rendered the relational character of the term obsolete: the equation of modernity with current actuality, with what is new today — a sense inscribed in the word through its Latin roots — ceased to possess validity.[2] On the other hand, it relativised the absolute claim that had governed notions and awareness of modernity since about the late-eighteenth century: modernity has ceased to be the great 'marching route' of world history, taken first by Europe, hit on with the same inevitability by every other part of the world and appearing boundless and unsurpassable. Whenever and wherever the limits of a phenomenon emerge, or appear to emerge, there arises the possibility of definition, of ascertaining and establishing the characteristics of a notion such as 'modernity'.

One problem encountered by efforts to determine what might constitute modernity in the aesthetic field is that modernity cannot be understood as a *style*. A further difficulty is that the terms 'modern' and 'modernity' are used in every genre, from music to architecture, and on a broad international basis, to denote heterogeneous phenomena within each field and region. Under these circumstances, any attempt to define the notion in terms of the semantics of aesthetic discourse itself is doomed to failure. That approach can achieve nothing more than the additive naming of individual components that are more or less widespread in the context of aesthetic modernity, such as irony, allegory, alienation, abstraction, fragmentation, collage and shock. Similarly, the listing of stylistic tendencies within the period reckoned to be covered by aesthetic modernity — from Romanticism to Abstract Expressionism, say — yields little clarification of the term's meaning.[3]

The present essay seeks to resolve these problems by addressing the issue of aesthetic modernity from the perspective of a general theory of the modernity process. In other words, it draws on a widely accepted sociological concept, without wishing to be misconstrued as a reduction to views offered by the 'sociology of art'.

A theoretical approach to modernity as a process of differentiation yields three main factors, all relating to the autonomisation of a social subsystem: *relative autonomy, thematic cleansing* and *functional specialisation*. These three general factors denote formally what takes place in all fields subject to modernity processes. Translated into the terms of artistic discourse, they materialise as *autonomy, authenticity*

1 This essay is a revised version of the author's article 'modern/Moderne/Modernismus' in Karlheinz Barck, Martin Fontius, Dieter Schlenstedt et al. (eds.), *Historisches Wörterbuch ästhetischer Grundbegriffe*, vol. 4, Stuttgart: Metzler Verlag, 2002.

2 When used of time, the Latin word *modo* means 'just now' or 'now'. In this sense 'modern' has now been replaced by 'contemporary'. Arthur Danto dated the transition from 'modern art' to 'contemporary art' to the 1970s in his *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History*, Princeton University Press, 1997, p. 5.

3 A recent instance of this approach is Peter Gay's *Modernism: The Lure of Heresy*, London: William Heinemann, 2007.

and *alterity*. 'Autonomy' signifies the structural screening of art from direct external prescriptions, norms and controls. In the world of art the claims of 'thematic cleansing' appear as a demand for 'authenticity', while 'functional specialisation' takes the form of 'alterity', art's otherness *vis-à-vis* society. These three categories expand and vary the formal factors arrived at through the view of modernity in the aesthetic sphere as a differentiation process, and they yield a connecting thread that enables the nature of aesthetic modernity to be described abstractly, yet comprehensively. Together, autonomy, authenticity and alterity form the 'aesthetic ideology of modernity'.[4] The term 'ideology' must be understood in this context not pejoratively, but as a general, neutral and summarising description of a highly heterogeneous, or as yet unordered, construct of ideas. It is used here not least because no coherent or consistent theory of aesthetic modernity currently exists. The following discussion takes some steps towards formulating such a theory.

A sociological perspective facilitates definition of the chronological span encompassed by aesthetic modernity. Its beginnings can be dated to the decades between 1750 and 1830, which have been referred to as the 'Sattelzeit (saddle period) of modernity'.[5] Aesthetic modernity climaxed in the decades around 1900, the era that also saw the onset of its crisis. Most observers would opt for a closing date in the years around 1970. There can be little doubt that since then far-reaching changes have been taking place, changes forming part of the *longue durée* of the cascading modernity process,[6] but also marking the end of a period that started around 1800.

Autonomy

As a result of the secularisation process of the Western world, the societal field of action developed various subsystems, which acquired independence from religious and ecclesiastical tutelage and evolved in accordance with their own norms and in relative autonomy *vis-à-vis* one another.

In the late-eighteenth century Immanuel Kant's three *Critiques* set the seal on distinctions between pure reason (theoretical and scientific), practical reason (legal and moral) and aesthetic reason (what Kant calls 'judgement'). This undermined the validity of the traditional unity of the beautiful, the true and the good. The young Friedrich Schlegel formulated a declaration of independence for the fine arts that resonates with the pathos of revolutionary change and whose borrowings from legal discourse call to mind the terminological origins of the notion of 'autonomy': 'Beauty is as original and important a component of human destiny as morality. All components should exist in relation to one another on the basis of equal rights (isonomy), and the fine arts have an inalienable right to independence (autonomy)';[7] 'Any philosophy of poetry... should begin with the independence of beauty, with the tenet that it is separate, and needs to be separate, from the true and the moral, and that it enjoys equal rights with them.'[8] As one critic has remarked: 'the poetic, the artistic and the beautiful became values in their own right, without reference to other values.'[9]

In liberating themselves from the doctrines of theology and metaphysics and establishing themselves as an autonomous (sub)system of modern society, the fine arts essentially followed the same path as science and technology, law and bureaucracy, state and society, economy and politics: 'Art takes part in society simply by differentiating itself as a system and thereby submitting to the logic of an operative unit, like any other functional system'.[10] Conversely, at about the same time the individual arts (painting, sculpture, architecture, music and literature) were subsumed

4 The resemblance to the title of Terry Eagleton's *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1990), though not accidental, reflects an essentially superficial similarity.

5 Reinhart Koselleck, in his introduction to Otto Brunner, Werner Conze and Reinhart Koselleck (eds.), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, vol. 1, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1979, p. xv.

6 Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht used the striking 'cascade' metaphor to describe the progress of modernity in his 'Kaskaden der Modernisierung', in Johannes Weiss (ed.), *Mehrdeutigkeiten der Moderne*, Kassel: University Press, 1998, pp. 17–41.

7 Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über das Studium der Griechischen Poesie (1795–1797)', in Ernst Behler and Hans Eichner (eds.), *Kritische Schriften und Fragmente (1794–1797)*, Paderborn: Schöningh, 1988, vol. 1, p. 119. English version: *On the study of Greek poetry*, New York: State University of New York Press, 2001.

8 Schlegel, 'Athenäum: Fragmente, Nr. 252', op.cit., vol. 2, p. 129.

9 Octavio Paz, *Die andere Zeit der Dichtung: Von der Romantik zur Avantgarde*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1989, p. 50. English version: *Children of the Mire. Modern Poetry from Romanticism to the Avant-Garde*, London/Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974.

10 Niklas Luhmann, *Die Kunst der Gesellschaft*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1997, p. 217. English version: *Art as a Social System*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000.

in the collective noun 'art'.[11] Not coincidentally, in this period aesthetics developed into an independent field of theoretical study.[12]

The autonomy principle took root in the sphere of art in three ways. It involved: (1) the independence of the artist, and hence the level of production; (2) the work of art's freedom from function; and, at the reception level (3) the self-sufficiency of aesthetic experience.

1) Autonomy with regard to the freedom of the artist and artistic production entails, on the one hand, independence from the personal wishes, ideological interests and political intentions of a specific patron and, on the other, liberation from social norms and artistic conventions. The aesthetic was freed from religiously or morally grounded restrictions in a way comparable to the rejection of ethically normative demands in the fields of science, the economy and politics. Hence Johann Wolfgang von Goethe could write in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*: 'a good work of art can and will have moral consequences, but to demand a moral purpose of the artist is to corrupt his trade.'[13] The independence of the artist resulted not least from the depersonalisation of relations between patron/commissioner, producer and recipient/audience and their reorganisation, like many other social relations in the modern era, in the more indirect terms of the market.

2) The autonomy principle brought about a shift from external referentiality to self-referentiality in all differentiating areas of modern society, but only in the artistic sphere did self-referentiality reach absolute status, as the work of art was endowed with complete freedom from function. Hence art cut off from the net of functional relations linking other differentiating social subsystems. The dynamics of this non-functionalism, initiated by the aestheticism of the nineteenth century, led in the twentieth to total liberation from representational content. Turning in on itself, art invoked aesthetic rules and laws and their exclusively immanent extension into the medium of art. In the mid-twentieth century the American critic Clement Greenberg summarised this development: '"Art for art's sake" and "pure poetry" appear, and subject matter or content becomes something to be avoided like plague.'[14] Release from the world outside art, liberation from the obligation to depict or represent external reality, to embellish or glorify it, cleared the way for the creation of pure and, eventually, abstract art. 'In turning his attention away from subject matter of common experience, the poet or artist turns in upon the medium of his own craft.... Picasso, Braque, Mondrian, Miró, Kandinsky... derive their chief inspiration from the medium they work in. The excitement of their art seems to lie most of all in its pure preoccupation with the invention and arrangement of spaces, surfaces, shapes, colours, etc., to the exclusion of whatever is not necessarily implicated in these factors. The attention of poets like Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Valéry, Éluard... appears to be centred on the effort to create poetry rather than on experience to be converted into poetry.'[15] 'A poem,' said Hugo von Hofmannsthal, 'is a weightless weaving of words' and, like Greenberg, he noted: 'No direct path leads from poetry to life, and none from life to poetry.'[16] The principle of freedom from function made of the aesthetic sphere a self-sufficient, self-contained cosmos. The autonomy of the aesthetic object, the self-referentiality of the work of art, gave rise to an immanent epistemology of the aesthetic that centred on purely aesthetic formal principles and their evolution. In this way a general characteristic of modernity, the principle of progress, of constant innovation, found an equivalent and an expression in the

11 Paul Oskar Kristeller, 'The Modern System of the Arts: A Study in the History of Aesthetics', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, no. 12, 1951, pp. 496–527; no. 13, 1952, pp. 17–46. A similar tendency to form collective nouns is reflected in such terms as 'history' and 'culture': 'The collective noun "history", in contradistinction to the many histories (or stories) of its various actors, was coined in the eighteenth century.' Reinhart Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft: Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1979, p. 50ff. The collective noun 'culture' unites such varied elements as religion, morals, tradition, language and everyday customs, along with literature and other aesthetic forms of expression.

12 Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's two-volume *Aesthetica* (1750, 1758) marks the beginnings of aesthetics as a philosophical discipline.

13 Johann Wolfgang Goethe, in Erich Trunz (ed.), *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Werke Hamburger Ausgabe, vol. 9, Munich: Beck, 1989, p. 539. English version: *From My Life: Poetry and Truth*, Parts 1–3 (*Goethe: The Collected Works*, vol. 4), Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press, 1994.

14 Clement Greenberg, 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch', in John O'Brian (ed.), *Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 1, Chicago: University Press, 1986, p. 8.

15 Ibid., p. 9.

16 Hugo von Hofmannsthal, 'Poesie und Leben: Aus einem Vortrage', in H. Steiner (ed.), *Gesammelte Werke in Einzelausgaben*, Frankfurt: Fischer, 1956, p. 263.

aesthetic.[17] The autonomy principle became a criterion for establishing the relative status of various kinds of artistic activity: the greater their autonomy and freedom from function, the higher their standing. Hence, the arts and crafts, so-called 'applied' or 'decorative' art, ranked low in the canon, if they figured in it at all. Especially those trends in aesthetic modernity that are often subsumed under the heading 'modernism' are closely associated with the autonomy principle.

3) Art achieves full freedom from function only when this involves the recipient as well, when the audience is willing to forego expectations that it will be 'useful' in any way. The autonomy of the recipient's aesthetic experience is defined by the principle of *disinterested pleasure*, likewise established by eighteenth-century aesthetics and also validly formulated by Kant. Kant had attempted to bridge the gap between theoretical and practical reason by means of the power of judgement (*Urteilskraft*) and he had thought to recognise in certain aesthetic sensations — those generating an experience of the sublime — a basis for moral principles. Later in the modernity process the notion of aesthetic autonomy became even more radical. Now, rigorous application of the autonomy principle not only does away with demands for the artist to pursue a moral purpose — as Goethe had proclaimed — but it also denies expectations of 'moral consequences' and any other extra-aesthetic effects of the work of art on its recipients. When the idea of autonomy is thought through to its logical conclusion, aesthetic experience, too, becomes 'an event with its own "laws"'. In other words, 'the validity of that which is experienced aesthetically [is] necessarily particular: it is relative to that sphere of experience that is defined by orientation towards the specifically aesthetic value of the beautiful. How and what we experience aesthetically has no power to dispute or affirm that which is the object of our non-aesthetic experience and representation. The autonomous gestalt of the aesthetic is an element *within* differentiated modern reason precisely because it neither takes precedence over, nor subordinates itself to, other discourses… with finely differentiated inherent laws, but ranges alongside them.'[19] More simply, 'aesthetic experience' permits the audience to participate in the free play of art as it obeys its own laws, but without deriving from it entertainment, knowledge, edification, improvement (moral or otherwise) or any other kind of non-aesthetic benefit.

As it became totally functionless in its autonomy, art acquired a precarious position in society. Serving nothing and nobody, it seemed to exist outside the social order. As one critic has noted, 'aesthetics is born at the moment of art's effective demise as a political force, flourishes on the corpse of its social relevance'.[20] This is presumably the reason why talk of the 'end of art' was first heard as the autonomy process got underway and has never entirely disappeared since, despite the fact that art, as a result of its autonomisation, experienced a dynamisation comparable to that observable in other differentiating social subsystems in the modernity process.

Authenticity

Autonomy is the premise and the basis of aesthetic ideology. Externally, it is concerned with independence *vis-à-vis* any form of outside influence on the sphere of art, be it on artists, works or recipients. When autonomy is viewed from an interior perspective, authenticity becomes the focus of attention. The relationship between

17 Ernst H. Gombrich, *The Ideas of Progress and their Impact on Art*, New York: Cooper Union, 1971; Christoph Menke and Juliane Rebentisch (eds.), *Kunst, Fortschritt, Geschichte*, Berlin: Kadmos, 2006.

18 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, in Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (eds. and trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

19 Christoph Menke, *Die Souveränität der Kunst: Ästhetische Erfahrung nach Adorno und Derrida*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1991, pp. 9–10. English version: *The Sovereignty of Art: Aesthetic Negativity in Adorno and Derrida*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1999.

20 Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, op.cit, p. 368.

the three categories ('autonomy', 'authenticity' and 'alterity') is characterised at once by convergence and divergence. On the one hand, they merge to such an extent that they appear to be three different aspects of the same; on the other, tensions exist between them. From the 'autonomy' perspective, the work of art and its absolute freedom from function occupied centre stage; by contrast, the notion 'authenticity' invokes the producer, the artist as subject or, more precisely, as the modern subject *par excellence*.

Like autonomy, 'authenticity' is best understood in the context of a theory of the modernity process — specifically, in relation to the rise of the ideas of 'the subject' and 'subjectivity' in the modern age. The demise of the Christian metaphysical world-view resulted not only in a process of objectification, but also in a process of subjectification (which usually receives less attention). Two opposing principles thus inherited the traditional order. The principle of objectivity ruled theoretical and practical reason that supported the functionally differentiated subsystems of society and their interrelations. In the words of Jürgen Habermas: 'On the one hand, a decentred understanding of the world opens up the possibility of dealing with the world of facts in a cognitively objectified [*versachlicht*] manner and with the world of interpersonal relationships in a legally and morally objectified manner.'[21] Irrespective of their differentiation in terms of theoretical and practical reason, science and technology, the state and the economy, law and morality, appear together on the objective side, in a 'cognitively objectified [*versachlicht*] manner'. For Habermas, the 'decentred understanding of the world' also 'offers the possibility of a subjectivism freed from imperatives of objectification in dealing with individualized needs, desires, and feelings [*Bedürfnisnatur*]'.[22]

The processes of objectification and subjectification must be taken more seriously as contrary, but equally significant, components of the modernity process than Habermas implies. The opposition between objectivity and subjectivity constitutes more than a 'possibility'; the complementary constellation is a 'requirement' of modern society, inasmuch as a decentred view of the world presupposes and requires a centring factor. Whereas functional differentiation amounts to dynamisation, pluralisation, fragmentation and expansion — that is, 'decentralisation' — the individual acts as a 'still point in a turning world'.[23] Ideally, the complementarity of the two would result in an interaction of opening and closing. 'Functional differentiation and centralisation of the self are two sides of the same coin. It is no accident that they basically run parallel to each other.'[24] '"Centralisation of the self" indicates that ways of knowing and acting in the world are no longer derived from traditional and transcendental norms, but are established autonomously. The ultimate point of reference here is the individual.… Modernity generated the idea of the individual as the centre of things.'[25] This grants the human self the status of subject. The decentralised areas on the object side obey the functional principle, whereas the subject seeks meaning and identity; while calculation and efficiency lie at the root of the functional principle, it is authenticity that guides the subject's search for meaning and identity.

The principle of liberated subjectivity first developed in the field of religion (belief). Secularisation did not cause — and has not caused religion to disappear, but to become more private. Religion thus came to encompass the realm of familial and intimate human relationships (love), now freed from economic interests and constraints, and finally embraced the sphere of subjective aesthetic experience (hope), as shaped and conveyed by art. 'The discovery of subjectivity, the liberation

21 Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*, vol. 1, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981, p. 300. English version: *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Thomas McCarthy (trans.), vol. 1. Boston: Beacon Press, 1984, p. 216.

22 Ibid.

23 Stuart Hall, 'The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity', in Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti and Ella Shohat (eds.), *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, p. 175.

24 Dieter Rucht, *Modernisierung und neue soziale Bewegungen: Deutschland, Frankreich und USA im Vergleich*, Frankfurt: Campus, 1994, p. 56.

25 Ibid., p. 53.

and legitimation of the individual… is the achievement and the office of aesthetic experience'.[26] This perspective casts a rather different light on the differentiation that characterises the modernity process: the plurality of the differentiating areas submits to the duality of the objective and subjective spheres, institutionalised in social terms as the duality of the public and private realms.

Gradually losing its traditional tasks and separating from the objective functional system of society, the aesthetic sphere began to gain greater significance on the horizons of subjectivity. Released from all kinds of social function, from the obligation to give visual form to truths deemed absolute, to depict nature, to evoke a universally valid good and to represent divine or worldly power, art came to be identified as the original, natural, essential and authentic expression of the subject, of the self and its inner being: 'as a creator, each artist must give expression to what is inherently his.'[27] On the producer's side, then, authenticity is the pure expression, the expressivity, of the artist, whose soul is mirrored in the otherwise 'useless' work of art. On the recipient's side, authenticity is the pure impression, the experience, of the subject, which corresponds to the artist's subjectivity. Authenticity marks a turn from objective truth to subjective truthfulness, 'a turn from truth to sincerity, from the search for the objective law to a desire for authentic response'.[28] Like the principle of autonomy, the authenticity/expressivity principle became a yardstick for assessing art. Consequently, the degree to which an artist gave expression to his true self, to his intuitions, visions, ideas and sensations, became a criterion for judging the quality of high art. Anything not corresponding to this ideal was deemed either inferior or wholly illegitimate. If artists followed guild rules, say, if their expression of feeling was indebted exclusively to the laws governing a particular genre (love poetry, for example), if they obeyed social convention or aimed to comply with the public's taste, then this was held to detract significantly from the authenticity of their work and hence from its aesthetic value.

Modern subjectivity and aesthetics are so closely linked in their development that the artist appears as the epitome of the subject. Only in the person of the artist does the self achieve in full measure the status of subject suggested by the modernity process. The heightening of autonomy and authenticity in the artist-subject peaks as complete sovereignty in the idea of the genius, which took shape around the mid-eighteenth century and is still influential. 'Genius is purported to be the individual whose spontaneity coincides with the action of the absolute subject.… In the concept of genius the idea of creation is transferred… from the transcendental to the empirical subject, to the productive artist.'[29] As creator, the artistic genius is not only virtually a god, untouched by the limitations of the human condition; the artistic genius is also unaffected by the deficits and defects that have proved to be part and parcel of the modernity process. The conditions of bourgeois reality soon disappointed the ideals of human freedom, equality and sovereignty proclaimed by Enlightenment philosophy and furthered by the French revolution. Only in the realm of art did the quickly dashed hopes for the future entertained by incipient modernity seem to find realisation, if only by proxy, as it were.[30] This raises the oft-discussed issue of the ambiguity of the term 'subject', as applied to the artistic genius on the one hand and the ordinary person on the other. All kinds of pressures and constraints have made the ordinary man a *subiectum* that is to say subjected to the functional system of modern society. By contrast, the artist-subject, endowed with absolute creativity, appear as the sovereign subject (in the sense of *hypokeimenon*), unaffected by the limitations inherent in the human condition

26 Hans Robert Jauss, *Studien zum Epochenwandel der ästhetischen Moderne*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1989, p. 111.

27 Vasili Kandinsky, *Über das Geistige in der Kunst*, Berna: Bentreli, 1970, p. 80. English version: *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, Boston: Museum of Fine Arts Boston, 2006.

28 'The Idea of the Modern', in Irving Howe (ed.), *Literary Modernism*, New York: Fawcett, 1967, p. 19.

29 Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie. Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 7, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 1997, p. 255. English version: *Aesthetic Theory*, Robert Hullot-Kentor (trans.), London and New York: Continuum, 1999, pp. 170–71; 'The old concept of transcendent genius, of self-willed or determined individualism, and of tormented but autonomous identity are all legacies which remain attached to the image of the artist through the twentieth century. Perhaps this is because no figure embodies or promotes the fantasies and fictions of the bourgeois individual under capitalism more dramatically than that of the artist.… Dismantled by the critical reformulations of the last twenty-five years, the concept of the artist nonetheless persists – it is the stock in trade of catalogue copy and museum panels, not to mention the art historical monograph and gallery exhibition.' Johanna Drucker, *Theorizing Modernism: Visual Art and the Critical Tradition*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, pp. 109, 113.

30 Carl Schmitt pointed out that cultural autonomy, or the autonomy of art, stands for bourgeois autonomy in general: 'That art is a daughter of freedom, that aesthetic value judgements must be autonomous, that the artistic genius is sovereign, appeared obvious to [liberalism]; indeed, genuinely liberal emotions stirred in some countries only when the autonomous freedom of art was threatened by "apostles of morality".' Carl Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen: Mit einer Rede über das Zeitalter der Neutralisierungen und Entpolitisierungen*, Wissenschaftliche Abhandlungen und Reden zu Philosophie, Politik und Geistesgeschichte, vol. 10, Munich and Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1932, p. 59.

as well as by external constraints of any kind.[31] In the aesthetic realm the modern principle of the autonomous subject rises above bourgeois self-preservation to the heights of self-expression, self-realisation and self-creation. The enormous creative potential set free by the break with the dogmas and conventions of the traditional world-view was channelled into the differentiated, specialised field of art while it was systematically banned from other areas, such as science, economics and politics.

'For the audience, [the autonomy of art] was a nostalgic projection, since, with the passing of the revolution, they could no longer expect their desire for autonomy to be satisfied in life, but only in the realm of art';[32] 'The artist's claim to express himself… attached… to the work of art. In this respect the artist was only the impersonator of the modern subject, whose autonomy… was only unwillingly surrendered. Art was thus a mirror in which the subject could see itself as autonomous.'[33] The license for self-expression granted the creative subject, the artist in bourgeois society, was not restricted to artistic activity in the narrow sense, but extended to the artist's way of life. The idea of art was linked to an artistic existence outside the rules and conventions of bourgeois norms, to an aesthetic life-style. The authenticity principle encompassed bohemia's eccentric, alternative forms of existence. 'Expressive self-realisation becomes the principle of art appearing as a form of life.'[34]

To the extent that the artist could embody claims to autonomy and authenticity far more comprehensively than the average modern subject, he was held to be especially capable of performing the centring task credited to the subject in general. Moreover, the exceptional subject 'artist' was expected to discover more than purely subjective meaning and to generate more than purely subjective sense: the artist was to (re)discover within himself the ability to (re)construct the order of being that had become uncertain and eventually had vanished due to the demise of the theological and metaphysical world-view. The artist (particularly the poet) was considered especially sensitive towards the '*Weltriss*',[35] the rupture in the world that had destroyed the great, transcendentally established chain of being. And the artist's exceptional subjectivity was thought to enable him to find a way of repairing the fragmentation caused by the *Weltriss*. In this way, the authenticity of the artist-subject, understood as subjective truthfulness, reopened access to something like a generally valid truth, which reunited subjectivity and objectivity. What Max Weber called the 're-enchantment of the world' was a project that took its cue less from religion than from the aesthetic sphere: 'the artist [was] chosen to bring forth myths again.'[36] This is the point at which the aesthetic sphere began to revolt against the differentiation that had promoted it, against the division into the orders of theoretical, practical and aesthetic reason in which it had a part. The artist adopted the role of *voyant*, becoming the prophet of an order of being and knowing different from, and superior to, the existing one.

When the idealisation of the artist's subjectivity reached its zenith the gap between the artist-subject as genius and the average human subject widened into an unbridgeable chasm. Thus, the modern subject paid the price of a split within itself for the hubris of its project to heal the *Weltriss*. Habermas calls this the aporetical doubling of the self-referential subject:[37] the subject simultaneously occupies the position both of a 'self-deifying subject consuming itself in acts of vain self-transcendence' and of an 'empirical subject in the world, where it is available as one object among others'.[38] In addition, such efforts to reconcile the *Weltriss* were prone to succumb to the temptations of totalitarianism, since the

31 '…"subject" signifies in effect (1) a free subjectivity: a centre of initiatives, the author of acts for which it is responsible; (2) a subjugated being, subject to a superior authority.' Louis Althusser, *Positions*, Paris: Éditions Sociales, 1976, p. 133.

32 Hans Belting, *Das unsichtbare Meisterwerk: Die modernen Mythen der Kunst*, Munich: Beck, 1998, p. 28.

33 Ibid., p. 9.

34 Jürgen Habermas, *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne. Zwölf Vorlesungen*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1985, p. 28. English version: *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, Frederick G. Lawrence (trans.), Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1995, p. 18.

35 Heinrich Heine, 'Die Bäder von Lucca', in Klaus Briegleb (ed.), *Sämtliche Schriften in zwölf Bänden*, vol. 3, Munich: Hanser, p. 405.

36 Manfred Frank, *Gott im Exil: Vorlesungen über die Neue Mythologie*, II, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1988, p. 12.

37 Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, op. cit., p. 261.

38 Ibid., p. 262.

dualism of sovereignty and submission inherent in the idea of the subject easily translates into a division of man into the superhuman and subhuman. Not coincidentally, it was Nietzsche who devoted special attention to the gulf between the subjectivity of the artist and that of the average individual.[39] The 'I' of the artist is not the same as 'that of the actual living man, but the "I" dwelling, truly and eternally, at the root of being'.[40] Nietzsche claims that the artist rises above the individual and the purely subjective, since 'the subject, the striving individual bent on furthering his egoistic purposes, can be thought of only as an enemy of art, never as its source. But to the extent that the subject is an artist he is already delivered from individual will and has become a medium through which the true subject celebrates his deliverance in illusions.'[41] Nietzsche explains the difference between the individual and the artist-subject with reference to the ancient Greek poet Archilochus: 'Archilochus, with his passionate loves and hates, is really only a vision of genius, a genius who is no longer merely Archilochus, but the genius of the world, expressing its pain through the similitude of Archilochus the man, whereas the subjectively willing and desiring human being can never be a poet.'[42] 'Only as the genius in the act of creation merges with the primal artist of the world can he truly know something of the eternal essence of art.'[43] When the subject is elevated to the status of an absolute, subjectivity disappears. Indeed, the conquest of individuation by art programmatically proclaimed by Nietzsche condemns subjectivity outright and destroys it: 'The basic recognition of the unity of all existing things, the view of individuation as the source of all ill, beauty and art as the hope that the spell of individuation can be broken,[44] as the premonition of restored unity.'[45] Ultimately, the artistic genius is closer to god — the 'primal artist of the world' — than to humanity. If art did indeed develop certain totalitarian affinities under the conditions of modernity, this was caused by the idealisation and stylisation of the artist as prophet and leader, by the concomitant disparagement of 'ordinary' man and by the violence implicit in the will to break the 'spell of individuation'.

Ideas vary as to what qualifies the artist to repair the fragmentation of reality and to heal the disenchanted world of modernity. His exceptional capabilities can be envisaged on a 'higher' or 'lower' plane than that of ordinary subjectivity. They may appear as the highest intellectuality and spirituality or as intuition flowing almost instinctively from the depths of the artist's body and soul. The artist transcends the human subject either in the direction of the divine or in that of the visceral; his creativity oscillates between the absolute, self-willed act and purely passive inspiration. Kant's concept of genius harboured the nucleus of this ambivalence, in that it attributed to the genius exceptional faculties over which the genius himself has no real control, since they are received passively as a natural gift.[46] The second idea of genius comes close to what Michel Foucault termed 'the explanation from below'[47] and gained considerably in importance around 1900, not least as a result of the discoveries of psychoanalysis, especially the unconscious, which undermined the sovereignty of the subject. The motive behind both alternatives was the same: to discover the source of the genius's ability to transcend modern reality in a realm outside norms and normality, whether above them or below them.

A third, constructivist conception of the genius's abilities existed alongside the 'higher' and 'lower' alternatives. In this view the artistic self, rather than (re)discovering the hidden laws of being, either on the clear heights of reason (Apollonian) or in the obscure depths of emotion (Dionysian), invents, creates or produces an

39 Adorno, too, considered the subjectivity of the artist to be different from, and greater than, subjectivity in the customary sense: 'From the perspective of the philosophy of history, expression in art must be interpreted as a compromise. Expression approaches the transsubjective; it is the form of knowledge that — having preceded the polarity of subject and object — does not recognize this polarity as definitive. Art is secular, however, in that it attempts to achieve such knowledge within the bounds of the polarity of subject and object, as an act of autonomous spirit.' Adorno (note 28), p. 111. Although '[o]nly the subject is an instrument of expression, [the] expression of artworks is the nonsubjective in the subject; not so much that subject's expression as its impression' (ibid., p. 113, tran. slightly amended). It must be more than 'abstract subjectivity that powerlessly sets itself up as substance' (ibid., p. 116).

40 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (eds.), Berlin: De Gruyter, p. 45. (trans. slightly amended). English version: *The Birth of Tragedy*, Arlington, VA: Richer Resources Publications, 2009.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

44 'The destruction of individuation, the dismay at the shattered unity, the hope for a new world creation — in short, the feeling of blissful horror in which the knots of pleasure and terror are tied together.' Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente Ende 1870 bis April 1871*, Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe, 15 vols., Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (eds.), Berlin: dtv and de Gruyter, 1980, vol. 7. 7 [123] p. 178.

45 Ibid.

46 Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft. Gesammelte Schriften*, Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1974, § 46, 181, p. 307; § 49, 200, p. 318. English version: *Critique of Judgement*, Indiannapolis, IN: Hackett, 2008.

aesthetic law 'without foundation'. 'Before art as a beginning there is nothingness, against which art sets itself up. Art "establishes" and "presents" truths that would otherwise not exist. Its foundation lies in the ecstatic decision to make.'[48] With the creative act — 'making' (*poiein*) — foregrounded in this way, the maker — the acting/active subject — acquires still greater prominence *vis-à-vis* the work. The shift of emphasis from object to subject, already apparent in the transition from the principle of autonomy to the principle of authenticity, culminated in the idea that the artist creates himself, that his life is a work of art. In Baudelaire's dandy Foucault sees the epitome of the (explicitly male) subject who creates himself: 'Modern man, for Baudelaire, is not the man who goes off to discover himself, his secrets and his hidden truth; he is the man who tries to invent himself. The modernity does not "liberate man in his own being"; it compels him to face the task of producing himself.'[49] This position marks the opposite pole to the self-referentiality of the work of art. In contrast to the self-referential pole, in which the personality and intention of the artist all but disappear behind the stylistic and formal laws of the aesthetic 'material',[50] the 'ecstatic decision to make', the will of the artist to invent himself in a self-creative act (*autopoiesis*) almost obliterates the object — the work of art.[51]

This polarity between the autonomy of the work of art and the authenticity of the artist characterised the entire history of modern art: 'With the Romantics absolute art had been the drunken vision of the subject, whereas in the Hegelian tradition of modernity it became the rigorous or ideal form, which revealed its truth in the works';[52] 'The conflict between the autonomy of the subject (experience) and the autonomy of form and technique (style) wound its way like a spiral through the course of modernity. Reborn Romantics demanded absolute freedom in art, the heirs of the Enlightenment an absolute bond with form in a neutral ideal of the work. The former desired deliverance from the strangeness of things, the latter from the arbitrariness of the subject.'[53] The 'strangeness of things', experienced as alienation, and the no less disastrous consequences of the 'arbitrariness of the subject', with its tendency towards totalitarianism, are the two sides of the suffering caused by modernity in the wake of the disenchantment of the world. The failure of the aesthetic project's grand attempt to mend the *Weltriss* in the context of modernity becomes obvious when one considers how the subject/object divide reoccurred at the core of the sphere of art.

The dream of reconciliation between pure self-expression and pure objective form lived on in aesthetic theory[54] and became a focus of the artistic imagination. In his novel *Doctor Faustus* Thomas Mann invests the composer Adrian Leverkühn, at the height of his genius, with the ability 'to yield himself to subjectivity' 'in the previously organized material, unhampered, untroubled by the already given structure', so that 'his technically most rigid work, a work of extreme calculation, is at the same time purely expressive'.[55]

For a long time no terminological conventions existed to express the difference between tendencies in nineteenth- and twentieth-century art and literature that focus either on the subject or the object, on the artist or the work. A distinction now gradually seems to be emerging between the use of 'modernism' for the object-centred approach and 'avant-garde' for the subject-centred. The two differ from each other most clearly in their relationship to society and politics. In the history of modern art avant-garde movements have frequently articulated radical social criticism and adopted explicitly political stances. These activist avant-gardes have seen themselves in the tradition of the prophetic artist-subject, as forerunners

47 'The explanation from below is... an explanation through the most confused, the most obscure, the most disordered, the most indebted to chance.' Michel Foucault, *Il faut défendre la société: Cours au Collège de France, 1975–1976*, Paris: Hautes Études, Gallimard and Seuil, 1997, p. 46. Foucault also describes the connection between the depths and the heights: 'above this network of bodies, accidents and passions... something fragile and superficial was building up, a growing rationality, that of calculations, of strategies, of ruses; that of technical procedures.' Ibid., p. 47. This c*oincidentia oppositorum*, the connection between the opposites 'arbitrariness' and 'calculation', 'materialism/sensualism' and 'formalism', characterises modern thought in many ways and also plays an important part in the diverging paths of modern art.

48 Beat Wyss, *Der Wille zur Kunst: Zur ästhetischen Mentalität der Moderne*, Cologne: Dumont, 1996, p. 54.

49 Michel Foucault, 'What is Enlightenment?', in Paul Rabinow (ed.), *The Foucault Reader*, New York: Pantheon, 1984, p. 50.

50 The programmatic aims of the De Stijl group, for example, included the 'elimination of subjective arbitrariness in means of expression'. *De Stijl: Schriften und Manifeste zu einem theoretischen Konzept ästhetischer Umweltgestaltung*, Leipzig and Weimar: Kiepenheuer, 1984, p. 53.

51 This line of development offered refuge in the arts to the philosophical art of living, which modernity had made homeless. Wilhelm Schmid speaks of a 'dwindling connection to objects in the modern arts', as a consequence of which 'the subject and its life' can themselves become the theme of art. Wilhelm Schmid, 'Das Leben als Kunstwerk', *Kunstforum*, no. 142, (Oct–Dec, 1998), p. 73. This development would end with the corporeality of the artist being the only remaining guarantee of authenticity.

52 Belting, *Das unischtbare Meisterwerk*, op. cit., p. 33.

and pioneers of a better world.[56] Linked to this social commitment is the desire to integrate art into life, with the work of art dissolving in the process. By contrast, the formalist and purist credos, founded in the pure form of things, have resulted more often than not in a-political or anti-political stances, in a retreat from the world, in a tendency to withdraw life into art, all of which can culminate in a kind — or rather, various kinds — of esotericism.

Alterity

Before turning to the third cornerstone of aesthetic ideology, it may be useful to take stock of the discussion so far by recalling the three theoretical principles underlying the present study of the modernity process.

> The principle of autonomy propels the differentiation of all subsystems in modern society, but has achieved absolute status only in the aesthetic sphere. Whereas the autonomy of all other subsystems is limited by functional interrelations among differentiated subsystems, and therefore relative, the work of art is considered to stand apart from these.
>
> The principle of thematic cleansing applies to the field of art as principle of authenticity. This implies not only an intensification but also a particularity, because under the guise of authenticity the process of thematic cleansing does not relate to the objectified subsystems of modern society but to the suject (the artist).
>
> Given the increase from relative to absolute autonomy that characterises the aesthetic sphere and removes it from all functional interrelations within society, and in view of the specific approach to thematic cleansing as authenticity and the sovereignty of the subject, it seems doubtful whether there is any sense in speaking of functional specialisation in connection with art. Equating functional specialisation with alterity likewise appears questionable, since the term 'alterity' denotes the very opposite of all functional relations.

Leaving aside these issues for a moment, there can be no doubt that alterity forms the third pillar of aesthetic ideology. Irrespective of the tensions between them, modernist and avant-garde currents meet under the banner of 'alterity'. The notion of 'alterity' is as useful in connection with the formal qualities of an object, with a work's autonomy and self-referentiality, as it is valid with regard to the authenticity of the artist-subject. The non-referentiality of the laws of pure form places them just as much outside reality as does the new myth arising from the artist's inner vision. Both the absolute autonomy embodied in the work of art's freedom from function and the authenticity exceptionally accorded the artist imply distance from reality. This '*foreignness to the world is an element in art*'[57] and is what the term 'alterity' stands for. If autonomy is the basis and authenticity the centre of the aesthetic ideology of modernity, then alterity constitutes its apogee.

The philosopher and sociologist Georg Simmel offers a definition of art that can be read as an explanation of alterity, although he does not use the word. According to Simmel, 'Art is the *other* of life, the deliverance from it by its opposite, in which the pure forms of things, indifferent towards their subjective enjoyment or non-enjoyment, refuse all contact with our reality.'[58]

As 'the *other* of life', art rebuffs its audience's need or desire for pleasure ('subjective enjoyment or non-enjoyment'), but at the same time Simmel posits

53 Ibid., p. 34. In literary modernity Peter Bürger notes a similar opposition between object- and work-centred modernism on the one hand and subject-orientated avant-garde on the other. Peter Bürger, 'Moderne', in Ulfert Ricklefs (ed.), *Fischer-Lexikon der Literatur*, Frankfurt: Fischer, 1996, pp. 1287–1319. Bürger finds early evidence of this duality in the nineteenth century: 'Baudelaire, Flaubert and… Mallarmé too are exponents of a literary modernity centred on the idea of the (classical) work.…Their antipode is Arthur Rimbaud [whose] writing project is existential' (p. 1299). For Bürger, Nietzsche was moving in the activist/avant-garde direction. With Wagner's music dramas in mind, he 'drew up the programme of a cultural revolution aimed at reintegrating modernity's atomised subject into a community' (p. 1300). Bürger discovers the opposition between object-work-centred and subject-centred again in twentieth-century poetry: 'On the one hand, there is the highly rational poetry of Paul Valéry, argued in terms of aesthetic effect and based on traditional forms… on the other, the Surrealist notion of "automatic writing", which is concerned with self-liberation in the act of writing, not with the creation of a work (see Breton and Soupault…). Valéry subjects poetry to rationalist principles.… By contrast, the Surrealist notion of *écriture automatique* is in line with Romantic tradition. The primary concern of this method… is the elimination of rational control, not the rational choice of means.… In this way writing can become an act of self-examination and self-liberation' (p. 1305).

54 Theodor W. Adorno, 'Der Artist als Statthalter', in Rolf Tiedemann (ed.) *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 11, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1997, pp. 114–126.

55 Thomas Mann, *Dr. Faustus: Das Leben des deutschen Tonsetzers Adrian Leverkühn erzählt von einem Freunde* in: *Gesammelte Werke in dreizehn Bänden*, vol. 6, Frankfurt: Fischer, 1990, p. 647. English version: *Doctor Faustus: The Life of the German Composer Adrian Leverkühn as Told by a Friend*, H. T. Lowe-Porter (trans.), Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1949, p. 468.

56 Cornelia Klinger and Wolfgang Müller-Funk (eds.), *Das Jahrhundert der Avantgarden*, Munich: Fink Verlag, 2004.

57 Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, op. cit., p. 183.

58 Georg Simmel, 'Das Christentum und die Kunst', in Michael Landmann (ed.), *Brücke und Tür*, Stuttgart: Köhler, 1957, p. 130 (emphasis added).

59 Ibid., p. 130.

60 Sigmund Freud describes the locus of the imagination as a separate area of the human psyche, untouched by the reality principle and devoted to 'compensation' for human activity dominated by the reality principle and controlled by reason. The elements that feature in Freud's description bear a striking resemblance to the characteristics of art's alterity. Sigmund Freud, 'Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse', *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 11, London: Imago, 1940, p. 387.

61 Armin Nassehi, 'Keine Zeit für Utopien: Über das Verschwinden utopischer Gehalte aus modernen Zeitsemantiken', in Rolf Eickelpasch and Armin Nassehi (eds.), *Utopie und Moderne*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1996, p. 252

62 Niklas Luhmann, *Gesellschaftsstruktur und Semantik: Studien zur Wissenssoziologie der modernen Gesellschaft*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1989, p. 158.

63 Ibid., p. 212.

64 Niklas Luhmann, *Soziale Systeme: Grundriss einer allgemeinen Theorie*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1984, p. 365. English version: *Social Systems*, Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996.

65 Harvie Ferguson, *Subjectivity: Body, Soul, Spirit*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000, p. 193.

a greater closeness of the work of art to 'us', the recipients: 'by being distanced, the content of being and imagination come closer to us than they could in the guise of reality. While all things in the real world can be integrated into our lives as means and materials, the work of art is completely self-contained. Yet all these realities maintain… a final, deep estrangement from us.… The work of art alone can become wholly ours:… by being more self-contained than everything else[59], it is more to us than everything else.' The apparent contradictions in which Simmel involves himself here result from the paradoxical situation in which 'we' find ourselves: the reality, the 'real world', in which we live and into which 'all things… [are] integrated… as means and materials' is at the same time strange (or has become strange) to us, while 'the content of being and imagination'[60] has disappeared from this estranged, reified kind of life, distancing itself from reality. Since autonomous, authentic art is likewise set apart from reality, its strangeness signifies closeness to the kind of self that is strange to the world, a self that is more than the various social functions it fulfils and different from them.

Simmel's account reflects both the view of the modernity process as one of alienation and reification and the idea put forward by systems theory that 'a central representation of the unity of society is no longer possible under conditions of functional differentiation'.[61] According to Niklas Luhmann, modern society 'no longer offers the individual a place where he or she can exist as "social beings". They can live only outside society, can reproduce themselves solely as a system of their own in the environment of society';[62] 'The individual is understood as a world relationship, wholly unique, acquiring awareness through the self and realised in human form; and the "world" (or, in social terms, "humanity") is that which "autonomously" achieves representation in the individual… the individual has his place within himself and outside society. The formula "subject" symbolises precisely that.'[63] Elsewhere Luhmann expresses this slightly differently: 'the social system responds to the individual's position as an outsider, to the fact that he or she can no longer be integrated into a social subsystem, by acknowledging and authorising their claim to "self-realisation".'[64]

The idea of the individual as subject, the notion of his or her authenticity and sovereignty, his or her claims to independence and self-realisation, were noted above as characteristics of the modern artist. In contrast to the elitist perspective epitomised in the cult of genius, which drew a sharp line between the artist and the average self, Luhmann asserts that *every* individual can embody the same principle, that the average self can also lay claim to self-realisation or authenticity, a claim that the social system must accept as legitimate because of the alterity, the otherness, strangeness or alienation, that the modernity process has created between the system and the individual. However, the alterity of each modern individual *vis-à-vis* society does not entail the positive significance of the artistic genius's higher or lower position in relation to society. Alterity here indicates neither transcendence nor sublimity, but the lack of place, the exclusion of the individual from something that no longer qualifies as society, but operates merely as a set of functional interrelations among objectified subsystems. The average subject's individuality is consequently understood as an 'individuality of exclusion'. This subject's alterity *vis-à-vis* society is kind of private exile: 'The world of "the subjects" cannot participate directly in this world and withdraws in private and interior forms of consolation.'[65]

The average subject possesses neither the potential for healing the *Weltriss* nor the ability to forge a unity from fragments of life devoid of meaning.[66] Nevertheless, individuals are not necessarily alone in the ex-territory of privateness and inwardness; they can appeal to various factors in order to 'reproduce themselves… as a system of their own in the environment of society' and to attain deliverance, or at least relief, from the suffering caused by alienation in the modern world.

Art's absolute autonomy, and the authenticity of the artist in his heightened subject status, have made the aesthetic realm one of the few *loci* in the topography of modern society where the losses and deficits concomitant with the modernity process have been understood and addressed: 'given the failures of science and religion to address and remedy the forms of psychic fragmentation and social alienation that were now increasingly associated with modern experience, the arts have a unique redemptive mission in modern social life';[67] 'Art in the modern era is not simply a sphere alongside the spheres of science and ethics; rather, it is a counterworld born of the spirit of modernity.'[68] For that very reason art performs an important function not for society, 'but… for each and every individual'.[69] If the principle of 'autonomy' focuses on the object, on the work of art, and that of 'authenticity' on the privileged status of the subject as artist/author, then 'alterity' revolves principally around the subject/the subjectivity of the recipient who participates in the autonomy and authenticity of the aesthetic sphere at one remove.

Discontent with modernity may induce the subject to search for meaning and identity in very different, even opposing, directions — towards 'an edenic past, a projected future, or a zone of cultural otherness', in Rita Felski's summary description.[70] In the nineteenth and the twentieth century art moved in all these directions. Orientalism and primitivism (of various kinds), for example, helped the modern subject to escape into the past or into distant worlds, into 'paradises' supposedly untouched by processes modernisation or Westernisation. As a form of resistance to reality, aesthetic alterity encompasses both nostalgic preservation of what has (purportedly) been lost in the past and utopian anticipation of what is to yet come in the future (Ernst Bloch). Activist avant-gardes have understood their artistic rebellion against prevailing conditions as pioneering work in preparation for a great cultural, social and political revolution. Even when escape or rebellion fails, consolation is provided by alterity in its modest, quotidian, trivial form: the self finds ' a zone of cultural otherness', a spatially and temporally circumscribed protection from reality, in the spaces of art, in museums or concert halls, in private libraries, in the archives of the imagination. The idea of alterity, the oppositeness of the aesthetic *vis-à-vis* reality, is the true culmination of the ideal of modernity in art.

Answers to the question as to the precise nature of art's resistance, as to what direction it should take, depend on the kind of diagnosis made of modernity's ailments.

Especially in the early history of the modern era, the sphere of art was turned to principally for deliverance, or simply relief, from a reality perceived as disjointed, as strange, alienated or alienating, as ugly, chaotic or arbitrary. Aesthetic alterity was therefore associated with harmony, reconciliation, unity and beauty. Aesthetic form was thought to possess the ability to invest the singular or the particular with general validity, to present a section of the world, a piece, a fragment of reality, as complete, as whole, even as *the* whole, to show the accidental as essential, the fleeting as lasting, the moment as eternal, the arbitrary as necessary and meaningful. Narrative structures provided commonplace stories with a beginning and an

66 Adorno, 'Noten zur Literatur' [1974], op. cit., p. 211.

67 Casey Haskins, 'Autonomy', in Michael Kelly (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, vol. 1, p. 172. 'While the industrial revolution ran its course with many a political upheaval, opposition was growing in the world of art to the glorification of science and technology and to the capitalist obsession with profit. The protest was chiefly humanist and aesthetic, directed at the crude materialism and rationalism of the bourgeoisie.' (Willem van Reijen and Hans van der Loo, *Modernisierung: Projekt und Paradox*, Munich: dtv, 1992, p. 76).

68 Peter Bürger, *Prosa der Moderne*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1988, p. 17.

69 Ibid., p. 15.

70 Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity*, Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1995, p. 210. Terry Eagleton has called these directions, even more tersely and rather more irreverently, 'the past, the bush, the political future'. Terry Eagleton, *The Idea of Culture*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2000, p. 25. See also Cornelia Klinger, *Flucht, Trost, Revolte: Die Moderne und ihre ästhetischen Gegenwelten*, Munich: Hanser, 1995.

end. Aesthetic form thus generated meaning and significance. Composition structured even a slice of reality as small as Albrecht Dürer's *Piece of Turf*, which acquired unity and harmony through placement inside a frame. In short, aesthetic treatment freed its objects from the chief cause of suffering in the secular world, from contingency, and lent them monumentality: 'Nothing is present in the work of art that does not relate essentially to content and gives expression to it.'[71] Or, in Simmel's words: 'The essence of the aesthetic view and representation lies… in the emergence of the typical from the particular, the underlying law from the accidental, the essence and significance of things from the external and the fleeting. No appearance would seem capable of escaping this reduction to what is significant and eternal in it. Even the lowest, the ugliest, phenomenon can be placed within a framework of colours and forms, of feeling and experience, and thus gain significance in a most appealing way; all we need do is to immerse ourselves deeply and lovingly enough in even the most indifferent phenomenon, however common-place or repulsive in appearance, and we will discover in it, too, an emanation and evidence of that ultimate unity of all things from which beauty and meaning spring.… to the sufficiently sharpened gaze the whole beauty, the sense of the world-whole [shines] through.'[72] Creating unity, wholeness and meaning, art achieved what the modernity process had seemed to render impossible and illegitimate.

If modern reality is perceived not in terms of a loss of order, but as a homogeneous, firmly structured entity, even as an 'iron cage',[73] then aesthetic alterity will take the form of the unruly, unsettling and deviating, the disruptive and fragmentary.[74] 'Art [is] to be understood as the production of catastrophes, as the creation of a discontinuity that destroys the tectonic balance of language'.[75] 'The experience of art [reinforces] the inevitability of the rupture, the unresolvability of all conflicts and the impossibility of any reconciliation with things.… This kind of art arises from an awareness of the irreducibility of the fragment, of the impossibility of re-establishing unity and balance.'[76] Especially in recent years, many authors have spoken of art's unsettling alterity, of 'the aesthetics… of disturbance that reveals a gap, an interval in the world, that signals a limit and establishes a transit, a passage elsewhere. It is in this space — historically nominated with such terms as the sublime, the uncanny, alterity — that the pedagogical languages of institutional identity, busily seeking to legitimate the narration of the nation, citizenship and cultural subjectivity, are interceded and deviated.… What this understanding of art holds out is the promise of interrupting such an order.'[77]

Alterity is involved whether art's opposition and resistance is aimed at the menacing totality of reality or at its painful fragmentation. The different paths of Classicism and Romanticism, of modernist and avant-garde currents, of the rivalry between the category of beauty and a work of art's objective formal laws on the one hand, and the category of the sublime and the subjectivity of the artistic genius on the other, inform different analyses of modernity and the contrary expectations attached to the redeeming, liberating or alleviating effect of art's alterity. Autonomy and authenticity meet and culminate in this third principle of aesthetic ideology, in art's functional specialisation 'as a repository for remnants of the life world that have been split off by reason'.[78] A hope that, if not 'the absolute', but at least 'something other', will be made 'present' characterises expectations placed in art by the individual, by the public and thus, ultimately, by society. This hope is the one element in the aesthetic ideology of modernity that has survived every disappointment — so far.

71 G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik I*, vol. 13, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970, p. 132. English version: *Hegel's Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Art*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975.

72 Georg Simmel, 'Soziologische Ästhetik', *Die Zukunft*, vol. 17, 1896, p. 205.

73 Perceptions of modernity typically oscillate between these two interpretative patterns. Wolfgang Welsch has examined this 'duality of contrary diagnoses of modernity' in his *Unsere postmoderne Moderne*, Weinheim: Acta Humaniora, 1988, pp. 53–63.

74 Jean-François Lyotard, 'Das Erhabene und die Avantgarde', in Jacques LeRider and Gérard Raulet (eds.), *Verabschiedung der (Post-)Moderne? Eine interdisziplinäre Debatte*, Tübingen: Narr, 1987, pp. 251–74.

75 Achille Bonito Oliva, *Im Labyrinth der Kunst*, Berlin: Merve, 1982, p. 55.

76 Ibid., pp. 58–59.

77 Iain Chambers, 'Unvollendete Demokratie und posthumanistische Kunst' in: Okwui Enwezor et al. (eds.), *Demokratie als unvollendeter Prozeß. Dokumenta 11_Plattform 1*, Ostfildern: Hatje-Cantz, 2002, p. 202f. English version: 'Unrealized Democracy and a Posthumanist Art', in Okwui Enwezor et al. (eds.), *Democracy Unrealized: Documenta 11_Platform 1*. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2002, p. 173.

78 Florian Rötzer, 'Zur Genese des Erhabenen', in Dietmar Kamper and Chr. Wulf (eds.), *Der Schein des Schönen,* Göttingen: Steidl, 1989, p. 94.

Coloniality:
The Darker Side of Modernity

Walter D. Mignolo

I.

I was intrigued, many years ago (around 1991), when I saw on the 'newsstand' of a book store the title of Stephen Toulmin's latest book: *Cosmopolis, The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (1990). I went to a coffee shop, across the street from Borders in Ann Arbor and devoured the book over a cup of coffee: what was the hidden agenda of modernity? was the intriguing question. Shortly after that I was in Bogotá and found a book just published: *Los conquistados: 1492 y la población indígena de América* (1992). The last chapter of that book caught my attention. It was authored by Anibal Quijano of whom I had heard, but was not familiar. The article was titled 'Coloniality and modernity/rationality'.[1] I bought the book and found another coffee shop nearby. I devoured the article and the reading was a sort of epiphany. At that time I was finishing the manuscript of *The Darker Side of the Renaissance* (1995), but did not incorporate the article. There was much I had to think about and the manuscript was already framed. As soon I handed the manuscript to the press, I concentrated on 'coloniality', which became a central concept in *Local Histories/ Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledge and Border Thinking* (2000). After the publication of the book, I wrote a lengthy theoretical article, 'The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference', published in *South Atlantic Quarterly* (2002). For Toulmin the hidden agenda of modernity was the humanistic river running behind instrumental reason. For me the hidden agenda (and darker side) of modernity was coloniality. What follows is a recap of the work I have since done in collaboration with members of the collective modernity/coloniality.[2]

The basic thesis is the following: 'modernity' is a European narrative that hides its darker side, 'coloniality'. Coloniality, in other words, is constitutive of modernity — there is no modernity without coloniality.[3] Hence, today the common expression 'global modernities' imply 'global colonialities' in the precise sense that the colonial matrix of power (coloniality, for short) is being disputed by many contenders: if there cannot be modernity without coloniality, there cannot be either global modernities without global colonialities. That is the logic of the polycentric capitalist world of today. Consequently, de-colonial thinking and doing emerged, from the sixteenth century on, as responses to the oppressive and imperial bent of modern European ideals projected to, and enacted in, the non-European world.

II.

I will start with two scenarios — one from the sixteenth century and the other from the late twentieth and the first decade of the twenty-first centuries.

1 The article is available in English: 'Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality', *Cultural Studies*, vol. 21, nos. 2–3, pp. 155–67 (2007).

2 The first publication in English of the work done by the collective since 1998 has been published in *Cultural Studies*, vol. 21, nos. 1–2 (2007). A special issue on 'Globalisation and the Decolonial Option'.

3 The point has been argued several times in the past decade. See for instance, Arturo Escobar, 'Beyond the Third World: imperial globality, global coloniality, and anti-globalization social movements', *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 207–30 (2004).

2.1. Let's imagine the world around 1500. It was, briefly stated, a polycentric and non-capitalist world. There were several co-existing civilisations, some of long histories, others being formed around that time. In China, the Ming Dynasty ruled from 1368 to 1644. It was a centre of trade and a civilisation of long history. Around 200 BC, Chinese Huángdinate (often wrongly called 'Chinese Empire') co-existed with the Roman Empire. By 1500, the former Roman Empire became the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nations, which still co-existed with the Chinese Huángdinate ruled by the Ming Dynasty. Out of the dismembering of the Islamic Caliphate (formed in the sixth century and ruled by the Umayyads in the seventh and eighth centuries, and by the Abassids from the eight to the thirteenth centuries) in the fourteenth century three sultanates emerged. The Ottoman Sultanate in Anatolia with its centre in Constantinople; the Safavid Sultane with its centre in Baku, Azerbaijan and the Mughal Sultanate formed out of the ruins of the Delhi Sultanate that lasted from 1206 to 1526. The Mughals (whose first Sultan was Babur, descendent of Genghis Kan and Timur) extended from 1526 to 1707. By 1520, Moscovites had expelled the Golden Horde and declared Moscow the 'Third Rome'. The history of the Russian Tsarate began. In Africa, the Oyo Kingdom (around what is today Nigeria), formed by the Yoruba nation, was the largest Kingdom in West Africa encountered by European explorers. The Benin Kingdom, after Oyo the second largest in Africa, lasted from 1440 to 1897. Last but not least, the Incas in Tawantinsuyu and the Aztecs in Anáhuac were two sophisticated civilisations by the time of the Spanish arrival. What happened then in the sixteenth century that would change the world order transforming it into the one in which we are living today? The advent of 'modernity' could be a simple and general answer, but... when, how, why, where?

2.2. At the beginning of the twenty-first century the world is interconnected by a single type of economy (capitalism)[4] and distinguished by a diversity of political theories and practices. Dependency theory should be reviewed in the light of these changes. But I will limit myself to distinguishing two overall orientations. On the one hand, the globalisation of capitalist economy and the diversification of global politics is taking place. On the other, we are witnessing the multiplication and diversification of anti-neo-liberal globalisation (e.g., anti-global capitalism).

On the first orientation, China, India, Russia, Iran, Venezuela and the emerging South American Union have already made clear that they are no longer willing to follow up on uni-directional orders coming from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank or the White House. Beneath Iran there is the history of Persia and the Safavid Sultanate; beneath Iraq the history of the Ottoman Sultanate. The past sixty years of Western entry in China (Marxism and capitalism) did not replace China's history with the history of Europe and the United States since 1500; and the same with India. On the contrary, it reinforced China's aim for sovereignty. In Africa, the imperial partition of Western countries between the end of the nineteenth and early-twentieth century (that provoked the First World War) did not replace the past of Africa with the past of Western Europe. And so in South America, 500 years of colonial rule by peninsular officers and, since early 1900, by Creole and Mestizo elites, did not erase the energy, force and memories of the Indian past (cf., current issues in Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, South of Mexico and Guatemala); neither did it erase the histories and memories of communities of African descent in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela and the insular Caribbean. Moving in the opposite direction was the emergence of the state of Israel in 1948, which exploded toward the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century.

4 Every time I say 'capitalism' I mean it in the sense of Max Weber: 'The spirit of capitalism is here used in this specific sense, it is the *spirit of modern capitalism*... Western European and American capitalism... ' *The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism* [1904/05], London: Routledge, 1992, pp. 51–52.

On the second orientation, we are observing many non-official (rather than non-governmental) transnational organisations not only manifesting themselves 'against' capitalism, globalisation and questioning modernity, but also opening up global but non-capitalist horizons and de-linking from the idea that there is a single and main modernity surrounded by peripheral or alternative ones. Not necessarily rejecting modernity but making clear that modernity goes hand in hand with coloniality and, therefore, modernity has to be assumed in both its glories and its crimes. Let's refer to this global domain 'de-colonial cosmopolitanism'.[5] No doubt that artists and museums are playing and have an important role to play in global formations of trans-modern and de-colonial subjectivities.

III.

What happened in between the two scenarios outlined above, the sixteenth and the twenty-first centuries? Historian Karen Armstrong — looking at the history of the West from the perspective of a historian of Islam — has made two crucial points.

Armstrong underscores the singularity of Western achievements in relation to the known history until the sixteenth century. She notes two salient spheres: economy and epistemology. In the sphere of economy, Armstrong points out that 'the new society of Europe and its American colonies had a different economic basis' that consisted in reinvesting the surplus in order to increase production. The first radical transformation in the domain of economy that allowed the West to '*reproduce its resources indefinitely*' is generally associated with colonialism.[6]

The second transformation, epistemological, is generally associated with the European Renaissance. Epistemological here shall be extended to encompass both science/knowledge and arts/meaning. Armstrong locates the transformation in the domain of knowledge in the sixteenth century, when Europeans 'achieved a scientific revolution that gave them greater control over the environment than anybody had achieved before'.[7]

No doubt, Armstrong is right in highlighting the relevance of a new type of economy (capitalism) and the scientific revolution. They both fit and correspond to the celebratory rhetoric of modernity — that is, the rhetoric of salvation and newness, based on European achievements during the Renaissance.

There is, however, a hidden dimension of events that were taking place at the same time, both in the sphere of economy and in the sphere of knowledge: *the expendability of human life* (e.g., enslaved Africans) and of life in general from the Industrial Revolution into the twenty-first century. Afro-Trinidadian politician and intellectual Eric Williams succinctly described this situation by noting that: 'one of the most important consequences of the Glorious Revolution of 1688 [...] was the impetus it gave to the principle of free trade.... Only in one particular did the freedom accorded in the slave trade differ from the freedom accorded in other trades — the commodity involved was man.'[8] Thus, hidden behind the rhetoric of modernity, human lives became expendable to the benefit of increasing wealth and such expendability was justified by the naturalisation of the racial ranking of human beings.

In between the two scenarios described above, the idea of 'modernity' came into the picture. It appeared first as a double colonisation, of time and of space. Colonisation of time was created by the simultaneous invention of the Middle Age in the process of conceptualising the Renaissance;[9] the colonisation of space

5 Walter D. Mignolo, 'Cosmopolitanism and the De-Colonial Option', in Torill Strand (ed.), *Cosmopolitanism in the Making*. Special issue of *Philosophy and Education. An International Journal*, forthcoming.

6 Karen Armstrong, *Islam: A Short Story*, New York: The Modern Library, 2000, p. 142 (emphasis added).

7 Ibid., p. 142.

8 Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1944, p. 32.

9 John Dagenais, 'The Postcolonial Laura', *MLQ: Modern Language Quarterly*, vol. 65, no. 3, September 2004, pp. 365–89.

by the colonisation and conquest of the New World. In the colonisation of space, modernity encounters its darker side, coloniality. During the time span 1500 to 2000 three cumulative (and not successive) faces of modernity are discernable: the first is the Iberian and Catholic face led by Spain and Portugal (1500–1750, approximately); the second, the 'heart of Europe' (Hegel) face lead by England, France and Germany (1750–1945); and finally the US American face lead by the United States (1945–2000). Since then, a new global order began to unfold: a polycentric world interconnected by the same type of economy.

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, 'modernity' was questioned in its own *chronology* and ideals, within Europe and the United States: the term post-modernity refers to such critical arguments. More recently, altermodernity is coming out as a new term and period, within Europe.[10] *Spatially*, expressions such as alternative modernities, subaltern modernities and peripheral modernities were introduced to account for modernity but from non-European perspectives. All of them have one common problem: these narratives and arguments maintain the centrality of Euro-American modernity or, if you wish, assume one 'modernity of reference' and put themselves in subordinate positions. All these narratives have another element in common: they assume that 'the world is flat' in its triumphal march toward the future while concealing coloniality. And finally, all of them overlooked the possible reality that local actors in the non-European world are claiming 'our modernity' while de-linking from Western imperatives, be it the corporate camp claiming 'our capitalist modernity' or the de-colonial camp claiming 'our non-capitalist, de-colonial modernity'.

The corporate claim (de-Westernisation) is being forcefully argued by Singaporean Kishore Mahbubani, among others. Mahbubani had made the case for the rise of the 'new Asian hemisphere and the shift of global power'.[11] 'Modernity' is not rejected but appropriated in the current shift lead by East and South Asia. Mahbubani's provocative question: 'Can Asians Think?' is, on the one hand a confrontation with Western epistemic racism and, on the other, a defiant and disobedient appropriation of Western 'modernity': Why would the West feel threatened by Asian appropriation of capitalism and modernity if such an appropriation will benefit the world and humanity at large, he asks?[12]

In the de-colonial camp (that is, not the postmodern and the altermodern), transmodernity would be the parallel concept. This type of argument is already at work among Islamic intellectuals. Being part of the modern-world system and entrenched unabashedly with European modernity, a global future lies in working toward the rejection of modernity and genocidal reason, and the appropriation of its emancipating ideals.[13] Similarly, claims are being made in the growing con-versations on 'de-colonial cosmopolitanism'. While Kant's cosmopolitanism was Euro-centred and imperial, de-colonial cosmopolitanism becomes critical of both, Kant's imperial legacies and of polycentric capitalism in the name of de-Westernisation.[14] For these reasons, trans-modernity would be a more fitting description of envisioned futures from de-colonial perspectives.[15]

IV.

The preceding explorations are based on the hypothesis that modernity and coloniality are two sides of the same coin. 'Coloniality' is short hand for 'colonial matrix (or order) of power'; it describes and explains coloniality as the hidden and darker side of modernity. The hypothesis runs as follows:

10 See for instance the symposium on Global Modernities, a conceptual debate on *Altermodern: Tate Triennal 2009 Exhibition* (http://www.tate.org.uk).

11 *The New Asian Hemisphere: The Irresistible Shift of Global Power to the East*, Kishore Mahbubani, 2008. Mahbubani is dean of the Lee Kwan Yee School of Public Policy in Singapore and collaborator for the Financial Times. See an illuminating interview in youtube.

12 See interview with Kishore Mahbubani by Suzy Hansen in http://dir.salon.com.

13 Kaldoum Shaman, *Islam and the Orientalist World-System*, London: Paradigm Publishers, 2008.

14 Walter D. Mignolo, 'The Darker Side of the Enlightenment. A Decolonial Reading of Kant's Geography' in Stuart Elden and Eduardo Mendieta (eds.), *Kant's Geography*, Stony Brook: Stony Brook Press, forthcoming.

15 See Enrique Dussel, 'Modernity, Eurocentrism and Transmodernity: in dialogue with Charles Taylor', Biblioteca Virtual CLACSO. For an analytical survey of 'transmodernity' and 'coloniality', see Ramón Grosfóguel: 'Trans-modernity, Border Thinking and Global Coloniality. Decolonizing Political Economy and Postcolonial Studies', *Eurozine*, 2007, (http://www.eurozine.com).

16 'On the Colonization of Amerindian Languages and Memories: Renaissance Theories of Writing and the Discontinuity of the Classical Tradition', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 34, no. 2, 1992, pp. 301–30 (http://www.jstor.org).

17 See Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity. Essays on the Ontology of the Present*, London: Verso, 2002.

18 For example, in Africa, Kwame Gyekye: *Tradition and Modernity. Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997; in Iran, Ramin Jahanbegloo (ed.), *Iran: Between Modernity and Tradition*, Laham, Md: Lexigton Books, 2004; in India, Ashis Nandy, *Talking India. Ashis Nandy in Conversation with Ramin Jahangegloo*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. In South America, where the intelligentsia is basically of European descent (contrary to Africa, Iran or India, where the intelligentsia is basically 'native', that is, not of European descent), the concern is more with modernity than with tradition, since 'tradition' for such ethno-class is basically European tradition. Which is not the case for Africans, Iranians or Indians.

1. As I mentioned before, the European Renaissance was conceived as such, establishing the bases for the idea of modernity, through the double colonisation of time and space. The double colonisation was tantamount with the invention of European traditions. One was Europe's own tradition (colonisation of time). The other was the invention of non-European traditions: the non-European world that co-existed before 1500 (colonisation of space). The invention of America was indeed the first step in the invention of non-European traditions that modernity was in charge of superseding by conversion, civilisation and later by development.[16]

2. 'Modernity' became — in relation to the non-European world — synonymous with salvation and newness. From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment, it was spearheaded by Christian Theology as well as by secular Renaissance Humanism (still linked to theology). The rhetoric of salvation by conversion to Christianity was translated into the rhetoric of salvation by the civilising mission, from the eighteenth century on, when England and France displaced Spain leading to Western imperial/colonial expansion. The rhetoric of newness was complemented with the idea of 'progress'. Salvation, newness and progress took a new turn — and a new vocabulary — after the Second World War, when the United States took over the previous leadership of England and France, supported the struggle for decolonisation in Africa and Asia and started an economic global project under the name of 'development and modernisation'. We know today the consequences of salvation by development. The new version of this rhetoric, 'globalisation and free trade', is under dispute.

From de-colonial perspectives, then, these four stages and versions of salvation and newness coexist today in diachronic accumulation although from the (post)modern perspective and self-fashioned narrative of modernity, based on the celebration of salvation and newness, each stage supersedes and makes the previous one obsolete: *it builds on newness and on modernity's own tradition.*

3. The rhetoric of modernity (salvation, newness, progress, development) went hand in hand with the logic of coloniality. In some cases, it was through colonisation. In other cases, like China, it was by diplomatic and commercial manipulations from the Opium War to Mao Ze-dong. The period of neo-liberal globalisation (from Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher to the collapse of the George W. Bush administration with the failure in Iraq and on Wall Street), exemplifies the logic of coloniality taken to its extreme: to the extreme of revealing itself in its own spectacular failure. The economic failure of Wall Street coupled with the failure in Iraq, opened up the gates to the polycentric world order.

In summation, modernity/coloniality are two sides of the same coin. Coloniality is constitutive of modernity; there is no modernity, there cannot be, without coloniality. Postmodernity and altermodernity do not get rid of coloniality. They only present a new mask that, intentionally or not, continues to hide it.

V.

Because the idea of modernity was built as solely European and, in that argument, there was and is just a 'singular' modernity,[17] it engendered a series of latecomers and wannabes (e.g., alternative, peripheral, subaltern, altermodernities). All of which reproduce the vexing question on 'modernity and tradition', a question you do not find much debated among Euro-American intellectuals. For that very reason, the debates about 'modernity and tradition' were and still are a concern, mainly, of intellectuals from the non-European (and US) world.[18]

Basically, the problems and concerns with modernity and tradition are enunciated from or in relation to the ex-Third World and of non-European histories — Japan, for example. In/for Japan, modernity was and is an issue extensively explored and debated. Harry Harootunian explored the issue in detail in his book *Overcome by Modernity. History, Culture and Community in Interwar Japan* (2000); in Russia, modernity was an issue since Peter and Catherine the Great who wanted to jump on the band-wagon of European modernity, but it was too late and ended up in reproducing, in Russia, a sort of second-class modernity.[19] China and India are not exempt. I have mentioned de-Westernisation arguments advanced in East and South East Asia. Sanjib Baruah recently summarised 'India and China' debating modernity. In a section revealingly entitled 'engaging the modern', Baruah observes that India is — in spite of its recent corporate face — the home of strong intellectual opposition to ideas of development and modernisation, following the teaching of Mahatma Gandhi.[20] His analysis points toward conflictive scenarios confronting arguments in defence of 'wanting to become modern and to develop' with those engaging in radical criticisms of modernity and development.[21] The scenario is a common one in Africa and in South America. But in that general scenario, what is really at stake in modernisation is vested in economic development. Baruah writes:

> Critics of modernity enjoy quite a bit of intellectual prestige in India (though this should not be confused with an actual adherence to their ideas). India is home to sophisticated intellectual and activist opposition to mainstream ideas on development and modernisation. As the China-historian Prasenjit Duara points out, counter narratives to modernity have 'almost as much visibility as the narrative of progress' in India. Viewed comparatively, the 'general acceptability and prestige' of Gandhi's anti-modern ideas in India is remarkable, even though policymakers ignore his ideas in practice.[22]

In England, Anthony Giddens ended his argument in his celebrated book *The Consequences of Modernity* (1990) by asking himself: 'Is Modernity a Western Project?' He sees the nation-state and systematic capitalist production as the European anchor of modernity. That is, control of authority and control of economy grounded on the historical foundation of imperial Europe. In this sense, the answer to his question was 'a blatant yes'.[23]

What Giddens says is true. So, what is the problem? The problem is that it is half true: it is true in the story told by someone who dwells, comfortably one should think, in the house of 'modernity'. If we accept that 'modernity' is a Western project let's then take responsibility for 'coloniality' (the darker and constitutive side of modernity): the crimes and violence justified in the name of modernity. 'Coloniality' in other words is one of the most tragic 'consequences of modernity' and at the same time the most hopeful in that it has engendered the global march toward de-coloniality.

VI.

If you dwell in the history of British India, rather than in Britain, the world doesn't look the same. In Britain you may see it through Giddens lenses; in India probably through Gandhi's lenses. Would you make a choice or work with the undeniable

19 See Madina Tlostanova, 'The Janus-Faced Empire Distorting Orientalist Discourses. Gender, Race and Religion in the Russian/(post) Soviet Construction of the Orient', *WKO* (Spring 2008); Leonid Heretz, *Russia on the Eve of Modernity. Popular Religion and Traditional Culture under the Last Tsars*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007; Eugene Ivakhnenko, 'A Threshold-Dominant Model of the Imperial and Colonial Discourses of Russia', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. 105, no. 3, 2006, pp. 595–616.

20 Sanjib Baruah, 'India and China: Debating Modernity', *World Policy Journal*, vol. 23, no. 4, 2006–07, p. 62.

21 'Modernisation' since 1945 translates as 'development', that is, conflating the spirit of an historical period with economic imperial designs. The argument has been made several times. For instance, Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development. The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994; for the Mediterranean area, see Ella Habiba Shohat, 'The Narrative of the Nation and the Discourse of Modernization: The Case of Arab-Jews in Israel', 1998 (http://www.worldbank.org).

22 Baruah, op. cit., p. 63.

23 Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, California: Stanford University Press, 1990, p. 174.

conflictive co-existence of both? Indian historian and political theorist, Partha Chatterjee addressed the problem of 'modernity in two languages'. The article, collected in his book *A Possible India* (1998), is the English version of a lecture he delivered in Bengali and presented in Calcutta.[24] The English version is not just a translation but also a theoretical reflection on the geo-politics of knowledge and epistemic and political de-linking.

Unapologetically and forcefully, Chatterjee structured his talk on the distinction between 'our modernity' and 'their modernity'. Rather than a single modernity defended by postmodern intellectuals in the 'First World' Chatterjee plants a solid pillar to build the future of 'our' modernity — not independent from 'their modernity' (because Western expansion is a fact), but unrepentantly and unashamedly 'ours'.

This is one of the strengths of Chatterjee's argument. But remember, first, that the British entered India, commercially, toward the end of the eighteenth century and, politically, during the first half of the nineteenth century when England and France, after Napoleon, extended their tentacles in Asia and Africa. So for Chatterjee, in contradistinction with South American and Caribbean intellectuals, 'modernity' means Enlightenment and not Renaissance. Not surprisingly Chatterjee takes Immanuel Kant's 'What is Enlightenment' as a pillar in the foundation of the European idea of modernity. For Kant, Enlightenment meant that Man (in the sense of the human being) was coming of age, abandoning its immaturity, reaching his freedom. Chatterjee points out Kant's silence (intentionally or not) and Michel Foucault's short sightedness when reading Kant's essays. Missing in Kant's celebration of freedom and maturity and in Foucault's celebration was the fact that Kant's concept of Man and humanity was based on the European concept idea of humanity from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment and not in the 'lesser humans' that populated the world beyond the heart of Europe. So, 'enlightenment' was not for everybody, unless they become 'modern' in the European idea of modernity.

One point in Chatterjee's insightful interpretation of Kant-Foucault is relevant for the argument I am developing here. I would surmise, following Chatterjee's argument, that Kant and Foucault lacked the colonial experience and political interest propelled by the colonial wound. Not that they had to have it. But yes, that their view cannot be universalised. If you have been born, educated and your subjectivity formed in Germany and France, your conception of the world and feeling will be different from someone born and raised in British India. Thus Chatterjee can state that 'we — in India — have built up an intricately differentiated structure of authorities which specifies who has the right to say what on which subjects'.[25] In 'Modernity in two languages' Chatterjee reminds us that the 'Third World' has been mainly 'consumer' of First World scholarship and knowledge:

> Somehow, from the very beginning, we had made a shrewd guess that given the close complicity between modern knowledge and modern regimes of power, we would for ever remain consumers of universal modernity; never would we be taken as serious producers.[26]

Chatterjee concludes that it is for this reason that 'we have tried, for over a hundred years, to take our eyes away from this chimera of universal modernity and clear up a space where we might become the creators of our own modernity'.[27] I imagine you are getting the point. 'The other' (the *anthropos*) decided to disobey: epistemic and political disobedience that consist of the appropriation of European modernity while dwelling in the house of coloniality.

24 Partha Chatterjee, 'Talking About Modernity in Two Languages', *A Possible India. Essays in Political Criticism*, New Delhi: Oxford India, 1998, pp. 263–85.

25 Ibid., pp. 273–74.

26 Ibid., p. 275.

27 Ibid.

VII.

It is not common to think of international law as related to the making of 'modernity'. I will argue in this section that international law (more exactly legal theology) contributed in the sixteenth century to the creation — a creation demanded by the 'discovery' of America — of racial differences as we sense them today. What to do, Spanish legal theologians asked themselves, with the 'Indians' (in the Spanish imaginary) and, more concretely, with their land? International law was founded on racial assumptions: 'Indians' had to be conceived, if humans, as not quite rational, although ready for conversion.[28] 'Modernity' showed up its face in the epistemic assumptions and arguments of legal theology to decide and determine who was what. Simultaneously, the face of 'coloniality' was disguised under the inferior status of the invented inferior. Here you have a clear case of coloniality as the needed and constitutive darker side of modernity. Modernity/coloniality is articulated here on the ontological and epistemic differences: Indians are, ontologically, lesser human beings and, in consequence, not fully rational.[29]

Conversely, museums have been counted in the making of modernity.[30] However, questions about museums (as institutions) and coloniality (as the hidden logic of modernity) have not been asked. It is taken for granted that museums are 'naturally' part of the European imagination and creativity. In VII.1 I attempt to unveil coloniality under international law regulating international relations. And in VII.2, I open up the question about museums and coloniality. Museums, as we know them today, did not exist before 1500. They have been built and transformed — on one hand — to be the institutions where Western memory is honoured and displayed; where European modernity conserves its tradition (the colonisation of time) and — on the other hand — to be the institutions in which the difference of non-European traditions is recognised.[31] The open question is then how to de-colonise museums and to use museums to de-colonise the reproduction of Western colonisation of time and space.[32]

VII. 1

Francisco de Vitoria is rightly celebrated mainly among Spanish and other European scholars for being one of the fathers of international law. His treatise, *Relectio de Indis* is considered foundational in the history of the discipline.

Central to Vitoria's argument was the question of *ius gentium* (rights of the people or rights of nations). *Ius gentium* allowed Vitoria to put at the same level of humanity both Spaniards and Indians. He did not pay attention to the fact that by collapsing Quechuas, Aymaras, Nahuatls, Mayas, etc, under the label 'Indians' he was already stepping into a racial classification. So it was not difficult for Vitoria to slide smoothly into the second step of his argument: although equal to Spaniards in the domain of *ius gentium*, Vitoria concluded (or he knew it first and then argued it) Indians were sort of childish and needed the guidance and protection of Spaniards.

At that moment Vitoria inserted the *colonial difference* (ontological and epistemic) into international law. The colonial difference operates by converting differences into values and establishing a hierarchy of human beings ontologically and epistemically. Ontologically, is assumed that there are inferior human beings. Epistemically, it is assumed that inferior human beings are rational and aesthetically deficient.[33] Legal scholar Anthony Anghie has provided an insightful analysis of the historical foundational moment of the colonial difference.[34] In a nutshell the argument is the following: Indians and Spaniards are equal in the face of natural law as both, by natural law, are endowed with *ius gentium*. In making this move, Vitoria prevented the Pope and divine law from legislating on human issues.

However, once Vitoria established the distinction between 'principes Christianos' (as well as Castilians in general) and 'los bárbaros' (e.g., the *anthropos*) on the other, and he made his best effort to balance his arguments based on the equality he attributed to both people by natural law and *ius gentium*, he turns into justifying Spaniard's *rights and limits* toward 'the barbarians' to expropriate or not; to declare war or not; to govern or not. Communication and interaction between Christians and barbarians are one-sided: *the barbarians have no say in whatever Vitoria said because barbarians were deprived from sovereignty even when they are recognised as equal per natural law and ius gentium.*

The move is foundational to the legal and philosophical constitution of modernity/coloniality and the principle of reasoning would be maintained through the centuries, modified in the vocabulary from barbarians to primitives, from primitives to communists, from communists to terrorists.[35] Thus *orbis christianius*, secular cosmopolitanism and economic globalism are names corresponding to different moments of the colonial order of power and distinct imperial leadership (from Spain to England to the United States).

Anghie made three decisive points about Vitoria and the historical origins of international law that illuminate how modernity/coloniality are bound together and how salvation justifies oppression and violence. The first is 'that Vitoria is concerned, not so much with the *problem of order among sovereign states but the problem of order among societies belonging to two different cultural systems*'.[36]

The second is that the framework is there to regulate its violation. And when the violation occurs, then the creators and enforcers of the framework had a justification to invade and use force to punish and expropriate the violator. This logic was wonderfully rehearsed by John Locke in his *Second Treatise on Government* (1681). One can say that 'coloniality', in Vitoria, set the stage not only for international law but also for 'modern and European' conceptions of governmentality. It seems obvious that Locke did not get as much from Machiavelli as from the emergence of international law in the sixteenth century, and in the way that Vitoria, and his followers, settled to discuss both the question of 'property' and 'governance' in the interaction between Christians and the barbarians.[37]

The third is that the 'framework' is not dictated by divine or natural law but by human interests, and in this case, the interests of Christian Castilian males. Thus, the 'framework' presupposes a very well located and singular locus of enunciation that, guarded by divine and natural law, it is presumed to be uni-versal. And on the other hand, the uni-versal and uni-lateral frame 'includes' the barbarians or Indians (a principle that is valid for all politics of inclusion we hear today) in their difference thus justifying any action Christians will take to tame them. The construction of *the colonial difference* goes hand in hand with the establishment of *exteriority*: exteriority is the place in which the outside (e.g., *anthropos*) is invented in the process of creating the inside (e.g., *humanitas*) to secure the safe space where the enunciator dwells.[38]

Clearly, then, Vitoria's work suggests that the conventional view that sovereignty doctrine was developed in the West and then transferred to the non-European world is, in important respects, misleading. *Sovereignty doctrine acquired its character through the colonial encounter*. This is the darker history of sovereignty,

28 Thus it is not surprising to find today growing concerns, and a number of scholars, working on the de-colonisation of international law, Branwen Gruffydd Jones (ed.), Boulder/New York: *Decolonizing International Relations*, Roman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2006.

29 For the ontological and epistemic difference, see Nelson Maldonado-Torres, 'On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the Development of a Concept', *Cultural Studies* vol. 21, nos. 2–3, 2007, pp. 240–70.

30 I am thinking, certainly, of Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum. History, Theory, Politics.* London: Routledge, 1995, pp. 60ff, but also of more specific studies such as Nick Prior, *Museums and Modernity, Art Galleries and the Making of Modern Culture*, Oxford: Berg Publisher, 2002, and Gisela Weiss, *Sinnstiftung in der Provinz: Westfälische Museen im Kaiserreich*, Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöning Verlag, 2005; and the review by Eva Giloi for *H-German,* June, 2007 (https://www.h-net.org).

31 Walter D. Mignolo, 'Museums in the Colonial Horizon of Modernity', CIMAM Annual Conference, São Paulo, November 2005, pp. 66–77, (http://www.cimam.org).

32 Two examples of de-colonial uses of museums installations are Fred Wilson's *Mining the Museum* (http://www.citypaper.com); and Pedro Lasch, *Black Mirror/Espejo Negro* (http://www.ambriente.com).

33 A case in point could found in Immanuel Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* (particularly section IV), Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960.

34 Antony Anghie, 'Francisco de Vitoria and the Colonial Origins of International Law' in Eve Darian-Smith and Peter Fitzpatrick (eds.), *Laws of the Post-colonial*, Ann Arbor: the University of Michigan Press, 1999, pp. 89–108.

35 A de-colonial history of international law can be found in Siba N'Zatioula Grovogui, *Sovereigns, Quasi Sovereigns, and Africans*, Minneapolis: the University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

36 Anghie, op. cit., p. 102 (emphasis added).

37 Franz Hinkelammert's analysis of Locke's inversion of human rights is very helpful to understand the double side/double density of 'modernity/coloniality' and how the rhetoric of modernity continues to obliterate coloniality. See his 'The Hidden Logic of Modernity: Locke's Inversion of Human Rights', 2004.

38 It is certainly very telling that a Japanese scholar, Nishitan Osanu, has cogently argued that 'anthropos' and 'humanitas' are two Western concepts. Indeed, they produce the effect of reality when the modern ideals of 'humanitas' cannot exist without the modern/colonial invention of 'anthropos'. Think of the debate of immigration in Europe, for example. There you have modernity/coloniality at its best. See Nishitai Osamu, 'Anthropos and Humanitas, Two Western Concepts' in Naoki Sakai and Jon Solomon (eds.), *Translation, Biopolitics, Colonial Difference*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2006, pp. 259–74.

which cannot be understood by any account of the doctrine that assumes the existence of sovereign states.

Briefly stated: if modernity is a Western invention (as Giddens says), so too is coloniality. Therefore, it seems very difficult to overcome coloniality from a Western modern perspective. De-colonial arguments are pressing this blind spot in both right-wing and left-wing oriented arguments.[39]

VII. 2

In the context at hand, 'museums' as we know them today (and their forerunner — Wunderkammer, Kunstkammer) have been instrumental in shaping modern/colonial subjectivities by splitting Kunstkammer into 'museums of arts' and 'museums of natural histories'.[40] Initially, Peter the Great's Kunstkammer was put in place toward 1720, while the British Museum (founded as a Cabinet of Curiosity) was created later (toward 1750). However, the institution of Kunstkammer in the West became the locale for curiosities brought from European colonies, most of the time, by looting. The history of the building, Le Louvre, goes back to the Middle Ages. But the museum, Le Louvre, came into being after the French Revolution.

Nowadays, a process of de-Westernisation has already begun. The hundreds of museums being constructed in China are part of this process. De-Westernisation is a process parallel to de-coloniality at the level of the state and of the economy. Kishore Mahbubani, quoted above, is one of the most consistent and coherent voices of de-Westernisation and the political, economic and epistemic shift to Asia.[41]

One can ask, then, given this exhibition titled 'Modernologies' what is the place of museums and art, in general, in the rhetoric of modernity and the colonial matrix of power? How can museums become places of de-colonisation of knowledge and of being or, on the contrary, how can they remain institutions and instruments of control, regulation and reproduction of coloniality?[42] By asking these questions, we are entering here in plain territory of knowledge, meaning and subjectivity. If international law legalised economic appropriation of land, natural resources and non-European labour (of which 'outsourcing' today shows the independence of the economic sector from patriotic or nationalist arguments of 'developed' states) and warranted the accumulation of money, universities and museums (and lately mainstream media) warranted the accumulation of meaning. The complementarity of accumulation of money and accumulation of meaning (hence, the rhetoric of modernity as salvation and progress) sustains the narratives of modernity. While colonialilty is the unavoidable consequence of 'the unfinished project of modernity' (as Jürgen Habermas would say) — since coloniality is constitutive of modernity — de-coloniality (in the sense of global de-colonial projects) becomes the global option and horizons of liberation. The horizon of such liberation is a transmodern, non-capitalist world, no longer mapped by 'la pensée unique', adapting Ignacio Ramonet's expression, neither from the right nor from the left: coloniality engendered de-coloniality.

VIII. Coda

I hope to have contributed to understanding how the logic of coloniality was structured during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; to understand how it changed hands, was transformed and adapted to the new circumstances, although maintaining the spheres (and the interrelations) in which management and control of authority, of economy, of people (subjectivity, gender, sexuality) and of knowledge

39 Anghie, op. cit., p. 103 (emphasis added).

40 See the cogent argument, on this issue, by Donald Preziosi, 'Brain of the Earth's Body: Museums and the Framing of Modernity', in Bettina Messias Carbonell (ed.), *Museum Studies. An Anthology of Contexts*, London: Blackwell, 2004, pp. 71–84.

41 See Mahubani, op. cit., note 9, and also his provocative arguments under the heading of 'Can Asians Think?' (http://dir.salon.com).

42 For example, *Modernity in Central Europe*, *1918–1945* is one of those exhibitions that 'enhances' Western Europe by embracing modernity. National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C, 10 June – 10 September 2007.

has been played out in building the mono-centric world order from 1500 to 2000; and how that order is being transformed into a polycentric one.

Now what is exactly the colonial matrix of power/coloniality? Let's imagine it in two semiotic levels: the level of the enunciated and the level of the enunciation. At the level of the enunciated, the colonial matrix operates at four interrelated domains interrelated in the specific sense that a single domain cannot be properly understood independently from the other three. This is the junction between conceptualisations of 'capitalism' (either liberal or Marxist) and the conceptualisation of the colonial matrix, which implies a de-colonial conceptualisation. The four domains in question, briefly described, are (and remember that each of these domains is disguised by a constant and changing rhetoric of modernity (that is, of salvation, progress, development, happiness):

1) Management and control of subjectivities (for example, Christian and secular education, yesterday and today, museums and universities, media and advertising today, etc.)

2) Management and control of authority (for example, viceroyalties in the Americas, British authority in India, US army, Politbureau in the Soviet Union, etc.)

3) Management and control of economy (for example, by reinvesting of the surplus engendered by massive appropriation of land in America and Africa; massive exploitation of labour starting with the slave-trade; by foreign debts through the creation of economic institutions such as World Bank and IMF, etc.);

4) Management and control of knowledge (for example, theology and the invention of international law that set up a geo-political order of knowledge founded on European epistemic and aesthetic principles that legitimised the disqualifications over the centuries of non-European knowledge and non-Europeans aesthetic standards, from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment and from the Enlightenment to neo-liberal globalisation; philosophy).

The four domains (the enunciated) are all and constantly interrelated and held together by the two anchors of enunciation. Indeed, who were and are the agents and institutions that generated and continue to reproduce the rhetoric of modernity and the logic of coloniality? It so happened that, in general, the agents (and institutions) creating and managing the logic of coloniality were Western Europeans, mostly men; if not all heterosexual, at least assuming heterosexuality as the norm of sexual conduct. And they were — in general — mostly white and Christian (either Catholic or Protestant). Thus, the enunciation of the colonial matrix was founded in two embodied and geo-historically located pillars: the seed for the subsequent racial classification of the planet population and the superiority of white men over men of colour but also over white women. *The racial and patriarchal underlying organisation of knowledge-making (the enunciation) put together and maintain the colonial matrix of power* that daily becomes less visible because of the loss of holistic views promoted by the modern emphasis on expertise and on the division and sub-division of scientific labour and knowledge.

Global futures need to be imagined and constructed through de-colonial options; that is, working globally and collectively to de-colonise the colonial matrix of power; to stop the sand castles built by modernity and its derivatives. Museums can indeed play a crucial role in the building of de-colonial futures.