

Modernity and its Other: The Logic of “Inclusive Exclusion”

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Abstract

This paper aims to examine the question, “Does the term ‘Modernity’ refer to a specific culture, or can it be employed more broadly?” Beginning with a conceptual clarification of modernity, modernization and tradition, I challenge Habermas’s unfinished project of modernity by introducing the concept of a “plurality of modernities.” Referring to Habermas’s implicitly Eurocentric claim of the universality of modernity, based in an “Occidental understanding of the world,” I argue that universalization cannot be achieved on the basis of a specific world-interpretation. Arguing against the feasibility of completing “the project of modernity” once and for all, I suggest that there are not only numerous paths to modernity, but that diverse historical conditions and sociocultural environments give rise to varied forms of modernity in different parts of the world. I argue that an emancipatory theory, which is what Habermas’s is believed to be, ought to address an understanding of the transformation of culture rather than simply the logic of communication. Consequently, it should address cultural as well as cross-cultural conflicts in various societies, including non-Western ones.

Keywords: modernity, universality, Eurocentrism, Occidental rationality, plurality of modernities, cross-cultural approach.

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