Katja Rieck

A Matter of Principle

Political Economy and the Making of Postcolonial Modernity in India: A Foucauldian Approach

Nomos

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Inhalt

Introduction

Chapter I Anthropology and the Study of Modernity/ies: Past and Present

Mutliple modernities. Vernacular modernities. Indigenous modernities. AlterNative modernities. Critical modernities. Entangled modernities. Particularly in the 1990s and early 2000s there was a veritable deluge of anthropological articles and monographs dealing with modernity and its others. And yet, the study of modernity was by no means new to the field. In a sense, it had been a theme from the earliest days of the discipline, sometimes more prominent (as in the case of the studies on 'acculturation' in North American anthropology during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, or in the works of Max Gluckman and the other members of the Manchester School on social change in the African Copperbelt), sometimes less so.[1] Nevertheless, beginning in the early 1990s, modernity became a ubiquitous theme in anthropological journals and monographs as researchers in all corners of the globe chimed in to make the point that

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1 On the study of acculturation and assimilation in North American cultural anthropology, see such classics as, for example, Herskovits 1927, Mead 1932, Lesser 1933, Spier 1935, Linton 1940, Benedict 1943 and Redfield 1953. For programmatic statements on the study of acculturation/social change in the context of modernisation in North American anthropology, see Redfield et al [1935] 1936 and Social Science Research Council [1953] 1954. For an insightful discussion of Gluckman's and the Manchester School's attention to crisis and social change, see Werbner 1984 and Kapferer 2008. That is not to say the study of social change and modernisation was limited to these two disciplinary movements. Various students of functionalist and structural-functional anthropology, like Isaac Schapera (1928, 1934, 1947), Godfrey Wilson (1945), Monica Hunter (1936), Raymond Firth (1953a, 1953b, 1954, 1959, 1962) and Hortense Powdermaker (1962), but also others, like Richard Thurnwald (1935), studied social change in response to developments they observed in the field as well. Even Bronislaw Malinowski, whose work usually stands as a classic example of functionalist (and therefore static, a-historical) ethnography, turned his attention to such developments, for example in a 1938 article "Modern Anthropology and European Rule in Africa" (cited and discussed in Firth 1962: 8f.), as well as in the posthumously published edited volume that brings together further work, he did to explore themes of social change and European culture contact in Africa (Malinowski 1945). For a useful discussion of how social change began to appear on the research agendas of functionalist and structural-functionalist anthropologists, see Firth 1954: 54-58. For discussion of how social change became an issue in Firth's own work, see Firth 1953a.

their subjects, too, were modern, even if alternatively so. This sudden burst of output that the study of multiple modernities elicited, with literally thousands of hits in the scholarly journal database JSTOR, for example, thus seems a bit puzzling and calls for an attempt at contextualization.[2] Far from this serving as an exercise in anthropological scholasticism, I hope that understanding the context from which modernity and its others emerged as a research problematic will help clarify the particular importance it holds for anthropology in the early 21st century. As we shall see, the study of modernity and its others, was and is very much entangled in epistemological, political and, to some extent, moral concerns confronting anthropologists at the end of the 20th century, and as such represents an important site through which the field seeks to reinvent itself in the face of new political and social realities.

On a rather mundane level, it seems that modernity forced itself on the research agenda for purely empirical reasons. By the 1950s, 1960s or 1970s it had become so integral to the life worlds of anthropological subjects that it was difficult to bracket from ethnographic accounts. Villagers were finding paid work in factories, moving to cities, or migrating abroad. They began commuting by motorbike, car, plane or boat; shopping in malls; eating in restaurants, etc. On an everyday level, the trappings of Western consumer and leisure culture—'McWorld'[3]—suddenly became commonplace in the field. Housing estates, shopping malls, tennis shoes, blue jeans, rap music, Kentucky Fried Chicken, mobile phones, automobiles, CNN, etc. made the far-off places in which anthropologists were supposed to study 'foreign life ways' seem disconcertingly familiar.[4] And in discussions with interlocutors, "up-to-date-ness"[5] recurred frequently as a topic of heated discussion. Thus, as commodification, urbanisation and rationalisation were transforming the life-worlds of anthropological subjects, ethnog-

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2 Bruce Knauft notes in his introduction, "Emory University's ample but by no means exhaustive research library includes a whopping 545 books published between 1991 and 2000 that have the word 'modernity' in the title. A full 145 of the volumes were published during 1999 or 2000 alone. By contrast, only a handful of volumes that used the term 'modernity' as a title concept were published before the mid- and early 1980s" (Knauft 2002: 10).

3 The term was coined by Benjamin Barber in his 1992 article "Jihad vs. McWorld", first published in *The Atlantic* and later expanded into a book of the same title.

4 See also Kahn's account of the transformations he observed in Negri Sembilan since the 1970s and his discussion of the methodological and theoretical difficulties this presented (2001a: 652 ff.)

5 Ferguson 2006: 185 f.

raphers were "dragged inexorably into a direct encounter with modernity".[6]

Paradoxically, while such manifestations of "modernity at large"[7] meant that in some respects 'they' were becoming more like 'us', 'indigenous culture' was by no means obsolete. As Marshall Sahlins acerbically observed, although anthropologists had, for example, in the 1950s and 60s lamented the imminent demise of the Eskimo (Inuit) due to migration into predominantly white urban centres and the encroachment of market capitalism into Eskimo villages, by the late 1990s they were still very much "there—and still Eskimo".[8] Despite migration, urbanisation and integration into the capitalist economy, they continued to pursue the hunting and gathering practices that were integrally linked to traditional customs, although now they were able to do so with the help of rifles, snowmobiles and CB radios. In fact, the unprecedented level of material well-being had made possible a cultural revival, as technology and modern conveniences were self-consciously put to use in the pursuit of the 'traditional' lifestyle. The renaissance in hunting and gathering and the maintenance of customary relations of production and distribution along kinship lines was thus directly linked to the Eskimos' participation in the capitalist economy. Moreover, this revival of tradition did not end at the village level: those who left to find work elsewhere carried it along, extending village relations of 'subsistence sharing' to places as far away as Oregon and California.[9] Africanists had also observed a recrudescence of 'tradition', most notably in the guise of witchcraft[10] or religious revival,[11] that was intimately linked with the spread of market capitalism and the formation of postcolonial nation-states. The list could be continued to cover all geographic areas of anthropological research.[12]

In any event, the spread of Western consumer culture and market capitalism was widely noted, not only by anthropologists,[13] to be contrapuntally accompanied by self-conscious, sometimes quite forceful

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6 Kahn 2001a: 654.

7 Appadurai 1996.

8 Sahlins 1999: vi.

9 *Ibid*.: vii-viii.

10 Comaroff and Comaroff 1993; see also Geschiere [1995] 2000.

11 For example, Pred and Watts 1992.

12 Only to name only a few 'canonised' highlights from a rather vast body of literature: Taussig 1983, 1997, Ong 1987, Breckenridge 1995, Appadurai 1996, Rofel 1997, Abu Lughod 2000, Pandolfo 2000, Dirks 2001, LiPuma 2001 and Mitchell 2002.

13 See Eisenstadt 2000 for an example from sociology.

(re)assertions of cultural identity[14] or by the revival of 'traditional practices' that anthropologists and social scientists had expected would disappear as traditional communities were engulfed by the market and the modern nation-state.[15] Clifford Geertz, in his retrospective on forty years of fieldwork, perhaps most eloquently expressed the sense of "dis-orientation"[16] such developments provoked:

> Imagine. Everywhere one looks, the traditional-modern, modern-traditional iconography, the neither-nor, both-and imagery of a past half gone and a future half arrived, is taken to sum up the present condition of things. The tension between what, writing about this actuality and condition of things, I once called "essentialism" and "epochalism" looking to "The Indigenous Way of Life" (cremations and prayer cloaks, rice paddies and craft markets) as against looking to "The Spirit of the Age" (nitrogen plants and jetports, skyscrapers and golf courses) for self-definition, is so pervasive in Indonesia and Morocco, and so far as I can see, in a great many other countries, not all of them in Asia and Africa, as to color virtually every aspect of their public life.[17]

The widespread coexistence and intermingling of 'The Indigenous Way of Life' with 'The Spirit of the Age' represented a perplexing paradox for social science. Sociological theories of change (inspired by Durkheim, Marx, Weber or Simmel) that dealt with urbanisation, the spread of market capitalism, the rise of bureaucratic nation-states, etc. had presumed that these developments would eventually squelch subsistence practices, cultural traditions and religious belief and postulated that eventually most of the world would come to look like the secular, industrialised nation-states of the West. However, this was patently not the case. Moreover, the manifestations of cultural difference or 'tradition' could not be satisfactorily explained away by references to incomplete modernisation or dependency/peripheralisation, since the assertion of cultural difference became more forceful as an *inherent part of* modernisation programmes in the so-called Third World.[18] Anthropological theory, which prided itself on its

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14 See, for example, Robertson 1995, Appadurai 1996, Hannerz 1996, Geertz 2000b, Kahn 2001d, Comaroff and Comaroff 2009.
15 Seminal to launching this field of inquiry was, of course, was Hobsbawm and Ranger's edited volume *The Invention of Tradition* (1992).
16 The term is James Clifford's but well describes what Geertz and others experienced in the field. See Clifford 1988.
17 Geertz 1995: 141–142.
18 Cf. Dirlik 2004.

capacity to theorise the diversity of human life by means of a holistic approach to the study of cultures and societies, was ill equipped to conceptualise such continued production of difference under circumstances in which innumerable flows of people, money, ideas, technologies, practices, etc. permeated, and in a sense undermined, the integrity of the cultures/societies studied.[19] Further, complicating matters, just as Western-style modernity was now 'at large', so too, had difference become unmoored, as James Clifford noted:

> In cities on six continents foreign populations have come to stay—mixing in but often in partial specific fashions. The 'exotic' is uncannily close. [...] An older topography and experience of travel is exploded. One no longer leaves home confident of finding something radically new, another time or space. Difference is encountered in the adjoining neighborhood, the familiar turns up at the ends of the earth.[20]

Difference had itself thus become 'modernised'—or to put it in Weberian terms, rationalised—becoming increasingly 'domesticated' and forming what Hannerz referred to as a "Culture of cultures" that entails "a tendency to assert difference along somewhat standardized lines".[21] These two trends, the diasporisation and the simultaneous standardisation of difference in the context of globalisation, troubled conventional anthropological theories of culture that theorised difference by referring to historically and environmentally constituted, supposedly localised, bounded, autonomous units that embodied systemic totalities.[22] Such conceptions of culture were simply not adequate for understanding the persistence or ongoing production of socio-cultural difference within the complex flows and entanglements that gave shape to lived experiences of anthropological subjects. There was, and is, thus a real need—not only within anthropology, but also in the neighbouring disciplines in the humanities, social sciences and area studies—to develop a conceptual framework that could render the complex interplay between homogenisation and differentiation, between Western-style modernisation and the tenacity, and sometimes even self-conscious assertion of 'The Indigenous Way of Life' (albeit in rationalised forms) that have characterised the contemporary situation of peoples in most parts of the globe.

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19 See Clifford 1988, Appadurai 1996 and Hannerz 1996.
20 Clifford 1988: 13–14.
21 Hannerz 1996: 53.
22 *Ibid*.: 48.

And yet at the same time, the juxtaposition of the modern and the traditional, the familiar and the foreign was not really new; nor was the idea that cultures were mobile, permeable and subject to the impact of global capitalism. In the works of Max Gluckman and the Manchester School of anthropology, just to refer to one notable example,[23] the notion of bounded, systemic autonomy of societies had already been problematised in the 1940s as a serious shortcoming of conventional functionalist and structural-functionalist analyses.[24] It was the hallmark of this school that the cultures and societies[25] were studied in the context of contemporary social, political and economic conditions circumscribed by expanding capitalist production, labour migration, urbanisation, colonialism, bureaucratic rationalisation and the postcolonial nation-state.[26] That modernity and its others would in the late 1980s and early 1990s feature so prominently as 'new' phenomena on the anthropological research agenda (as opposed to already well-established ones such as migration, urbanisation, acculturation, integration into the market economy, etc.) therefore had to entail other reasons as well.

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23 The work of Gluckman and his students is indeed discussed here as one, albeit prominent, example in the history of anthropology of the awareness of the impact of social change and modernity on anthropological subjects of study. However, they were certainly not alone in their work on social change or the impact of contact with European culture. Gluckman himself notes the work of Godfrey Wilson, Isaac Schapera, Audrey Richards, among others, as being important predecessors to his own. See also fn. 1 above, for other contributions to the study of social change, especially under European and North American contact situations that predated the work of the Manchester School.

24 See Gluckman, Max (1945): "Human Problems in British Central Africa", Journal of the Rhodes-Livingston Institute, 4. December: 1–32. Accessed at van Bimsbergen, Wim (2006): "Photographic Essay: Manchester School and Background", http://www.shikanda.net/ethnicity/illustrations_manch/manchest.htm (accessed 2 March 2020). See especially, point 5. The Proposed Plan for Expanded Research, p. 7 f.

25 Although much of the research focussed on Africa, with many of Gluckman's students doing field research under the Rhodes-Livingston Institute, some like John Barnes or Ronald Frankenberg had their regional focus in other parts of the globe. In the former case it was Norway (albeit after initial work done in Africa), in the latter it was Wales. A. L. Epstein is known for having continued his work in Melanesia. Abner Cohen started his careers doing work in Palestine and then subsequently doing work on Africa.

26 Among the classic works attributed to Manchester School anthropology, see: Bailey 1960, 1963, 1973; Barnes 1951, 1954; Cohen 1965, 1969, 1981; Epstein [1958] 1981; Frankenberg 1957, 1982; Gluckman 1954, 1955, 1963, 1964, 1965, 1967, 1972; Mitchell 1956; van Velsen 1964, 1984; Turner 1965, 1969; Worsley 1957.

An important development that contributed to the boom in popularity of modernity and its others as an anthropological research problematic sui generis was undeniably postmodernism. Emerging out of a period of profound socio-political turmoil in 1960s and 1970s Europe and North America, the movement constituted a critical engagement with the underpinnings of the political and intellectual establishment of the time and stood for an attempt to overcome the injustices of the socio-political status quo by pushing beyond established ways of thinking.[27] Central to the postmodernist project was to critically examine modern rationality and denaturalise its ostensible truths—that is, to demonstrate the contingency of the knowledge it had produced and to thereby clear the grounds to make visible alternative ways of thinking that would open up new possibilities for socio-political change.[28]

Particularly relevant for our present discussion was the postmodernists' problematisation of the socio-politically conditioned production of knowledge. The truths that reason had ostensibly come to grasp since the Enlightenment, and which had come to form the foundations of contemporary society, were demonstrated to be the outcomes of particular language games that were structured by narrative tropes manifest in the meta-narratives that served as mythic underpinnings of post-Enlightenment society.[29] What is most pertinent here is that, as part of this attempt to overcome the strictures of the contemporary socio-political order by deconstructing its meta-narratives and discourses, the movement constituted modernity as an object of critique and inquiry.[30] This gave rise to a particular interest in the exclusions and aporias that the meta-narratives of modernity had produced, and in how these narratives came to constitute truth regimes that operated to include and exclude particular groups of people, practices, ways of thinking and being.[31]

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27 See, for example, the afterword in Eagleton 1996: 190–208.
28 This was the critical thrust shared by thinkers as diverse in political and scholarly orientation as Jacques Derrida, Gilles Déleuze, Michel Foucault, Fredric Jameson and Jean-Francois Lyotard, whose writings formed the cornerstones of the critical engagement with modernity in its various (European) manifestations.
29 Lyotard [1979] 1984.
30 Cf. Knauft 2002: 11–13.
31 Lyotard's concern with the meta-narratives of modernity in his *Post-modern Condition* (1984) highlights the exclusionary mechanisms at work in these. Jacques Derrida was also explicitly concerned not only with exclusions, as was the case in his *Margins of Philosophy* (1982), but also with the more knotty problem of how modernity structured and thereby engendered boundaries of what was thinkable at all, a subject to which he devoted attention in *Aporias* (1993). Ultimately, the

Yet, the postmodern engagement with modernity, its truth regimes and the exclusionary practices that they brought forth, focussed entirely on Europe, with little or no (explicit) regard for the impact of these on the histories and contemporary situations of non-European peoples.[32] Postcolonial and subaltern studies sought to rectify this bias, asserting that the discourses and meta-narratives which constituted post-Enlightenment European societies were foundational to both colonialism and the perpetuation of quasi-colonial power structures in the postcolonial nation-state.[33] Postcolonial and subaltern perspectives on modernity yielded two important outcomes. For one, they raised demands to rectify the Eurocentric critique of modernity, calling for due attention to the fact that colonialism and imperialism were as much a part of the emergence of Western modernity as the Enlightenment was.[34] In their view, postmodern engagements with modernity had focussed too much on Europe and too little on the

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interest in exclusions and aporias of modern thought runs through the entire project of deconstruction and can thus be seen as an on-going theme in more, or less, all his works. Seminal were also Michel Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge* ([1969] 1972), his *The Order of Things* ([1969] 1994) and his *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* ([1961] 1988) as well as Zygmunt Baumann's *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989). For a feminist concern with exclusionary discursive practices, see for example, Carol Pateman's *The Sexual Contract* (1988) and Mary Poovey's *Un-even Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (1988). For a discussion of the "strategies of exclusion" in classical liberal political theory, see Mehta 1997, esp. pp. 59–70.

32 See the discussion in Mitchell 1991: x, 35; Stoler 1995: 1–18; cf. also Clifford 1988: 265; and Arnold 1998.

33 On the European Enlightenment's imbrication in colonialism, see, for example, Said 1979, 1993; Chatterjee 1985; Inden 1990; Pratt 1992; Mignolo 1995; Mehta [1990] 1997. On the problematic nature of anti-colonial, nationalist discourse for the constitution of the postcolonial nation-state, see Chatterjee 1993 and Guha 1996. Chatterjee 1998 and Visweswaran 1996 provide complementary discussions of on the denial of women's agency, with Visweswaran focusing in particular on lower-class, poor women; Mayaram 1996 and Pandey 1998 focus on the dichotomisation of Indian identities into Hindu vs. Muslim by both the colonial regime and the nationalist resistance; see Dhareshwar and Srivatsan 1996 for a discussion of colonial and postcolonial discourse and how it effects class-based exclusions from postcolonial citizenship. For a discussion of developments in revisionist and postcolonial approaches beyond the Indian context on Irish historiography, see Lloyd 1996.

34 For general discussions, see Chakrabarty 1998: 287-290; Chatterjee 1985. For a discussion of bringing empire and the emergence of modernity into a historical research agenda, see Stoler and Cooper 1997. For a case study on imperialism and the formation of bourgeois conceptions of motherhood, see Davin 1997. For a look at missionary imperialism and the formation of a language of class in early

ways it had impacted areas beyond Europe. This was problematic in two regards. For one, many of the key components of modernity had (first) emerged in colonial contexts.[35] For another, the concepts and narrative tropes that had become established historiographical practice—not only in Western academe, but also in postcolonial nationalist academic institutions—had been developed with European contexts in mind. This, it was asserted, could not do justice to describing and understanding non-Western societies.[36] Hence, Dipesh Chakrabarty's call to correct this historiographical bias by "provincializing Europe" and focusing more on other "habitations of modernity" to glean from them richer conceptualisations of modernity's manifestations in other (colonial) contexts.[37]

Postcolonial and subaltern studies thus sought to impart an important impulse to the study of developments beyond Europe that had been important to the emergence of modernity, but that had been omitted from both canonical Western and nationalist historical accounts as well as critical, but Euro-centric, postmodern re-readings of history.[38] The provincialisation of Europe thus came to be understood as a critical counterweight to the still implicitly Eurocentric view that continued to attribute the emergence of modernity to European influence, even if the location of modernity's emergence was shifted to the colonies. This inspired some scholars to take the project of provincialising Europe even further and to look beyond the scope of Europe, the North Atlantic and the colonial context alto-

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industrial England, see Thorne 1997. Stoler 1995 examines empire as a key site in the formation and cultivation of modern (bourgeois) European selves.

35 Mintz 1985; Rabinow 1989; Mitchell 1991: 35; Wright 1997: 327, 339–40; Joyce 2003: 245; Maharaj 2010: 572–573. Ann Laura Stoler and Fredrick Cooper, in turn, have problematised this 'empire as laboratory of modernity' perspective: Instead they have called for a perspective that analyses metropole and colony as part of a single analytic field since circulating people, ideas, goods and resources created innumerable interconnections between the two, complicating the assertion that many of the trappings of modernity evolved in the colonies first (1997b).

36 In several articles Ranajit Guha criticised the failures of Indian intellectuals to reclaim their history Guha 1997: especially 19, 28 ff. and 200-212. Cf. also Guha 1998b: xiv–xxi. Colleagues in the Subaltern Studies Collective proceeded to rectify these failings. See Chakarbarty 1989; Chakrabarty 1997; Chakrabarty 1998: 263–272; Chatterjee 1985; Sarkar [1984] 1998. For critiques of the 'Manichean' and essentialist ramifications underlying such an approach to (post)colonial history, see Stoler and Cooper 1997b: 6 and Chibber 2013. Cf. also Eisenstadt and Schluchter 1998: 6–7.

37 Chakrabarty 1998: 287–290; 2000; 2002.

38 Chatterjee 1998, Pandey 1998, Guha 1998b.

gether to identify the independent emergence of modernity in other societies and cultures.[39] Postcolonial and subaltern studies had thus not only brought into focus the colonial and imperial legacy of Western modernity, but also encouraged the pluralisation of the notion of modernity by drawing attention to endogenous developments integral to the ontology of the present in other (non-European) societies and cultures. Ultimately, it was the postcolonial project to decentre postmodernism's Eurocentric bias in its study of modernity that paved the way for the boom in the anthropological study of modernity and its others.

Yet to fully understand the reason the study of multiple modernities came to figure so prominently on the anthropological research agenda in particular, we must further consider the crisis that took hold of the discipline when postmodernism's general critique of knowledge was brought together with postcolonial perspectives on power/knowledge in colonial and neo-colonial contexts. As noted above, an important outcome of the critique of post-Enlightenment rationality was that reason came to be understood as an institutionalised language game, or discursive practice, that engendered the modern socio-political order. A corollary of this realisation was that the meta-narratives embodying the 'truths' modern reason had grasped effected the political marginalisation or exclusion of specific

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39 Asia, China and Japan especially, as two loci of difference never subject to colonial rule, provided a popular field for exploring other forms of modernity. For a look at the emergence of East Asian, Confucian modernities in Vietnam, China and Korea, see Tu 2000. For a discussion of the specificity of Japanese modernity, see Eisenstadt 2000: chap. 3. For a critical account of Chinese modernity that takes issue with the mere culturalisation of what the multiple modernities approach still presumes to be a universal capitalist modernity, see Dirlik 2004.On Turkish modernity as a manifestation of a type of "later modernity", see Kaya 2004. Wittrock (1998) provides a comparative account of the different historical situations from which the specific forms of modernity in Europe, China and Japan emerged, while complicating notions of a unitary 'European modernity'. The notion of a "Western" modernity is complicated by Arnason's (2000) account of communist, and more specifically, Soviet, modernity on the one hand, and Heideking's (2000) analysis of American modernity on the other hand. On the resurgence of religion and modernity, see Eisenstadt 2000: chap. 4. Eisenstadt and Schluchter 1998 and Eisenstadt 2000 set out analytical frameworks that allows for the comparative analysis of the emergence of modernity in different socio-cultural contexts. For a further development of this framework that attempts to rid it of its Eurocentrism by translating it into terms of a Parsonian AGIL scheme, see Mouzelis 1999.

groups of people.[40] The human sciences, as patently visible forms of institutionalised discursive practices drew particular attention in this regard. From a postcolonial perspective, the problematisation of the role of the human sciences in privileging some sorts of people (as 'civilised' or 'advanced', later 'modern') while marginalising others (as 'primitive', 'barbaric', later 'traditional') raised serious questions as to how discourses on the non-Western Other and the practices that produced them were implicated in establishing and maintaining dominance over non-Western peoples by firstly constituting these as objects of knowledge and providing the conceptual bases to make colonial rule possible, but also more subtly by perpetuating and bolstering the meta-narratives that served as the foundations of Western cultural hegemony and (neo)imperialism.[41] This critique hit anthropology particularly hard—although it was not initially directed against it explicitly—and eventually manifested itself in the discipline as a crisis of representation.[42]

The force with which this postcolonial critique of power/knowledge and its concomitant representational practices affected anthropology had much to do with wider political developments that had played out in the previous two decades, developments with which anthropology was still trying to come to terms when the critique took centre stage in the 1970s and early 1980s. Amidst the wave of decolonisation and Cold War counterin

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40 For an early example of this new epistemological humility in postcolonial anthropology, see Berreman [1969] 1974: 87.

41 These critiques that began in the 1960s and continued into the 1970s culminated in the most prominent and salient of these contributions, namely Said 1978 and 1993 (cf. also *ibid*. 1995). See in particular Gough 1968, Asad 1973, Caulfield [1969] 1974, Willis [1969] 1974 and Wolf 1982: 4–19.

42 Ironically, Said himself ended his critique of the imbrication of knowledge/power in the establishment and perpetuation of colonialism by pointing to Clifford Geertz's work as a positive counterpoint to the types of knowledge produced by Orientalism and contemporary journalism. While anthropologists of the 1970s seem to have shared in Said's more positive assessments of Geertz's work, particularly his attention to the effects of colonialism on the 'primitive societies', anthropologists of the 1980s did not. Ultimately, in the course of the Writing Culture debate, his work came to serve as an example of the sort of (totalising and essentialising) authoritative (and therefore implicitly 'colonial') ethnography it was no longer acceptable to produce. See especially the discussions of Geertz's "Notes on a Balinese Cockfight" in Crapanzano 1986: 69–76 and Clifford 1988: 38–41.
Said's generous treatment of anthropology notwithstanding, anthropologists embarked on over a decade of disciplinary self-flagellation, agonising over the political and epistemological foundations of their discipline. See Clifford 1986 and 1988, Marcus and Fischer [1986] 1999, Fox 1991, Gupta and Ferguson 1997.

surgency projects in the 1950s and 1960s as well as the rise of Third World nationalist and indigenous peoples' movements that greatly politicised relations between the West and the Rest during this time, anthropology was forced to reconsider how it positioned itself vis-à-vis its 'objects'/ subjects of study.[43] The once colonised were no longer colonial subjects, but citizens of modern nation-states who were increasingly educated and able to eloquently represent themselves and their interests. Anthropologists were thus no longer able to speak in their names unchallenged, and the authority of ethnographic accounts was open to contestation by 'indigenous' portrayals that could claim to be more 'authentic' than those produced by outsiders. The discipline's authority was further undermined by the controversial part some of its practitioners had played in counter-insurgency efforts in Southeast Asia and Latin America.[44] This forced anthropology to reflect on the role its knowledge had in the establishment and maintenance of colonial rule as well as in Cold War manifestations of neo-colonialism, a particularly uncomfortable task given its already wavering authority. [45]

The legitimacy of the discipline's knowledge practices thus compromised, its scientific authority became rather shaky. The consequences were pronouncedly more modesty regarding the claims of the knowledge produced and self-critical reflections on the complex relationship between anthropologist and informant (or rather, interlocutor, as s/he came to be referred to).[46] Hence, the political shifts of the 1960s and 1970s initiated by the political decolonisation of many parts of the world ultimately forced

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43 Seminal in this regard were the influential article by Kathleen Gough, the book by Talal Asad on the links between anthropology and imperialism published in 1968 and 1973 respectively, and the edited volume put out by Dell Hymes, the contributions in which drew attention to the political entanglements of late 19th- and early 20th-century anthropology and the consequences this had both for anthropological subjects and the production of anthropological knowledge (Gough 1968 and Hymes [1969] 1974).

44 Project Camelot, which encompassed a wide-range intelligence and counterinsurgency project in Latin America, stirred considerable controversy in the mid-1960s and provided the impetus for the critical debate on the ethics and politics of social science research in the service of government.

45 Hymes [1969] 1974, Asad 1973. For more recent critical reflections on the role of anthropology and the social sciences in general in Project Camelot specifically, see Solovey 2001 and Rohde 2009.

46 Classic examples of this approach were Vincent Crapanzano's *Tuhami, Portrait of a Moroccan* (1980) and Kevin Dwyer and Faqir Muhammad's *Moroccan Dialogues: Anthropology in Question* (1987). For general reflections on issues of representation in anthropology, see Rabinow 1996a.

upon the field greater sensitivity and self-reflexivity regarding questions of power, domination and anthropology's role in perpetuating or critically engaging with the legacy of colonialism and imperialism. And it is precisely with these rather uncomfortable discussions that the postcolonial critique of power/knowledge dovetailed. Ultimately, it was this confluence of on-going internal discussions regarding the relations of power involved in the production of anthropological knowledge, and how this articulated with the legacy of colonialism, and postcolonial studies' trenchant critique the way knowledge played into the establishment and perpetuation of colonial domination, that in the early 1980s led to the discipline's crisis of representation.

The immediacy and urgency of the crisis that ensued is best understood in retrospect in the context of the politically charged climate at the time that pitted former colonisers against the formerly colonised. The crisis thus hinged and focussed particularly vehemently on a critique of the figure of the 'primitive' other that had during anthropology's formative and most influential periods served as the field's definitive object of research. In light of postcolonial perspectives on power/knowledge it was precisely this figure of the primitive that had made anthropology complicit in the perpetuation of Western hegemony.[47] Taking up this critique of representational practices that constituted non-Western others, Johannes Fabian identified the "denial of coevalness"[48] as an important trope in ethnographic accounts, which through temporal distancing defined and constructed the primitive other as the definitive object of anthropological enquiry. Far from being a merely discursive fact, Fabian showed how this temporal distancing of non-Western cultures and societies created objects of knowledge/power that sustained (and continue to sustain) ideologies, or "political cosmologies", as he prefers to call them, of "progress" and "modernization".[49] Casting difference in *temporal* terms constituted the anthropological Other as the object of reformist interventions, anthropology thus played into narratives such as those of the *mission civilatrice*, of the mission

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47 Eric Wolf, for example, pointed out as early as 1969 that anthropology's focus on the primitive and his 'management' by the US authorities had occluded perspectives on the historical forces and power relations from which 'the primitive' had emerged and in which he continued to be enmeshed. Although Wolf was referring specifically to US-American anthropology, the general thrust of the critique could be applied to other anthropological traditions as well (Wolf [1969] 1974). Cf. also Said 1994.
48 Fabian 1983.
49 Cf. *ibid*. 146.

of moral and material improvement, or, more recently, of modernisation and development that naturalised the subjection of non-Western peoples to Western/capitalist dominance. The politics of time that structured ethnographic accounts was thus intimately connected to the constitution of relations of domination and subjection in the global political economy, or as Fabian puts it, "The absence of the Other from our Time has been his mode of presence in our discourse—as an object and victim. That is what needs to be overcome...".[50] In his concluding discussion he therefore calls upon anthropologists to "meet the Other on the same ground, in the same Time".[51]

Along similar lines, Michel-Rolph Trouillot pointed out that along with the politics of time there was also a politics of space at play. The construction of 'North Atlantic' self-conceptions and concomitant justifications of the normative socio-political orders always required the 'Elsewhere' of non-Western peoples that provided positive or negative models against which the 'Here and Now' could be critically assessed. The Other, most commonly conceived as 'primitive', was therefore also dissociated from Europe spatially and represented an imaginative beyond where arguments about the nature of man and society could be played out, arguments over the foundational metanarratives of the North Atlantic (as Trouillot refers to the West). The postulated radical alterity of the primitive Other was thus grounded in both his spatial and temporal dissociation from the West: the primitive there and then was made to stand against our here and now, and served to throw critical light on how *we* were doing.

Anthropology as a discipline emerged from this discursive formation around the primitive Other, which Trouillot refers to critically as the "savage slot". This had a significant impact on the field's institutionalisation and shaped the methods and tropes that conditioned the knowledge it produced. It is by virtue of its entrapment in this slot that anthropology came to fulfil the task of what Marshall Sahlins referred to as "redemptive cultural critique—a morally laudable analysis that can amount to using other societies as an alibi for redressing what has been troubling us lately. [...] It is as if other peoples had constructed their lives for our purposes", in answer to "the evils of Western society".[52] In consequence, ethnography in its classical form was ostensibly less about understanding the life-worlds of

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50 *Ibid*. 154.
51 *Ibid*. 165. For an insightful discussion of how this played out, and to some extent continues to play out, in scholarly and political discourse on Africa, see Ferguson 2006.
52 Sahlins 1999: v.

others on their own terms, and more about constructions of a primitive Other to help us reflect on our own life-worlds. Further, and somewhat paradoxically, one might add, the representational practices imbricated in this instrumentalisation of alterity were deemed complicit in the perpetuation of the colonial and neo-colonial subordination of non-Western others.

For anthropology to overcome its crisis, it would have to extricate itself from the 'savage slot'. This meant a correction in perspective and research approach was imperative: the contemporaneity of anthropological subjects and their experiences as well as their entanglement in the same historical processes that shaped the contemporary West demanded recognition and scholarly engagement. Just as the 'Other' was as much a part of history as the North Atlantic, and therefore coeval with it, so, too, had he long been part of the world system, and not representative of some alternative beyond it. They, too, had a history, were very much a part of the 'here and now'; and they, too, were integral parts of the (capitalist) world system. A disciplinary consensus therefore emerged that ethnographic accounts give proper attention to "change, history and political economy" in order to show how "closely observed cultural worlds are embedded in larger, more impersonal systems".[53] Thus, whereas the trope of 'primitive man', untouched by history or civilisation, had previously shaped the discipline's perspective; now, as a consequence of demands to acknowledge the contemporaneity and entanglement of 'the other' in historical processes and the global political economy, and also of the increasing empirical pervasiveness of 'modern life' in the field (mentioned above), the figure that at the end of the 1980s emerged from the crisis of representation as anthropology's new locus classicus was that of the 'modern' other.

Thus, although wider political and intellectual developments of postmodernism and postcolonialism were important to the emergence of modernity as an anthropological research topic, the confounding intensity with which anthropology began to focus on modernity and its others during the early 1990s was most immediately a consequence of the discipline's crisis of representation. Hence, modernity represented an approach that finally did justice to the contemporaneity of anthropological subjects by documenting their imbrication in capitalism, globalisation (in terms of the flow of things, ideas, practices and people) and governmental regimes. However, for most researchers, having finally established the coevalness of

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53 Marcus [1986] 1999: 166. Cf. Wolf 1982 and Mintz 1985, and also much earlier Worsley 1957.

the once primitive other, it was time to move on, and by the mid-2000s modernity had become old hat, no longer receiving much interest.

Yet, many questions still remain open. Is the explosion of difference in the contemporary world really to be attributed to the emergence of multiple modernities? And, if so, then there must be something about these socio-cultural formations that makes them all somehow still 'modern'? If, however, it is indeed a singular modernity that we are facing, then how do we theorise the place of difference in it? Is it even possible to theorise such difference without subsuming all contemporary social phenomena under 'the modern' and thus eroding the analytical purchase of the term? In other words, should modernity simply circumscribe everything in the present? In which case, why speak of modernity at all, rather than simply of the present, or the contemporary, as Paul Rabinow has done?[54] Or, does it make sense to delineate modernity in a more specific way—a perspective that would most likely entail the constitution of a realm of the non-modern, and potentially reproduce the same sorts of othering tropes that the crisis of representation hoped to overcome? Last and certainly not least is the question of how to account for Hannerz's observation, mentioned above, that the difference we anthropologists observe, whether this be in Asia, Latin America or Africa, often seems to be taking on certain standardised forms, along the lines of a 'culture or cultures'?

One could counter perhaps that the engagement with modernity served its purpose to reorient anthropology in the wake of the crisis of representation, and that with the establishment of the coevalness of our subjects as well as their situatedness (however peripheral it may be) in the world system and in networks of flows of goods, technologies and ideas, the time has come to move on to other lines of inquiry. The difficulty in defining modernity as an object of study and/or as an analytical category, which continues to vex sociologists, anthropologists and historians, makes this a tempting stance to take.

And yet, given the importance of modernity to the shaping of the situations in which we do field work—be this, for example, in the form of state policies affecting our interlocutors, or in informing arguments about social norms, in fuelling aspirations for a better life, or in redefining the aesthetics of a group's material culture—it would be methodologically problematic, and in many cases empirically difficult, to disband an anthropological engagement with modernity altogether. One could argue, as Fredrick Cooper does, that modernity be retained solely as an object of

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54 See Rabinow 2008.

inquiry that is comprised of an empirically observable set of arguments that actors draw on to make claims.[55]

While this is no doubt a very important part of the study of modernity, regarding it solely as a set of claim-making strategies would be too reductionist, since it also undeniably embodies widely circulating epistemologies and concomitant practices by which actors aim to intervene in their life worlds, or intervene in the life worlds of others.[56] Further, the structural dimensions of modernity, the critique of modernisation theory notwithstanding, cannot be dismissed entirely: the spread of the market economy, capitalism, commodity consumption, wage labour, the rise and spread of the mass media and communications technology, the extension of bureaucratic political structures deep into society, etc. have, as discussed above, undeniably impacted people everywhere, as many anthropologists have observed since at least the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. That the effects of these structural changes have not transformed the world into a reproduction of 20th-century Europe, does not diminish the significance of such changes for the lives of the people embroiled in them. Hence, to simply study modernity as a claim-making discursive strategy would foreclose due attention to its epistemological, praxeological and (infra)structural dimensions.

At the same time, one could not contextualise and analyse the claims actors make in the name of modernity, or their practices, or the structural changes with which they are confronted without some sort of reference point from which to do this. Even the most open and empirically grounded research perspective requires some analytical conception of its object of study, however rudimentary and cautiously proposed it is, and however much primacy one gives to actors' conceptions. Particularly if the research endeavour aims to move beyond empirical description for its own sake in order to grasp wider socio-political transformations, one cannot get around engaging with modernity on an analytical level. That our analytical conceptions of modernity have so far been shown to be ideologically distorted and unsuitable to understanding our contemporary situation and the historical developments that have contributed to its shaping is another matter.[57] Rather than abandon the project entirely, it seems more important than ever to continue to commit energy to it.

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55 Cooper 2005: 115–116, 131–132.
56 Rabinow 1989; Arnold 1994; Barry, Osborne and Rose 1996; Mitchell 2002; Foucault [2004] 2007; Foucault [2004] 2008.
57 Cf. Cooper 2005: 122–131, 142–148.

Yet, the concepts and models by which scholars conventionally delineate modernity, such as secularisation, rationalisation, urbanisation, capital expansion and industrialisation, and the narrative tropes that these terms are often associated with, are abstractions that have served to highlight aspects of particular historical experiences that have come to be considered as characteristic of the constitution of contemporary societies per se. But as Giddens, for example, pointed out in his classic study of the emergence of modern social theory, thinkers such as Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim or Max Weber were very much grappling with specific socio-political issues of their day. Although he does not deny the continued salience of their contributions to social theory, he does argue that, given that their work was being done *in medias res* and in the context of specific socio-political engagements, scholars do need to critically assess, refine and/or amend their ideas in light of present-day research on the historical transformations they were endeavouring to conceptualise.[58] Upon closer examination, abstractions un-reflexively und un-critically drawing on their theories, such as the Weberian notion of rationalisation and secularisation, may not adequately capture what we know today about the sorts of historical transformations that took place in Europe. Such a lack of understanding of the dynamics that have played out within European and North American societies stands in the way of understanding contemporary developments. For example, more recent empirical studies have shown how rationalisation and secularisation went hand-in-hand with countervailing developments, efflorescences of anti-rationalisation and new forms of the religious.[59] The fact that such countervailing transformations have been widely observed in other contexts presses upon us the need to engage with these phenomena theoretically, rather than regarding them as anomalies or as locally specific variations of social transformation. Our shifting perspectives on the nature of the historical transformations that imparted contemporary societies with their present shape thus requires that we revisit existing theories of modernisation and modernity to refine our understandings of them.[60]

Perhaps more seriously, however, not having an adequate understanding of the historical developments that have contributed to shaping the present situation in Europe and North America gives us a skewed compar-

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58 Giddens 1971: 246–247.
59 For example, Stanley 1983; Hilton 1988; Watermann 1991, 2004; Marty and Appleby 1993; van der Veer and Lehmann 1999; Taylor 2007: esp. part IV. And, certainly not least in the work of Peter L. Berger, for example, Berger 1969, 1970 and [2008] 2016.
60 Cf. Kahn 2001c: 9–19.

ative perspective when assessing historical and contemporary transformations in other parts of the globe. In his critical assessment of the key texts of the Subaltern Studies Group, Vivek Chibber has detailed how the theoretical foundations of some of their central works rest on a profound misunderstanding and misrepresentation of European history on the part of its most important thinkers: Ranajit Guha, Dipesh Chakrabarty and Partha Chatterjee.[61]

Chibber's critique is worth discussing, because anthropologists have readily (and perhaps also rather uncritically) adopted postcolonial perspectives in their own work, and, in consequence, followed in making some of the same errors. These postcolonial thinkers' misunderstanding of how power actually functioned during Europe's transformation to capitalism leads them to insist on a necessary link between modernity, capitalism and a democratic political culture in the West, a link that Chibber shows to be historically untenable.[62] In fact, as Chibber discusses at great length, for much of European history, the interest groups representing manufacturing and financial capital (the bourgeoisie) resisted democratic transformation and supported authoritarian political orders grounded in pre-existing ('feudal') notions of power and authority.[63] Moreover, the supposed liberal, democratic political achievements of capitalism in Europe, which the Subaltern Studies Group assumes to have come about through bourgeois cultural hegemony, were in fact the result of popular struggles initiated by working-class movements together with other non-elite groups.[64] Hence, contrary to the picture painted by historians in the Subaltern Studies Group, Chibber shows the bourgeoisie to have behave quite consistently both in the metropole and the colonies. In fact, Chibber's analysis of the historical material for England, France and India quite persuasively shows that the same historical dynamics were at play across the colonial divide and that the bourgeoisie in India behaved not so differently from their counterparts in Europe, undermining the case for the inapplicability of Marxist theory to colonial contexts and claims of the concomitant historical specificity of colonial modernity.

The second part of Chibber's close, critical reading of some of the foundational works of postcolonial theory focuses on the second locus of colonial difference identified by the Subaltern Studies Group that they claim

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61 Chibber 2013.
62 *Ibid.*: chap. 3, esp. 127–129; also 144–151.
63 *Ibid.*: 57–66, 74–79, 112–124.
64 *Ibid.*: 145–148, 152.

makes necessary a separate theory of modernity for colonial and postcolonial contexts. This is the ostensible difference in political psychology and agency that supposedly renders the experiences of the Indian working and peasant classes essentially different from that of their counterparts in the West.[65] Central here, are the works by Partha Chatterjee, who focussed on Indian peasant resistance, and Dipesh Chakrabarty, on the working-classes in Bengal. While peasants and the working classes in Europe, so the main line of argument goes, had adopted a bourgeois culture of rights, equality and citizenship that liberated them from (feudal) commitments to religion and community, their counterparts in South Asia had not undergone such a cultural transformation.[66] The reason for this, so Chakrabarty and Chatterjee claim, is linked to the supposed failure of the universalisation of capital in India, discussed above. This prevented the spread of a supposed bourgeois cultural hegemony and reinforced among the subaltern classes a traditionalist culture and communal solidarities. Subaltern resistance in South Asia, therefore, was not expressed, as in Europe, in terms of rights, equality and citizenship, but rather in local terms of culture, religion and community. So while Western modernity emerged as and came to embody a culture of universal human rights, democracy and the secular nation-state, South Asian colonial modernity embodied this very different complex of historical transformations towards communal solidarities and traditionalist culture that were purported to comprise the specificity of the socio-political landscape of the postcolonial nation-state.

We have already discussed how this first assertion about capital's failure to universalise across the colonial divide is untenable in light of historical scholarship. Chibber goes on to show that Chakrabarty and Chatterjee's claims that peasants and the working classes in India were not motivated by self-interest and individual rights, but rather by obligations to community and culture, not only is based on a false premise of the capitalism's failure to universalise, but also does not hold up to their own empirical material taken from moments of worker and peasant resistance. While Chibber does not deny the importance of culture to resistance movements and to social change in general, he does persuasively show that the empirical material discussed by Chatterjee and Chakrabarty supports rather classical Marxist analyses of how resistance to capitalist exploitation forms around perceptions of material self-interest centring on concerns for securing the means of survival that are not so different from those observed in

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65 *Ibid*.: chap. 7.
66 *Ibid*. 153–154, 186.

other peasant and working-class contexts around the globe, and certainly do not require a bourgeois cultural hegemony and Western notions of the subject in order to become effective.[67]

Chibber points out that the historical material presented by Chatterjee and Chakrabarty even shows that actors are not simply passive bearers of social relations and cultural automatons, but that, particularly in times of duress, they also can be seen to exercise what he calls "agential reflexivity",[68] by which actors critically assess their needs for survival and actively draw on whatever resources available to them to meet their needs, creating the necessary solidarities to do so, even across expected lines of antagonism (such as religion or social class). Hence, far from embodying a specifically (and essentially) South Asian form of agency rooted in tradition and a pre-existing sense of community, peasants' and workers' responses to the socio-economic changes sparked by the expansion of capitalist production show them to engage in the sort of rational behaviour, solidarity building and collective action documented in other peasant and working-class contexts in Europe and elsewhere. If and when communal ties were drawn on to resist capitalist exploitation, then this was done not in any automatic, un-reflexive way along reified and pre-existing communal lines, but was the outcome of critical deliberation and active recruitment of support, often across what one would expect to be communal lines, to negotiate, define and achieve common ends.

Ultimately what Chibber shows in the conclusion of his close reading of the key works of the Subaltern Studies Group is that their assertions of the essential difference of (post)colonial modernity have no basis in historical fact, but are rather grounded in distorted perceptions of European history and the history of capitalism, skewed readings of Marx's texts and the mis-representation of key Marxian concepts.[69] Moreover, their assertions that communal ties and religious tradition form the locus of (post)colonial political agency and are constitutive of a specifically postcolonial form of modernity, are not supported by their own historical material. In the end there is little left of the supposed deep structural chasm dividing East and West, metropole and colony, and as Chibber concludes, "The colonies' political dynamics did not attain a fundamentally different kind of modernity than the Europeans'".[70] Further, he warns that the conservative

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67 *Ibid*.: chap. 8, esp. 191–200.
68 *Ibid*.: 195.
69 *Ibid*.: 196–208 and also chap. 11.
70 *Ibid*. 285.

"apologetics" of the Subaltern Studies Group have "the tendency to obscure or deny basic properties of capitalism, and the valorization (sic.) of some profoundly Orientalist constructions of Eastern cultures".[71]

The lessons to be learned from Chibber's critique are just as relevant to anthropology as they are to postcolonial studies. Much of what led Guha, Chakrabarty and Chatterjee to assert the essential difference of colonial modernity was a distorted view of European history that confused narrative tropes and ideological self-understandings with historical fact. This made for a completely inaccurate baseline comparison when assessing the Indian historical material. As discussed above, when the Indian cases are juxtaposed with analogous material from Europe, then the argument for a colonially specific modernity becomes quite difficult to sustain. And yet, one cannot discount the importance of culture altogether. Chibber's own avowal of the undeniable importance of culture in shaping actors' perceptions of their situation and their needs, however, is little more than lip service. The cases he discusses all fall within a context where the calculus of basic existence predominates, and his analysis focuses on actors' strategic behaviour in forging alliances and creating antagonisms in such a context of very basic material survival. He is not so much interested in how actors experienced their situation more generally, how they imbibed it with meaning, or the particular socio-cultural strategies by which alliances and antagonisms were given their particular form and force, or solidarities their particular forms of expression. But it is precisely at this level of human experience that culture can and does matter.

However, Chibber is certainly also quite correct in warning that one ought to beware of simply assuming that a set socio-cultural repertoire (tradition and community) will in any straightforward way define political agency. Not only did Subaltern Studies tend to give too much weight to the cultural dimension of Indian political psychology, they essentialised and dehistoricised it by presuming that the agency of Indian workers and peasants was wholly constituted by it. Further, on the European side, they essentialised and dehistorcised the achievements of European political development by reducing them to manifestations of a bourgeois mentality grounded in Enlightenment rationality.[72] And this brings us back to the question as to why we should, or rather need to, continue the study of

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71 *Ibid*. 286.

72 The most well-known statement of this is Partha Chatterjee's essay "The Cunning of Reason", originally published in *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (Chatterjee 1986). Also Guha 1997: 4–7 and Chakrabarty 2000: 12–22, chap. 2, 237–240. For a detailed critique of Guha's understanding of

modernity. It is precisely to avoid the pitfalls of such reifications and ideological distortions of our understanding of past transformations, our present condition and the shifting topographies of distinction and interconnectedness that the project continues to be important.

Anthropologists are, in particular, called to this task, since it involves two methodological operations, which John Comaroff has argued, despite myriad of changes to how we produce anthropological knowledge, continue to define the discipline as a particular form of scientific practice, namely the "critical estrangement of the lived world", on the one hand, and mapping "processes of being and becoming", on the other.[73] With regard to the first operation, it has been and continues to be extremely helpful in helping us to self-critically explore questions regarding "[w]hat is it that actually gives substance to dominant discourses and conventional practices of that world, to its subject positions and its semiosis, its received categories and their unruly undersides, to the manner in which it is perceived and experienced, fabricated, and contested".[74] Hence it serves to historicise and self-reflexively engage with that whole complex of "dominant discourses and conventional practices" that, as we saw above, would in a reified and a-historical manner associate with post-Enlightenment rationality and Western hegemony. At the same time, it would also show how anti- and postcolonial discourses and practices often emerged as the "unruly undersides" to these, rather than as locally unmediated expressions of native/subaltern resistance. This anthropological approach to the study of modernity thus allows us in a non-essentialist manner to conceptualise within a single framework seemingly contradictory or antagonistic developments as part of a shared contemporary reality without denying the historical coevalness and structural embedment of the actors involved.[75]

The second operation that Comaroff refers to focuses on being and becoming and maps "those processes by which social realities are realised, objects are objectified, materialities materialised, essences essentialised, by which abstractions—biography, community, culture, economy, ethnicity, gender, generation, identity, nationality, race, society—congeal synopti-

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European history and the role of bourgeois rationality in it, which is used to justify Subaltern Studies' specific approach, see Chibber 2013: 89–100. For critiques of Chakrabarty's occidentalist and orientalist essentialisms in his contrast between the forms of power constituting Western (in his view bourgeois) and colonial power, see Chibber 2013: 104–109, and chaps. 9 and 10.

73 Comaroff 2011: 94–95.
74 *Ibid*. 2011: 94.
75 Cf. also Dirlik 2004.

cally from the innumerable acts, events, and significations that constitute them"[76]. In this regard, the anthropological study of modernity represents an important approach to theorising the historicity of present, and often-times seemingly contradictory, socio-cultural realities by allowing us to focus on how actors have become situated in the contemporary order by virtue of their own agency as well as on the structures and strictures of relevant abstractions such as gender, culture, nationality, generation, etc. that come to circumscribe their conditions of existence. It thus critically engages with the colonial difference posited as essentially given by Subaltern and Postcolonial Studies and examines how such difference emerged and became meaningful. The study of modernity therefore provides a strategic point of entry for the non-essentialist study of socio-cultural difference (and similarity, for that matter) as the outcome of specific historical dynamics, power relations and attempts to create meaningful worlds in times of flux.[77] It therefore not only continues to be a valuable research site to further develop new research approaches in the wake of the Writing Culture debate, but also has the potential to make a much larger contribution in critically assessing and revising the doxa of both classical and postcolonial social theory.[78]

Last but certainly not least, whether or not scholars are comfortable with the term as an analytical construct, it has become firmly entrenched in social theory, where it has come to serve to draw attention to the cultural dimensions of the transformations that contributed to giving contem-

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76 Comaroff 2011: 95.
77 Cf. Hedge 2009; Lentz 2013; Bierschenk, Krings and Lentz 2015.
78 As Bierschenk, Krings and Lentz noted in their reflections on the role of anthropology in the 21st century, if anthropology is to take on the role of "self-observer of global society", this demands "first, the critical exploration of social theory, that is of the various attempts to conceptualise the present such as the multiple modernities perspective, or the concepts of globality, postcoloniality, late capitalism, neo-liberalism, network society, and so on. This critical exploration is not yet anthropological research itself, but it has consequences for research practice. Anthropology today no longer examines discrete units but global flows and networks. It does not lose sight of the marginalised communities produced or forgotten by globalisation, but the local communities, whose analysis is anthropology's particular strength, must be understood in the context of macro-structures. The focus of research today tends to lie on practices and processes, rather than on the objectivications or results of these processes. With its affinity for informal processes and practices and the capacity for considering politics outside of the state and economics outside of the market, anthropology is also interested in the counter trends, irritations, resistance and recodings which the dominant processes produce" (2015: 16).

porary societies the shape they have.[79] It would thus be an egregious act of professional neglect to simply leave the study of modernity to other academic fields like philosophy or sociology. And, given modernity's prominent place on the research agendas of many neighbouring disciplines, it represents a fruitful bridge concept by which to make anthropological insights relevant to a wider scholarly community. Certainly, not all anthropologists would see need for such collaboration or engagement, yet not to do so risks entering a form of radical empiricism and disciplinary "self ghettoisation" that would catapult our work into irrelevance.[80] Cooper's own critical overview of the most prominent works on the study of modernity makes clear that, if anything, the problem is not so much defining modernity as an analytical category per se, but that social theory has been far too comfortable grounding its concepts in ideal types and tropes that simply do not hold up to the growing empirical studies detailing transformations (and continuities) as they actually transpired (or are transpiring) to give shape to our contemporary condition.[81] This speaks not for a disbandment of a study of modernity, but for increased attention to and 'unpacking' of it.[82] In particular, this involves assessing how sociological *idées reçues* hold up to empirically grounded studies and to revising our theoretical apparatus accordingly.

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79 Among those who have found modernity useful to think with are Ulrich Beck, Schmuel Eisenstadt, Michel Foucault, Anthony Giddens, Jürgen Habermas and Charles Taylor. But ultimately, modernity lies at the heart of the very concept of society and its constitution as an object of study in contradistinction to the (pre-modern) community. For examples one only need look to such classic works as those by Henry Sumner Maine on status vs. contract society, Ferdinand Tönnies' Gemeinschaft vs. Gesellschaft, Émile Durkheim's mechanical vs. organic solidarity, Werner Sombart's work on capitalist society or Karl Polanyi's 'great transformation' and the disembedding of the economy.

80 Comaroff 2011: 90.

81 Cf. Cooper 2005: 122–124.

82 Cf. *ibid*.: 132–135. Also the statement issued by the *American Historical Review* entitled "Historians and the Question of Modernity" (American Historical Review 2011).

Chapter II Conceptual Framework for a Foucauldian Analysis of Modernity and its Others and an Overview of the Present Study

The present work seeks to analyse the relationship between modernity and its 'others', particularly with regard to Ulf Hannerz's observation that difference has come to take on certain standardised forms.[1] It does so, by attempting to 'map a process of being and becoming' modern as it unfolded in England and in some of its colonial territories, with special focus being given to India as the 'Crown Jewel' of the British Empire.[2] The study thus looks at the emergence of modernity and its others in the context of an imperial topography of power. In this chapter I will first outline the conceptual background that informed the approach taken to this study, which undertakes a genealogical reconstruction of the discourses that eventually coalesced into political economy and follows the dispersions and reverberations of this discourse in an imperial context. Because my approach is inspired by the work of Michel Foucault and many of the analytical concepts used in this and the following chapters are taken from it, I will summarise relevant aspects of his work that explain the conceptual apparatus used in the following chapters. The chapter will close with an outline of the analysis pursued in the rest of this work that aims to understand the relationship between modernity and the manifestations of difference that are coeval to it.

The point of departure for this study was initially inspired Foucault's essay "On Governmentality".[3] In that text, he highlights how the emergence of a particular form of knowledge/power around the eighteenth century, associated with political economy as a body of knowledge, came to be formative in constituting new kinds of socio-political orders that were markedly different from the sorts of social orders prevailing during the Middle Ages.[4] This form of power became manifest in new regimes of political and ethical practices as well as in prescriptions and programmes of conduct that set the limits and circumscribed the possibilities of these

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1 Hannerz 1996: 53.
2 Comaroff 2011: 94–95. See also chapter 1 of the present work.
3 Foucault [1978] 1991c.
4 *Ibid*.: 103.

orders. This impacted not only societies' norms and forms[5] but also the sorts of relationships humans could have both with others and with themselves. Moreover, it circumscribed the possible modes of "problematisation", that is, the terms by which the prevailing socio-political order could be reflected on, called into question and resisted through the definition of objects, rules of action and modes of relation to oneself.[6] Foucault conceptualised this new form of specifically modern power as governmentality, a form of power that he pointed out circumscribed not only regimes of intervention, ethical comportments and practices of freedom.[7]

In his work, Foucault contrasts this power with already existing forms of power. Unlike these already existing forms (sovereignty and discipline), the third, specifically modern form of power, governmentality, worked through the "conduct of conduct",[8] or the management of the sorts of behaviour a population would engage in by making use of semi-autonomous opaque life processes that were independent of the state but manageable (within naturally circumscribed limits) if certain scientific principles were manipulated to the desired ends.[9] By means of this specific conception of power Foucault sought to highlight three particular moments that have impacted the shaping of modern societ(ies) and the contemporary order:

1. The ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security.
2. The tendency which, over a long period and throughout the West, has steadily led towards the pre-eminence over all other forms (sovereignty, discipline, etc.) of this type of power which may be termed government, resulting, on the one hand, in the formation of a whole series of specific governmental apparatuses, and, on the other, in the development of a whole complex of savoirs.
3. The process, or rather the result of the process, through which the state of justice in the Middle Ages transformed into the administrative state

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5 Cf. Rabinow 1989.
6 Foucault 2000h; *ibid*. 2000p: 318.
7 Dean 2010: 5, 10 182–197; Foucault [2004] 2008: 61–70. Cf. Foucault 2000o: 295–300; also *ibid*. 2000p: 312–319.
8 Foucault [2004] 2007: 192–193.
9 Foucault [1978] 1991c: 102.

during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, gradually becomes 'governmentalized'.[10]

Foucault's focus on governmentality in the constitution of modern socio-political orders thus allows him to analyse not just the infrastructural/institutional, praxeological and epistemological conditions underlying them, but also to access the internal dynamics of the on-going (and never completed) process of critical reflection and transformation, driven in large part by the forms of knowledge (*savoirs*) that shape the conduct of conduct. Foucault's concern with governmentality thus aims in a non-teleological way to conceptualise the underlying constitutive dynamics of transformations that brought forth liberalism and capitalism and the array alternative ideologies and socio-politico arrangements that have emerged in the last two hundred years, and which have come circumscribe the possibilities of our present situation. To be included among these, I would argue, are not just (neo)liberal capitalism, socialism, communism and fascism (all of which Foucault gave consideration to), but also the emergence of postcolonial manifestations of modernity.[11]

Foucault's focus on governmental power broadens attention beyond the rationalising state as the classical site of modernity's emergence. Instead, his approach brings into view "the variegated domain in which what might be called 'regimes of government' come to work through 'regimes of conduct', "a domain populated by the multiform projects, programmes and plans, some operating under the aegis of the state and others not, that attempt to make a difference to the way in which we live by a swarm of experts, specialists, advisers and empowerers".[12] Hence, the focus is not solely on how *state* apparatuses constitute modern political subjects (although much of the work in governmentality studies has focused on this aspect), but on how a broad range of state and non-state ('civil society') institutions and actors conceptualise and work to achieve to produce particular kinds of human subjects that behave in particular ways and desire particular ends.

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10 Foucault [1978] 1991c: 102–103.

11 On political economy and its links to the emergence of liberalism, see Foucault [2004] 2007, [2004] 2008. For a discussion of the emergence of various forms of socialism and fascism, see Foucault [1997] 2003. For a discussion of authoritarian governmentalities, including National Socialism and Chinese communism, see also Dean 2010: chap. 7, esp. 163 ff.

12 Dean 2010: 211.

Important to note is that Foucault does not conceive of individuals as passive objects of governmental interventions, but also considers them as active participants in their self-constitution through "technologies of the self" and "technologies of living" that can reinforce, stand in tension to, or even actively resist, the regimes of conduct in effect through state and non-state governmental regimes.[13] This opens the analysis as to the specific ways in which individuals constitute themselves as social and ethical subjects within, laterally to, and potentially against a particular governmental space and brings into view the complex interplay between socio-political horizons of possibility and the capacity for human agency in modern societies. [14] Moreover, it opens a perspective that regards subjects as part of a "frame [...] in which questions of who we are, of what our being is composed, of what we would like to become emerge, in which certain eventualities are to be avoided and in which worlds to be sought, struggled and hoped for and achieved appear".[15] This approach thus dovetails well with the non-essentialist study of society and its "shifting topographies of distinction and interconnectedness" that constitutes an important desideratum of post-Writing-Culture anthropology.[16]

However, Foucault's work, and a good bit of the work in what came to be known as governmentality studies, which his ideas on modern power inspired, is concerned exclusively with historical developments in Europe from about the 16th century onwards and omits developments in colonial

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13 Foucault uses the term "technologies of the self" to refer to practices "which permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality" (Foucault 2000m: 225). When certain forms of technologies of the self, exist in tension or direct opposition to governmental regimes, Foucault refers to them as "counter- conducts" (Foucault [2003] 2007: 201–202). The term was developed out of his dissatisfaction with the term dissident, because he felt it too narrow to circumscribe the wide array of ways in which people can "struggle against the processes implemented for conducting others" (*ibid*.: 201), most notably those forms of struggle manifested by "delinquents, mad people, and patients" (*ibid*.: 202). The term, thus serves to make visible the way people act in a general field of politics or power relations and how such actions "put in question, work on, elaborate, and erode" specific forms of power (*ibid*.: 202 and 204).
14 Cf. Dean 2010: 226.
15 *Ibid.*
16 Comaroff 2011: 94–95.

contexts.[17] But as historians of colonialism have been arguing since at least the 1990s, one cannot properly understand the emergence of modernity without looking at the entire context in which this took place.[18] One thus needs to incorporate the imperial/colonial situation as part of a single field in which the relevant transformations took place, a field in which colony and metropole were intimately connected through the circulation of personnel, knowledge, expertise and practices across state and non-state institutions.[19] The lacunae in Foucault's work in this regard have thus invited historians, anthropologists and other scholars in the humanities to extend his perspective to incorporate the full context of the transformations he analyses.

Foucault's exclusive focus on Europe in his studies of the structures and transformations that have engendered modern society has thus come to draw the attention of anthropologists, historians and other scholars work-

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17 See, for example, Ann Stoler's lengthy discussion of this omission in Foucault's *History of Sexuality* (Stoler 1995). Mitchell Dean's classic work *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society* (Dean 1999), for example, even has a chapter on authoritarian governmentality, but limits its discussion to National Socialism. No mention is made of communist, socialist, colonial, postcolonial or other non-Western forms of authoritarian governmentality. Similarly, the edited volumes *The Foucault Effect* by Burchell, Gordon and Miller (1991) and *Foucault and Political Reason* by Barry, Osborne and Rose (1996) reproduce Foucault's Eurocentrism. Joyce's analysis of liberalism and the growth of the modern metropolitan city omits any discussion of colonialism until the final fifteen pages, when he admits that the colonial city was an important site for the creation of new governmental practices that would often circulate back to the metropole and that there were striking similarities between the treatment of the lower classes in Britain and Indian subalterns (Joyce 2003: 245, 248). Unfortunately, these remarks are left as marginal afterthoughts, and his analyses of liberalism and the modern city do not incorporate the wider imperial context of its development. Mary Poovey's study *Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation, 1830–1864* suffers from a similar methodological nationalism, and the fact of empire is given only a cursory remark near the end of the study without further analysis (Poovey 1995: 176–180).

18 For example, the programmatic statement published in Stoler and Cooper 1997. See also, for example, Rabinow 1989 and Stoler 1995.

19 Cf., for example, Comaroff and Comaroff 1991 and 1997 for a focus on how epistemes, discourses and technologies of government and self circulated between metropole and colony beyond state institutions through exchanges between British civil society (as mediated by Evangelical missionaries) and the Tswana.

ing in and on colonial and postcolonial situations.[20] Edward Said's *Orientalism* provided a point of entry for many anthropologists and historians to take a closer look at the purchase of Foucault's ideas, particularly those pertaining to knowledge/power, in colonial contexts.[21] But even among those anthropologists who were not immediately provoked by Said's work, the question remained as to how Foucault's ideas played out beyond Europe, or the degree to which the particular constellation of power relations in the colonies engendered distinctly (post)colonial modernities.[22]

However, political economy and the imperative of economic government that served as the foundational premise of this *savoir* were not only relevant to the wider imperial world at the ideological level. As Foucault and others have argued, and as we shall see in the following chapters, they also played an essential role in the emergence of a wide array of practices and institutions that have become constitutive of modern state and concomitant civil society formations and that may be said to form an infrastructural common ground of all modern societies.[23] Thus, the principle of economy became central to informing a wide array of projects to reform

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20 This requires some qualification, however. The anthropologist Bernard Cohn had already been conducting research on the workings of colonial power and the role of knowledge in it (Cohn 1987b, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c, 1996d). Although his work covers many of the same themes as those discussed by Foucault, these developed independently. Cohn's work, in turn, inspired students like Arjun Appadurai, Nicholas Dirks and Ronald Inden. However, in the case of Dirks, at least, Foucault served as a useful theoretical complement to the empirical work inspired by Cohn (see especially Dirks 2001). Cohn's work thus must be seen as an important path-breaking factor, together with Edward Said's *Orientalism* that served as an additional impetus, when considering the emergence of an interest in the workings of colonial power and the role of knowledge and specific governing practices.

21 Said 1979, Breckenridge and van der Veer 1994.

22 See, for example, Rabinow 1989; Roefel [1992] 1997; Stoler 1995; Knauft 1996c, 1996d; Scott [1999] 2005; and Pandolfo 2000.

23 On political economy and its role in the emergence of modern practices and institutions, see, for example, Foucault [2004] 2007: 29–53. Cf. also Dean 2010: chap. 7; Poovey 2002 and Taylor 2002. For a discussion of how ideas of economy in the 19th and early 20th centuries impacted even practices of technical innovation and played into the development of Britain's communications infrastructure as an economical solution to the problem of empire that economised on the use of military resources while maximising their effective application at a given moment, see Barry 1996: 132–138. A more detailed account of the development of Britain's communications infrastructure in the imperial context that also discusses the supposed imperatives of political economy and how its imperatives to secure the political and economic 'well-being' of its most prized dominion impacted the

and manage society by means of the shaping of the conduct of conduct via the 'natural' principles that governed the relevant functional systems.[24] As such, it provided not only programmes for social, political and legal reform, but also enabled the development of the corresponding technologies of power to effect these changes.

In its normative assumptions concerning human nature and the motivations for acting political economy as a body of knowledge described the dynamics by which populations respond to particular situations. By transposing these normalizing assumptions about the collective behaviour of populations onto individuals, political economy came to circumscribe the norms for the ideal(typical) liberal subject who perceives and acts in his own interests and thereby maximises the welfare of all of society, i.e. the population at large.[25] This set of assumptions about population dynamics and the nature of human subjects came to form the foundations of such central modern institutions as individualised private property, the market, wage labour, and also informed the disciplining practices deployed to correct those whose behaviour deviated from the norms embodied by the liberal subject.[26]

In other cases, the idea of the liberal subject as the foundation of society was turned on its head. Socialist and postcolonial political discourses asserted that the emergence of a capitalist economy and the liberal subject was a pathological historical development and that true human nature was in fact collectivist and value-oriented (rather than materialist and utility maximising); institutional arrangements in such alternative political orders were planned accordingly as were disciplinary regimes.[27] In the 19th and 20th centuries, the debates surrounding these competing socio-political

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development and construction of communications and transportation infrastructure, see Prakash 1999: chap. 6. Thomas Osborne discusses the importance of the idea of economy and non-intervention in what came to be seen a semi-autonomous system of the urban environment for the 19th-century development of Britain's public hygiene and sanitation system (1996: 104–105, 110–114).

24 For a discussion of government via existing natural mechanisms, which was circumscribed by principles the French Physiocrats came to refer to as *laisser-faire*, *laisser-aller*, and *laisser-passer*, see Foucault [2004] 2007: 35–49.

25 For a discussion of how political economy shaped normative assumptions and expectations of subjecthood as they were made visible in the debate over 'pauperism' as a particular social pathology distinct from simple poverty (which was regarded as natural and in no way connoted negatively) in the 19th century, see Procacci 1991.

26 See the discussion in Foucault [2004] 2007: 63, 65–76.

27 For example, see Roefel 1997, also Prakash 1999: chap. 7.

orders and the ideas concerning human nature underlying them were often conducted in terms of competing versions of political economy, as the scientific formulation of the underlying principles of the human order.[28] Foucault's work thus shows how looking at the emergence of political economy and examining how it came to inform processes of socio-political transformation serves as a window on understanding the specificity of what constitutes modernity both as a historical epoch and as a particular way of being.

The following chapters of this volume thus trace the seemingly antinomious dynamics of modernity by examining the emergence political economy as the knowledge of the art of government out of a preceding and more general discourse on commerce and economy. They will examine how political economy not only was constituted as a science that created 'the economy' as its object, but more importantly served as a specific *savoir* pertaining not only to the management of affairs of state, but also to the conduct of affairs in civil society on a collective and individual level. Within this epistemological horizon specific norms and forms concerning the conduct of state, society and individuals emerged, which went hand in hand with the emergence of what Foucault referred to as a liberal apparatus (*dispositif*),[29] a heterogeneous ensemble of discourses, practices and materialities existing as a system of relations that include institutions, policy decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements and philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions.[30] The term thus con-

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28 In the European, and British context in particular, see Collini, Winch and Burrow 1983: 257–275. Prakash's portrayal of the Nehruvian and Gandhian critiques of British rule, which were to a significant degree formulated in terms of a critique of political economy and the British policies in India that followed from it, provides cases from a colonial context (1999: esp. chaps. 6 and 7).

29 The English translation for the French *dispositif* varies. In some texts it is translated as assemblage, in others as apparatus. The translation as assemblage captures the agglomerated nature of *dispositifs*, their being made up of heterogeneous, diverse components comprising institutions, rules, laws, discourses, technical and social practices and so on. The translation as apparatus captures the aspect of the term present in everyday French-language usage to refer to systems that have been set up to serve a specific purpose. Alarm systems or burglar alarms are thus referred to as *dispositifs d'alarm*; the intercom system to enter an apartment building is thus referred to as a *dispositif de communication*. For a discussion, see Bührmann and Schneider 2008: 51–52.

30 Foucault apparently first used the term in an interview that was later published in English in an edited volume ([1977] 1980: 194–198). The term is also discussed in his lectures at the *Collège de France*, cf. Foucault [2004] 2007: 6–23. See also Bührmann and Schneider 2008: esp. 51–56.

nects discourses to para-discursive phenomena like state and civil society institutions, administrative practices, philanthropic projects and so on, and tries to make visible the nature of the connections and interactions between the heterogeneous elements of discourse, knowledge, practices, institutions and materialities.

Key to the constitution of an apparatus, according to Foucault, is that it has

> […] as its major function at a given historical moment that of responding to an urgent need. The apparatus thus has a dominant strategic function. This may have been, for example, the assimilation of a floating population found to be burdensome for an essentially mercantilist economy: there was a strategic imperative acting here as the matrix for an apparatus which gradually undertook the control or subjection of madness, sexual illness and neurosis.[31]

While apparatuses emerge to control a specific problem, Foucault also points out that they entail an element of contingency in two regards. For one, as Foucault notes, they are strategically overdetermined. That is, they produce effects whereby one element of the apparatus may resonate or alternatively contradict with another element or other elements, intentionally or unintentionally, in positive or negative ways. And this ultimately leads to adjustments or re-workings of the affected heterogeneous elements of the apparatus. The second element of contingency arises from strategic elaboration. Unforeseen effects produced by strategic overdetermination enter back into the apparatus by means of a sort of feedback loop.

Here Foucault provides the example of how the apparatus of imprisonment that made measures of detention seem the most rational and efficient method to contain criminality produced the unforeseen effect of "filtering concentrating, professionalising and circumscribing a criminal milieu". This in turn gave rise to a situation that Foucault's designates as the "strategic completion (*remplissement*) of the apparatus" in which "[t]he delinquent milieu came to be re-utilised for diverse political and economic ends, such as the extraction of profit from pleasure through the organisation of prostitution."[32] The rationalisation of punishment thus had the effect of rationalising crime, an unintended effect that gave rise to new strategies and practices that were integrated into the apparatus itself. Organised prostitution (as itself a new kind of criminal activity), thus,

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31 Foucault [1977] 1980: 195.
32 *Ibid.*: 195–196.

ironically is the outcome of a system of rationalised incarceration that originally was intended to keep crime in check. This contingent dynamic inherent to apparatuses by virtue of their very constitution provides an account of conflicts, contradictions and moments of resistance that places them not at the interstices between program and technology versus their application, but as an integral part of these. Resistance, conflict and contradiction are thus not manifestations of systemic failures but are shown to be part of an apparatus's conditions of existence.[33]

While there is nothing specifically modern about apparatuses per se—they are any assemblage of epistemological, infrastructural and technical support that upholds any given socio-political order—modernity as a particular historical epoch can be characterised by a unique apparatus, the nature of which rests on a form of power that is specific to the modern era. Foucault refers to this as the liberal apparatus (*dispositif*), which he defines in contradistinction to the sorts of apparatuses existing prior to the 17th century that were linked to the institution of absolute monarchy. Examining such diverse cases as town planning, grain policy in dealing with famine and scarcity, as well as policy responses to small pox, he shows there to have been a dramatic shift in the way these phenomena were treated and dealt with.[34] Prior to the 17th century the model for action was one in which the ruler as sovereign shaped the order of his realm by enforcing laws and disciplinary measures to produce the desired effect. The will of the sovereign thus was imposed upon and shaped the socio-political and economic order under his realm, and the predominant technologies of power were law and discipline. In dealing with recurring grain scarcities, for example, the approach taken was to pass laws dictating price ceilings (to keep grain affordable), while prohibiting grain exports (to keep grain from being exported to markets with higher prices) and punishing those who were caught hoarding grain. These policies were aimed at immediately addressing those issues that made grain unavailable to the people, and prohibiting these: high prices, hoarding and export. Characteristic of this specific apparatus was thus a model of political power that posited the subjection of the worldly order to the will of the sovereign and his might to enforce that will by law or decree.[35]

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33 Cf. Lemke 2000.
34 The following discussion draws on Foucault [2004] 2007: 29–79.
35 For the discussion of how the problem of grain scarcity was defined and dealt with prior to the 18th century, see *ibid*.: 29–33.

Beginning in the 18th century, according to Foucault, the whole conception of what it means to rule changed. Indicative of this shift is also the shift in terminology: the main problem now no longer was posed as one of the ruling sovereign but of government. This shift in emphasis from rule to government, Foucault continues, was embedded in wider epistemic shift and linked to transformations in the technologies of power. Whereas previously the sovereign ruled over a more or less transparent realm that could be formed at his will, this perception of the world began to change. By the 18th century the world was becoming less transparent. Mirroring the changes in perception of the physical world in light of the new perspective provided by the physical sciences, the social world, too, began to be seen as a product of natural processes that had their own inherent dynamics which were not subject to the will of the sovereign. The problem of rule thus shifted to the problem of government, as one that centred on understanding these natural processes, restoring their natural dynamic and exercising power through this. It is this that Foucault identifies as a distinctly modern phenomenon, a new perspective on the world that is linked to the emergence of a new type of power, and a new kind of politics.[36] The emergence of this new type of power led to new ways of trying to shape world: new ways of perceiving problems, new techniques of intervention, new programs of action, new types of laws and so on. Rather than trying to dictate a given order by force of law and discipline, the central idea came to be to provide a framework of policies and material infrastructures that would allow natural processes to function freely and bring about a natural equilibrium that would inherently provide the maximum benefit for all. This assemblage of ideas, concepts, practices and institutional arrangements is what Foucault refers to as the 'liberal apparatus'.[37]

In the context of grain policy to prevent famines, for example, the emergence of a liberal apparatus manifested itself as a complete change in approach to dealing with this historically recurring phenomenon. Within the liberal apparatus scarcity was in and of itself no longer considered the problem, but rather the symptom of potential dysfunction in the natural mechanisms governing the production and distribution of grain.[38] As a result, policies now came to focus on eliminating the clogs on the grain market. Price controls were eliminated so that farmers' natural inclinations to act in their own self-interest would lead them to grow more grain.

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36 *Ibid.*: 34.
37 *Ibid.*: 48–49.
38 The following draws on *ibid.*: 34–43. Cf. also Gray 2006.

Export bans were lifted to ensure excess grain could flow out of the country and farmers could still get a good price for it. Import restrictions were also lifted so that in the event of a bad harvest more grain could be imported. At the infrastructural level, facilitating the flow of grain entailed constructing and maintaining efficient transport systems by land or water.[39] When and if scarcity did lead to a famine it was regarded not as a tragedy to be alleviated, but rather a natural mechanism to bring a population that had grown too quickly back to a level at which it could be sustained by the food supply. Hence, scarcity and the higher morbidity rates that went along with it were now considered natural phenomena that would ultimately serve to restore the natural equilibrium between the supply and demand of grain. [40] Political economy played a central role as the science of the art of government that brought together insights from the relevant subfields regarding the proper functioning of the natural processes that contributed to the shaping of the human order and translating these into programmes, policies and technologies of government, the agglomeration of which made up a liberal apparatus.

The emergence of such a liberal apparatus markedly transformed the art of government, not only in Europe, but also further afield in the colonies. While England was at the forefront in the historical developments that led

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39 On the importance of public works/infrastructure in combating famine/ scarcity, cf., for example, the discussion of policy in Ireland and India in Collison-Black 1968: esp. 332 f.

40 Cf. Foucault [2004] 2007: 42. Foucault describes this as the capacity to make all the elements constitutive of a given reality function in relation to each other in order to achieve the desired ends, and regards this to be distinctive of specifically modern technologies of power. See Foucault [2004] 2007: 45–48. It should be noted, however, that, his account notwithstanding, the liberal principle of non-intervention and the perception of famine as a natural phenomenon that must not be interfered with, was, in the British imperial context, subject to controversy in the latter quarter of the 19th century cf. Gray 2006: 207 ff.). The massive loss of life in both the Irish Potato Famine (1845–1852) and the series of famines that hit India in the latter half of the 19th century (1860–1906, esp. 1876–1878 and 1896–1897) were difficult to frame as natural phenomena that were part and parcel of the course of things. Instead, famine came once again to be seen as a symptom of dysfunction, of a failure of policy to provide an environment where public welfare was secure. Liberalism thus had to reconcile the apparent demands of science with existing moral sensibilities that were less inclined to tolerate abjection and massive suffering or the loss of millions of lives. However, the classical liberal non-interventionist position, which was highlighted by Foucault, that "the extra deaths and short births of these two years [1877 and 1878] will put off for a long time the fulfilment of the Malthusian doctrine in this country [India]" continued to exist (quoted in Gray 2006: 208).