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Fractured Modernity – Fractured Experiences – Fractured Histories: An Introduction

This collection of essays presents selected contributions to a conference held at *Historisches Kolleg* in Munich, April 16 to 18, 2009, under the theme “*American Modernism: Die Vereinigten Staaten auf dem Weg in multiple Modernen, 1900–1940?*”. Without being expressly required to do so, most of the conference papers did indeed explicitly or implicitly deal with the problem of “modernity”. Whether or not the people or groups or institutions and organizations the authors analyzed made the question of “the modern” a topic of discourse, the papers gravitated towards issues such as the “dark underside” of modernity, its moral ambiguities and normative deceptions, its manipulative features, exclusionary tendencies, inherent violence, and cultural margins. Most papers focused on phenomena related to facets of modernity and reactions to them regardless of whether the term itself played a role in the contemporary debate or not. For the present volume, the papers have been reworked into essays which have markedly sharpened this perspective. We as the editors now have the impression that they correspond with each other and constitute an exemplary sample of how a group of experts in the early twenty-first century would approach the question of American modernity, even if – and in part because – they by no means offer a comprehensive panorama of American history in the period that Detlev J. K. Peukert once, for the German case, famously termed “classical modernity”¹.

There is no doubt that the original conference theme was formulated from a distinctively German or European perspective that turned out to be misleading when applied to the United States. The theme seized on the impression – more than a century old and still widespread among both European intellectuals and the public – of the United States as a “laboratory of modernity”, as a symbol of everything considered modern at that time and as the very materialization of symbolic modernity. This tendency to regard the United States as an archetype of modernity persists into the twenty-first century as a subtext in German discourse. This helps to explain the preoccupation of the essayists with undermining or negating an outlook that might not seem so worrisome to an analogous group of American

¹ *Detlev J. K. Peukert, Die Weimarer Republik. Krisenjahre der Klassischen Moderne* (Frankfurt a. M. 1987).

scholars gathered to discuss similar themes. In recent decades, American scholars have to be sure treated the encounter with modernity as a central dimension of the country's history. They have chafed against oversimplifications that attend the concepts of modernity and modernization and have deplored various American attempts to project the country to the world as a model modern nation. But even at the height in the mid-twentieth century of classical modernization theory, which did tend toward portraying the United States as an ideal type, most American scholars did not take too literally the European and especially German way of equating of *Amerikanismus* with *Modernismus* and further with *Fordismus*. Such a reduction of ragged reality to a concept was difficult to maintain for those immersed every day in American modernity's anomalies².

The conference was, therefore, supposed to look behind the monolithic characterization of America-as-modernity in order to detect sediments and layers of premodern times, along with niches and countertendencies contradicting this view. The original goal was similar to Charlie Chaplin's in his movie "Modern Times", when Chaplin takes his audience for a ride from the heights of Fordist production, over traditional skilled craft work and old-fashioned shipbuilding, to the archaic toil of the chain-gang and the anachronism of folk culture. The movie-maker and some of our essayists wished to expose American Modernism as a giant with feet of clay. The contributions to the conference responded to this proposition – which was not explicit in the call for papers but which was most definitely a subtext – by taking up themes at the borderlines and faultlines of American modernity, a modernity that indeed sometimes perceived itself as monolithic and that, even more gratingly, sometimes did present itself to others as a moral as well as developmental archetype. Some of the essays are informed by Foucauldian or postcolonial perspectives, and some not. But – and this is the point that makes this book worth reading on both sides of the Atlantic – the essayists across the board depict the phenomena that they analyze less as beyond the reach of modernity or as anti-modern resistance but rather as integral parts of modernity. Until recently, the subjects of many of the essays in this volume would have been treated as falling outside standard definitions of the modern, as peripheral or opposed to the central impulses and trends of a modernized society. In this book, modernity itself appears, as Norbert Finzsch summed up at the conference, a multifaceted, incoherent whole, a "fractured" landscape full of ruins of former times and permanently under construction.

The "fractured modernity" that the essays sketch in effect debunks the original conference theme. Modernity, as portrayed by our contributors, is by no means equivalent with modernism. It can come completely without modernistic propa-

² Numerous writers in both German and English have dwelled upon the early twentieth-century German inclination to view of the United States as an archetype of modernity. For example, *Alexander Schmidt*, *Reisen in die Moderne. Der Amerikadiskurs des deutschen Bürgertums vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg im europäischen Vergleich* (Berlin 1997), which one might compare with *Thomas P. Hughes*, *American Genesis. A Century of Invention and Technological Enthusiasm, 1870–1970* (New York 1989) ch. 6.

ganda or even with anti-modernistic furor. The essays show why the distinction between *modernity* and *modernism* is useful to keep in mind. We follow a semantic distinction gaining traction in literary studies which calls *modernity* a social and societal phenomenon whereas *modernism* specifies modes of cultural expression *affirming what is perceived as “modern”* in this sense. It is also necessary to recognize that *American* modernity might just be modernity *in* America³. Yet the notion of modernity-*in*-America also repudiates the tentative hypothesis put forward by the subtitle of the original conference theme. The essays do not support an interpretation which tries to see the faultlines, fissures, and contradictions in the monolithic view of American modernity as symptoms of the evolution of “multiple modernities” on American soil itself.

The concept of “multiple modernities” comes, of course, from Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, who elaborated on it in numerous writings⁴. This concept served well as the heavy artillery that brought down the last bastions of the 1950s and 1960s version of theories of modernization. Modernization theory, as we recall, coalesced at the height of the Cold War into a model of modernity based upon a simplified, even stylized concept of Western, or rather Anglo-Saxon, or (even narrower) U.S. American institutional and normative outcomes. Americans in the post-World War II decades debated many versions of modernization theory; some of these were closer to Max Weber’s dreary image of a *stahlhartes Gehäuse* than to any picture of American capitalist liberalism that could be made attractive in Asia, Africa, or Latin America. Nonetheless, the stage-model approach identified with policy-oriented intellectuals such as Walt Whitman Rostow overshadowed more nuanced or ambivalent treatments of this vexed theme. Formulaic models such as Rostow’s became identified as the standard American theory of modernization. In Cold War rhetoric, the Western modernity at the basis of Rostow-style models became synonymous with the direction of civilization itself⁵. This theory claimed moral superiority over totalitarian barbarism – and it offered a formula for overcoming supposed developmental lags in wide parts of the (third) world⁶. The con-

³ For a discussion of how U.S. historians have treated concepts of modernity, *Dorothy Ross*, *American Modernities, Past and Present*, in: *American Historical Review* 116 (2011) 702–714.

⁴ *Shmuel N. Eisenstadt*, *Multiple Modernities*, in: *Daedalus* 129 (2000) 1–29; *idem.*, *Die Vielfalt der Moderne*, translated by Brigitte Schluchter (Weilerswist 2008).

⁵ *Walt Whitman Rostow*, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge, New York 1960). On modernization theory as a rationale for Cold War-era development policies, *Michael E. Latham*, *Modernization as Ideology. American Social Science and “Nation Building” in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill 2000); *Latham*, *The Right Kind of Revolution. Modernization, Development, and U.S. Foreign Policy from the Cold War to the Present* (Ithaca 2011); *David Ekbladh*, *The Great American Mission. Modernization and the Construction of an American World Order* (Princeton 2010). For an example of a pessimistic modernization theory, *Kenneth Cmiel*, *Destiny and Amnesia. The Vision of Modernity in Robert Wiebe’s Search for Order*, in: *Reviews in American History* 21 (1993) 352–368. See also *Alan Lessoff*’s essay below, esp. notes 15–17.

⁶ *Chris Lorenz*, *Won’t you tell me where have all the good times gone? On the advantages*

cept ordered the world according to regional distances from the Western model and projected these distances onto a timeline which translated them into measures of “backwardness”⁷.

Modernization theory thus came to function as a Whig philosophy of history and at the same time a political prognosis with the sense of a mission. It explained the histories of entities deviating from the Western standard as stories of a “not yet”, whereas it foresaw a global convergence of societies ultimately reaching this stage. In Eisenstadt’s words, the theory “assumed ... that the cultural program of modernity as it developed in modern Europe [and, even more, the U.S.] and the basic institutional constellations that emerged there would ultimately take over in all modernizing and modern societies; with the expansion of modernity, they would prevail throughout the world”⁸.

Eisenstadt’s critique reflected widespread disenchantment that had set in among European and North American intellectuals by the late 1960s with modernization as either a prescriptive or a descriptive model. Indeed, by the time the Soviet bloc collapsed in the late 1980s, adherence to mid-century versions of modernization and the structuralist social science on which it was based seemed a defining characteristic of neoconservatism, precisely because the remaining proponents obstinately reasserted the West as an archetype in the face of broad and withering attacks. This explains, for example, why Francis Fukuyama’s 1989 essay, “The End of History”, was widely understood at the time as a neoconservative tract; the author, after all, was insisting that the collapse of Marxism as a concrete political program vindicated liberal, democratic capitalism as the central direction of development. This reading of the beleaguered Fukuyama persists, despite years of elaboration and qualification on the part of the author, who finally repudiated his neoconservative identity altogether⁹.

Eisenstadt thus sought to render untenable any view that there was one dominating model of modernity and that eventually all industrial societies would converge on it. His concept of “multiple modernities” identified the beginnings of the “Great Transformation” in Europe¹⁰. But the Israeli scholar acknowledged the increasingly independent development of institutional and cultural constellations

and disadvantages of modernization theory for history, in: *Rethinking History* 10 (2006) 171–200.

⁷ See, for example: *Sebastian Conrad*, What Time is Japan? Problems of Comparative (Inter-cultural) Historiography, in: *History and Theory* 38 (1999) 67–83.

⁸ *Eisenstadt*, Multiple Modernities 1.

⁹ *Francis Fukuyama*, The End of History, in: *The National Interest* (1989). Repr. in: *Fukuyama*, The End of History and the Last Man (New York 1992). Also *Fukuyama*, Reflections on *The End of History*, Five Years Later, in: *History and Theory* (1995) 27–43. *Fukuyama*, America at the Crossroads. Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy (New Haven 2006).

¹⁰ After *Karl Polanyi*, The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time (New York 1944). The popularity of Polanyi’s ambivalent vision of modernity among post-war American intellectuals stands as more evidence that Rostow-like stage models did not hold the field alone.

in the United States and Asia which he termed “modernities” in their own right. While the overarching course of history since the “axial civilizations” indeed was leading to the “age of modern”, the actual institutional forms and cultural programs these processes brought about would differ according to regional context factors and path dependencies. As trajectories diverged further and further, variations in modernity might even widen to substantive divides¹¹. According to this reasoning, even recent manifestations of anti-modernist resistance – such as, most prominently, fundamentalism of all shades and creeds – may be interpreted as a new form of modernity whose full impact is yet unknown¹².

Although recognized as an act of intellectual liberation from modernization theory, the concept of “multiple modernities” has likewise drawn considerable criticism. We will not discuss the problematic basic idea of “axial civilizations”, and we will also not dwell on the widespread charge that Eisenstadt’s concept retained an underlying European- or Western-centeredness, though these criticisms certainly have merit¹³. We are rather concerned with features of Eisenstadt’s concept which amount to hard constraints on its further development and which are almost impossible to overcome. The first of these limitations is that despite his insistence on the word “multiple”, a limited and indeed definite set of “modernities” dominated Eisenstadt’s view. The second constraint on his theory stems from his tendency to depict the development of “multiple modernities” as a set of path-dependent trajectories moving forward in one-directional evolutionary process based upon contextual factors in time and space. This results in a tendency to portray different lines of development as isolated hermetically from one another, a position bound to dissatisfy historians with any understanding of transnational networks of influence. This flaw is intertwined with the third and, in our eyes most consequential shortcoming. Eisenstadt’s “modernities” are still conceived as identifiable, definite, and durable sets of concrete institutions, social actors, social movements, and coherent cultural programs. In his words “modernizing” societies tended to generate coextensive *types* of institutions and cultural programs – “in family life, economic and political structures, urbanization, modern education, mass communication, and individualistic orientations” – which were *then* organized in diverging patterns according to regional context factors resulting in a selection of different “modernities”¹⁴. This repeats one of the most-criticized flaws in classical modernization theory, the structuralist impulse to reify the set of social arrangements that exist alongside one another in a place and time into a coherent order or a system.

This should suffice to highlight where the subtitle of the original conference theme in Munich went wrong: Eisenstadt’s own view of the “American modernity” is too coherent and hermetic as to allow for competing modernities within the

¹¹ *Eisenstadt, Multiple Modernities* 2.

¹² *Eisenstadt, Vielfalt der Moderne* 174–176.

¹³ See the contribution of *Norbert Finzsch* to this volume.

¹⁴ *Eisenstadt, Multiple Modernities* 1–2.

place and historical period to which we were applying his model. Even if such an internal competition among variants of modernity could be accepted in principle, the “multiple modernities” approach would lose all conceptual grasp over what these alternative “modernities” on American soil would consist of. There is no hint in the present essays that such alternatives could be interpreted as patterns of foreign (European, Asian, pan-fundamentalist) “modernities” intruding upon and usurping the American subtype. And even if additional endogenous “modernities” could be introduced conceptually, widening the spectrum that Eisenstadt sketched out, empirical analysis would have demonstrated that they lacked exactly the coherence, durability, path dependency, and positive programmatic unity needed for them to qualify as an identifiable “modernity” à la Eisenstadt.

Eisenstadt still shares with most theoreticians and historians the sense that “modernity” means a delimitable period of history spawned and defined by the emergence of concrete institutions, norms, and processes, even if the outcomes differ according to context factors in time and space. For example, Dorothy Ross, one of the most accomplished historical analysts of American social science, can still insist: “I take modernity to denote a stage of history characterized by national state formation, industrialization, and the rise of new ideas of reason, human agency, and historical progress.”¹⁵ Ross, too, sees modernity as a system or a *Gestalt*. According to such a view, the institutions and ideas that comprise modernity in any one country would have a recognizable face. They would come together into a constellation of fixed elements that interrelate in predictable ways, a stable overall pattern, even if some elements are constantly in flux.

The essays in the present volume point into a different direction. This calls for a brief, tentative attempt to provide the term coined at the conference, “fractured modernity”, a measure of theoretical depth. From this angle, modernity has no *Gestalt*. Its only universal institutional feature is, in the words of Niklas Luhmann, structural differentiation, which is also its principal element of motion¹⁶. Modernity should, therefore, best be conceived of as “a mode of institutionalizing change”. This does not mean that modernity does not produce patterns of social order and stability. On the contrary, because of the inherent instability and insecurity of irresistible dynamics, such patterns are generated in surplus, though in most cases, they end up as future ruins along the path of historical development. Structural arrangements in modernity are, therefore, plentiful, but their outcome is contingent and their relative stability depends on systemic integration of processes. Static or rigid ways of describing modernity in any place or period are misleading at best. The structural arrangements of modernity survive by selection and adaptation. They frequently usurp older institutional constellations, subject them to their services, and exploit their resources, turning them into ruins eventually¹⁷.

¹⁵ Ross, *American Modernities* 702.

¹⁶ Niklas Luhmann, *Why Does Society Describe Itself as Postmodern?*, in: *Cultural Critique* 30 (1995) 171–186.

¹⁷ Thomas Welskopp, *Kontingenz als Prognose. Die Modellierung von Zukunft in der Struk-*

Capitalism itself offers the best example of the feature of modernity we are positing. Capitalism's resilience has been as noteworthy as – for some – frustrating. Yet this resilience has not been the product of long-lasting institutions but of institutions that organize constant change and that continually absorb new influences as a means of adapting to change, even at the risk of repeated deep structural crises. Joseph Schumpeter, of course, applied the term “creative destruction” to this quality of capitalism¹⁸. People confronted with the overwhelming and accelerating changes prompted by modernity – capitalist or otherwise – react within a broad spectrum. Such reactions range from outright resistance to utopian enthusiasm, the latter being a form of thought and action that hinges on the perception of all-encompassing change as offering a clean slate, a chance to build social orders from scratch¹⁹.

In such a view there are no multiple modernities in the sense of distinguishable, relatively stable entities. Rather, we find an incoherent, ruptured modernity with transitional local and regional solidifications of institutional arrangements. Some people thrived on this atmosphere of fracturing and disruption. But most people's responses were ambivalent, embracing and resisting in ways that confuse the historian and probably confused the people involved. A good proportion of people reacted with outright hostility, treating modernity as a set of uncontrollable and apparently threatening changes²⁰. The present essays describe an array of expressions and practices which can best be understood as diverse and often contentious reactions to this fundamental experience. They were accompanied by an equally broad spectrum of emotional and ideological stances that range from pragmatist – or even stoic – adaptation to social-democratic, progressive, reformist, cynical, or racist or ethno-nationalist utopian visions, and finally to “fire- and brimstone” fundamentalisms. Whether they made it an explicit point of debate or not, the heroes, crooks, and victims in the stories in this volume seem particularly obsessed with finding answers to the challenges of modernity.

If this is the case, does that mean that American people had special experiences during the decades when Europeans were inclined to consider the United States a “laboratory of modernity”? Maybe. Dorothy Ross's recent, sweeping analysis of the theme of modernity in American historiography points into that direction. She demonstrates that the debate over modernity and modernization always served American self-orientation in the historical process, most prominently by linking

turierungstheorie à la Anthony Giddens, in: *Zukunftsgenese. Theorien des zukünftigen Wandels*, ed. by Victor Tiberius (Wiesbaden 2012) 281–296.

¹⁸ *Joyce Appleby*, *The Relentless Revolution. A History of Capitalism* (New York 2011).

¹⁹ *Thomas Etzemüller* (ed.), *Die Ordnung der Moderne. Social Engineering im 20. Jahrhundert* (Bielefeld 2009).

²⁰ *Thomas Welskopp*, *Bewegungsdrang. Prozess und Dynamik in der Geschichte* (Bielefeld 2011). *Gary Gerstle*, Theodore Roosevelt and the Divided Character of American Nationalism, in: *Journal of American History* 86 (1999) 1280–1307, offers a memorable portrait of how these contradictory impulses co-existed within the dynamic figure who represented the advent of modernity to his generation of Americans.

and relating developments in the United States to European history. This was the case regardless of whether U.S. historians put forward a defensive American exceptionalism against a modernity that stood for everything they disliked about a real or imagined Europe or whether they asserted an expansive Americanism as the embodiment of true modernity. In the guise of modernization theory, policymakers and supportive social scientists made this drive to spread Americanism – or at least their archetype of it – a global agenda of the country in the 1950s and 1960s.

Implicitly or explicitly, Ross explains, modernity also played a central role in domestic grand narratives of American history, as a positive or negative benchmark against which to measure the larger social, cultural, political, and ideological projects that emerged as contemporary answers to the challenges of the time. Interestingly enough, Ross observes that modernism as an affirmative vocabulary for modernity was frequently outdistanced and even mimicked by different shades of Americanism.

Dorothy Ross's panorama contains hints that the fixation of American historiography on questions of modernity may have been the result of a genuine American experience. In effect, post-World War II writers such as Seymour Martin Lipset who sought to fuse modernization theory and American exceptionalism may have had a point when depicting the United States as born modern, as the "first new nation"²¹. Americans never faced the task of demolishing rigidified traditional institutions in order to meet the challenges of modern times. Nor did they have the tried-and-tested institutional and ideological resources of an old order at their disposal, resources that they could call into service in order to channel change. After revolutionary liberation from a colonial system whose institutions were only sporadically present on American soil, the United States and the American people were more squarely exposed to modernity. They had to embark on a comprehensive project from scratch, an enterprise perhaps more challenging than a departure from the time-honored traditions and anachronisms of anciens régimes. According to Samuel Huntington, nation-building in Europe, for example, as a modern project, could be disguised as an organic development whose roots reached far back into medieval times. For Americans the use of such myths as ideological cushioning from the shock of modernity was not a feasible intellectual procedure. The past could not even serve as an enemy against which to rally one's troops. It could give no orientation or guidance. Echoing again innumerable writers on American national identity, Huntington asserted, "the United States thus had its origins in a conscious political act, in the assertion of certain basic political principles, and the adherence to constitutional arrangements based on those principles"²².

²¹ *Seymour Martin Lipset, The First New Nation. The United States in Historical and Comparative Perspective* (New York 1963).

²² *Samuel P. Huntington, American Politics. The Promise of Disharmony* (Cambridge, MA 1981) 25.

This disorienting experience of being exposed to all-encompassing change without being able to rely on foundations of tradition – whether they would be consulted affirmatively or taken as launching pads for alternative solutions – shines through in this volume's essays on ordinary Americans during the critical decades of "classical modernity". We encounter enthusiastic cults of modernity which grasped the opportunities that the new times seemed to promise. We read about communitarian attempts to reconcile the challenges of the modern world by retaining moral control over neighborhoods and selected parts of life. The effort to create controllable moral milieus regularly expanded into nativist and racist struggle when so-called old-stock Americans perceived immigration or African American migration as a particularly dangerous threat to staggering self-determination. Some analysts in the 1920s, of course, already viewed the impulse to impose a coherent, ethnically based moral vision upon the flux of modernity as itself a product of the modern age. The sociologist John Moffatt Mecklin, for example, characterized the Ku Klux Klan as a product of "the hurly-burly of our so-called industrial society", in which the "stress and strain of social competition" was revealing the "essential mediocrity" of the "average American of native stock"²³.

When paired with the new utopian sciences such as racist biology and eugenics, these outlooks went on the offensive and took on a more recognizably modernist cast. Whereas the undefined program of modernity opened venues for cultural expressionism of a new kind, the inevitability of uprooting change motivated the preservation of niches of an alleged untouched primal state – "nature". Ironically, Warren G. Harding's election as president in 1920 may be, in this sense, interpreted as an attempt to introduce conservationism in politics at the moment when capitalism went out of control and consumerism took over. The essays show, in sum, how much American history can instruct us when we ask about the characteristics, the aporias, and the course of a "modernity" we no doubt will have to conceive as "fractured". They also demonstrate why and in how far the question of modernity may serve as a key to understanding the American history of the twentieth century.

The agenda among our essayists to expose and explicate the fractured qualities of modernity – a goal they often pursue by emphasizing the modern elements of groups and movements that hitherto have seemed peripheral or opposed to modernity – means that the essays fuse into no coherent system. It is futile to search for order in them, though they do exhibit clusters of themes.

The first two essays, by Jürgen Martschukat and Daniel Siemens, draw upon unusual sources and experiences to study a conventional theme: what comprises modern identity and consciousness, when and how did this emerge, and how in retrospect can historians examine such subjective aspects of modernity. The bach-

²³ *John Moffatt Mecklin, The Ku Klux Klan. A Study of the American Mind* (orig. 1924, repr. New York 1963) 107–108.

elior world that surrounded New York's YMCA, on which Martschukat focuses, was "a distinctly modern and urban phenomenon". Industrial urbanization entailed creation of enormous concentrations of unmarried men of greater or lesser mobility who lived for varying stretches in homosocial environments. As the essay further emphasizes, bachelors such as Robert McBurney, the northern Irish immigrant and YMCA official at the center of Martschukat's story, already created unease within Victorian culture, since their lives took place outside the accepted structures of family and responsibility. In the decades after McBurney became a target of a recognizably Victorian set of indirect imputations about his behavior, however, social scientists undertook the enterprise of classifying McBurney as *homosexual* and analyzing his relationships as deviating from a particular norm. Both McBurney's life, therefore, and the discourse surrounding it "emerged hand and hand" within modernity.

Siemens tackles the even more elusive subject of self and emotional style. Since the early twentieth century, both American and foreign observers have struggled to express a shift they perceived away from the Victorian concept of *character* to the modernist notion of *personality*, to borrow the dichotomy as formulated by cultural historian Warren Susman. In his own essay in the America-as-modernity mode, *In de Schaduw van Morgen* (1935), Johan Huizinga, the great Dutch historian of culture, lamented that Americans had replaced traditional values of responsibility and self-sacrifice with "a belief in the right to happiness", a hollow "worship of life". Researching the self and emotional style inherently entails chasing shadows. But as Siemens explains, the evidence is overwhelming for the psychological pattern that Huizinga, Susman, and Peter Stearns, among others, have in different ways identified as pervading modernity in America and elsewhere. Siemens's essay illustrates the value of the fractured-modernity approach by chasing the new self-fulfillment ethic into unexpected corners: murder trials, popular eugenics tracts, even the evangelical modernism of Bruce Barton's Jesus-as-businessman tract, *The Man Nobody Knows* (1925).

The next two essays shift perspective from the self to the international realm. While Eisenstadt pointed to the diversity of modern societies as a device for assailing modernization theory, Frank Uekötter and Alan Lessoff start from the opposite line of criticism. By treating modernity as a set of phenomena intertwined across national borders, transnational perspectives on history undermine modernization theory's tendency to treat national states as entities passing through stages of development that are roughly the same from country to country, though proceeding at different rates. Uekötter perceives environmentalism and Lessoff perceives progressivism as transnational as well as modern phenomena with American manifestations. Significantly, both conclude that conventional modernization theory retains value "despite all the criticism it has received", as Uekötter puts it. In both instances, urban, industrial, capitalist societies appear to generate an analogous set of ideological, political, professional, and institutional changes. As the transnationalists insist, environmentalism and progressivism were both strongly marked by the circulation of ideas, expertise, and people across the oceans. But

both authors point to limitations of the transnational critique of the modernization model. For better and for worse, the activists and officials who set in motion the American conservation movement and who pursued the array of social reforms and policy innovations known as progressivism insisted – with reason – that their approach was not simply a repeat of what they had encountered in Germany, France, Great Britain, India, or Brazil. Historical, political, and ideological conditions in the United States led these movements into what Uekötter posits as “a peculiar modernism”, affirming the value of Eisenstadt’s approach in this book that emphasizes its limitations.

As a context for American divergence from European approaches, Uekötter reiterates a standard explanation that runs through U.S. historiography. Long-standing disputes over the West and its resources and over federal involvement in resource issues created a different context than in European countries for a variety of reasons. In Lessoff’s account of progressivism, a decentralist, anti-monopoly tradition that had no precise counterpart elsewhere played a similar role. This leads Lessoff to a cautionary note: In day-to-day practice, most United States-based historians exhibit only distended or ephemeral interest in this volume’s social-theory agenda; few American historians devote themselves in a sustained way what the United States might reveal about modernity, whether it is fractured, multiple, or whatever. Even when U.S. historians are versed in comparative and transnational arguments and repudiate old-fashioned forms of exceptionalism, most pursue what Lessoff labels an “Americanist” agenda, which he elaborates as “the posing of questions or the defining of subjects so as to address internal American concerns with little reference to how these concerns might be relevant to other countries”. Themselves often inheritors of the anti-monopoly tradition, U.S.-based scholars are more inclined to dwell upon what progressivism – to use the example at hand – illustrates about the complexities and shortcomings of American democracy than upon what it reveals about modernity, professionalism, Weberian rationalization, or corporate capitalism²⁴. Historical writing is in this way an episode in fractured modernity. The writers in this book exhibit shifting agendas half-tacitly derived from German intellectual and political contexts. The same is true of the American scholars into whose hands the book may fall and who may appropriate bits and pieces of it in constructing their myriad useable pasts.

The next two essays concentrate on media, mass politics, political economy, and the state, standard themes in studies of modernizing societies. Linards Udris draws on the history and theory of mass media to offer a detailed and in places surprising analysis of the role of the press in reflecting and shaping public opinion about Prohibition. It was impossible to tell where press reporting of Prohibition

²⁴ For an explication of the tendency to examine the Gilded Age and Progressive Era as episodes in democracy and not modernization by a scholar devoted to that perspective, *Robert Johnston*, *The Possibilities of Politics. Democracy in America, 1877–1917*, in: *American History Now*, ed. by *Eric Foner*, *Lisa McGirr* (Philadelphia 2011) 96–124.

ended and media-induced framing of Prohibition politics began. The 1929 shift of the Hearst chain against Prohibition seems to illustrate the power of the press to shape perceptions on which opinions are based. Into the twenty-first century, virtually every young person in the Chicago area, where legends of Al Capone still abound, grew up *knowing* that Prohibition collapsed amid a crisis of popular lawlessness and official corruption. Whatever one thinks of Prohibition as a public policy, Udris suggests that the sense of *crisis* surrounding this social-engineering experiment by the late 1920s resulted as much from the rhythms of news and the cycles of politics as from underlying shifts in behavior in the country. Udris's account recalls the mordant views put forth at the time by Walter Lippmann, who in works such as *Public Opinion* (1922) offered a self-consciously modernist critique of modern mass politics. Public opinion was constructed, Lippmann believed, of fragments of half-digested facts filtered through preconceptions and misperceptions. Where information and ideas are fractured – where “the threads of memory and emotion are in a snarl”, as Lippmann put it – one could not count on coherent public policy based on a reasoned discussion of a situation²⁵.

Christopher McKnight Nichols of Oregon State University builds on such concerns in his overview of the trajectory of political economy from the New Era of the 1920s to the New Deal of the 1930s. Similar to Udris, Nichols takes note of the disjuncture between familiar narratives of politics and the half-perceived constraints and forces acting upon governance and civic life. In popular accounts, the Great Depression discredited the trite consumer-as-citizen model that had taken hold among the American middle class and much of the country's working class by the 1920s, “the belief that to be an American was to be a consumer, and perhaps a player in business and investment”. The Depression inspired a vigorous, broad-ranging debate over “the attenuation of political, economic, and civic life, a process which [critics] saw as inherent in an unrestrained mass modern society”. Efforts to replace “the consumerist view of modernity” with a more civic-minded, social democratic vision, however, ran aground against limits of politics. The simple need to keep the political system together and the economy going in the crisis of the Depression pushed New Deal liberalism toward reinforcing “modernity as a mass consumption-mass production culture and modernity as state management of political economy”. In the only essay in this volume whose first draft came after the original 2009 conference, Nichols had the chance to incorporate the editors' doubts about multiple modernities as an organizing concept and their interest in the ways that contemporary commentators drew upon the concepts and techniques of intellectual and artistic modernism to critique social, cultural, and political modernity.

The image of a fractured modernity – whose components recombine in varying ways in different places and situations and among different groups and movements – proves especially useful in this book's essays on racial identity and conflict. Liberal-minded Americans have often distanced themselves from lynching

²⁵ Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (orig. 1922, repr. New York 1997) 254.

and other forms of race-based terror by labelling such phenomena relics of backward eras. These survivals from more brutal eras would, as Manfred Berg writes, “disappear with the advance of progress and civilization”. The hollowness of this reassuring scenario has prompted some authors to overstate the extent that modernity itself generated lynching and similar systematized forms of violent oppression. But the notion of violence as a *product* of modernity threatens to become its own unsubstantiated cliché. Berg adopts a more subtle approach. While clearly not *distinctly* modern, Berg demonstrates that lynching was infused with modern elements and intertwined with modernization in numerous ways. The practice burgeoned in the 1800s, the author explains, “in tension with the rise of the modern state”. Diverse evidence supports this analysis; extralegal violence thrived in areas disrupted by and infused with modernity in terms of economic development, mass communications, and mobility, but where the state had not yet asserted its monopoly of legitimate violence. In Berg’s view, modern humanitarian values and respect for order and rights did not end lynching. It was supplanted by “improved law enforcement against lynch mobs and the death penalty as a substitute intended to satisfy popular demands for retributive justice”.

Even if racial violence were intertwined with modernity, its portrayal as a relic of earlier, brutal stages of civilization amounted to a powerful delegitimizing device. In his study of NAACP strategies concerning forced confessions and other forms of police abuse, Silvan Niedermeier builds on the work of recent scholars who are as interested in the provenance and function of *claims* to modernity as they are in modernity as a set of social, cultural, and political arrangements. As Niedermeier notes, pervasive abuse by southern police of African American suspects by the second third of the twentieth century may have been in part a consequence of southern states’ efforts to use more effective policing to limit lynching. His essay concurs with Berg’s conclusion that the pressure for speedy convictions became overwhelming in a legal system pervaded by the same racist assumptions about black criminality that had earlier animated extrajudicial violence against blacks. For such reasons, the NAACP “perceived police torture as an issue intertwined with lynching”, observes Niedermeier.

When assailing extralegal racial violence such as lynching or the official violence carried out by southern police and sheriffs, the NAACP took pains “to emphasize the backwardness” of such practices. This rhetoric made a mockery of southern arguments for white supremacy. The self-proclaimed master race’s own behavior marked it as primitive, as an enemy of the civilization that southern whites pretended to preserve from supposedly retrograde southern blacks. Moreover, the NAACP’s insistence that it championed civilization against barbaric threats within the United States reinforced African American efforts to identify the nation with the black struggle for civil and political equality. In combating “barbarous police practices” and in expanding “the constitutional rights of black *and* white American citizens”, NAACP activists “portrayed themselves as the true modernizers”. The abuse and oppression of blacks, in this discourse, defied “America’s self image as a ‘modern’, ‘civilized’, and ‘democratic’ society”. By

implication, Niedermeier suggests that modernity is often an ascribed quality. People, practices, institutions, causes, and ideas can become modern simply because groups succeed in labelling them as such.

The final two essays illustrate the intellectual advantages of dissolving the notion that modernity has cores and margins. Since the 1920s, observers have recognized that the Harlem Renaissance “had a lot in common” with white intellectual and artistic modernists, as Norbert Finzsch writes; they shared “concerns with alienation, primitivism, and experimental forms”. But in general, black writers, scholars, and artists have seemed outsiders who appropriated elements of an intellectual and aesthetic movement whose central tendency was defined by whites. With the assumptions that sustained such a view no longer tenable, Finzsch perceives possibilities for examining the Harlem Renaissance as an exemplary episode in modernity, precisely because “artistic modernity, nonmodernity, and antimodernity cannot be readily distinguished” and because “the Harlem Renaissance, like other artistic movements, had a tendency to make use of the forms and contents of other movements”. Intrigued by the theoretical possibilities of such liberating insights, Finzsch considers how concepts ranging from Foucault’s *heterotopia* to postcolonialism might illuminate the modernity of the Harlem Renaissance. The one model whose elements he adamantly rejects is Eisenstadt’s multiple modernities, for reasons similar to those expressed above: Eisenstadt’s modernities barely interact, while the Harlem Renaissance thrived on hybridity, critical appropriation, and transcultural flow.

Michael Hochgeschwender applies similar reasoning to another well-known episode from the 1920s which looks different if one fractures one’s presumptions about modernity. Centering his analysis on the 1925 Scopes Trial, Hochgeschwender reviews the large amount of evidence that has accumulated in recent years that the fundamentalist side of the argument was, in its way, as modernist as the defense of evolutionary science. For U.S. scholars aware of the burgeoning of revisionist religious history since the 1990s, this essay has value as a synthesis of analyses that they may have encountered in a disparate way. But Hochgeschwender’s essay goes further. Drawing upon his knowledge of the philosophy and intellectual history of history itself, the author asks a question we hope all readers will ask as they go through this book: Why do scholars want to overturn preconceptions and fracture concepts of modernity now? In the case of the Scopes Trial and fundamentalism, the first-level answer starts with the discrediting of the secularization paradigm tied to classic models of modernization. Since the 1980s–90s, fundamentalism’s relation to modernity has seemed more relevant. But beneath that contemporary issue one finds a long process of disenchantment among western intellectuals – secular as well as religious – with the notion of Enlightenment reason as universal and progressive. In this atmosphere, the “structuralist and functionalist universalisms of the 1950s and 1960s” gave way before a host of attacks ranging from historicist cultural anthropology to post-structuralism, post-modernism, and post-colonialism. When one adds the professional circumstances of academic life – where new “images and interpretations ... guarantee attention and

thus success” – the ground was well-prepared for efforts to overturn received wisdom concerning fundamentalism’s reactionary or modernist qualities. Indeed, the ground was so well prepared that one might wish to stop and reflect upon the reasons the old archetypes and dichotomies took hold in the first place.

These essays reveal the invigorating possibilities of Norbert Finzsch’s *fractured modernity*. This image broadens opportunities for understanding the interchange, appropriation, flux, conflict, competition, and resistance that characterized the United States or any intricate society amid and after modernization. The shortcomings of this image are also manifest. As the essays demonstrate, the intellectual inclination to explore modernity at its fractures and differentiated points may lead scholars to overlook the unifying patterns emphasized by conventional modernization theory. This book provides new perspectives on some older, standard themes in studies of modernization and modernity, for example the self and social psychology, mass media, and political economy. But the authors have little to say about professionalization, rationalization, bureaucracy, corporate enterprise, finance, industrialism, labor relations, science, technology, transportation, urbanization, planning, and similar fodder for unreconstructed proponents of the modernization model. What could the authors of this volume say, for example, to the equally distinguished gathering of economic historians who recently and reasonably titled a volume on international banking in the years covered by this book, *Finance and Modernization*²⁶?

On a deeper level, the book’s particular formulation of fractured modernity may dissatisfy the melancholy among us, those who appreciate Max Weber’s mood of *stahlhartes Gehäuse*, who approve Henry Adams’s dictum, “man has mounted science, and is now run away with”²⁷. In the 1960s-70s, social scientists around the world revolted against Rostow’s formulaic, stage-model version of modernization not simply on account of its western ethnocentrism, but because of its cheerful determinism²⁸. More recently, Francis Fukuyama spent two decades apologizing for inviting the implication that he equated universal, liberal-capitalist modernization with bright times ahead. Since the 1970s, a healthy recognition of modernity’s capacity to generate ever more diverse and innovative forms of violence, abuse, exploitation, and oppression has taken hold. The essays in this book have absorbed that lesson admirably. But it is hardly original to admonish that the dissolution of structuralism carried the danger of a subjectivism tethered by no material limitation, of culture and discourse as trumping sources of power.

²⁶ Gerald D. Feldman, Peter Hertner (eds.), *Finance and Modernization. A Transnational and Transcontinental Perspective for the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Burlington, Ashgate 2008).

²⁷ Quoted in Ernest Samuel, Henry Adams (revised and abridged edition Cambridge, MA. 1989) 61.

²⁸ Cf. Alvin W. Gouldner, *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology* (New York 1970).

If the concept we have introduced implies that modernity has no definitional or structural core but shifts boundlessly from group to group and situation to situation, *fractured modernity* might amount to a new way of presuming that the clearing away of modernity's wreckage is mainly a task of changing the way we narrate modernity's story. A doubter will long for a partial return to determinism, a leavening measure from those classic themes in modernity that emphasized economic, geographic, environmental, and technological *constraints*, a little more of the language of objective class relations, segmented urban ecologies, paleotechnic civilization, and mechanization taking command.

With such admonitions and qualifications, one can make productive use of the diverse perspectives offered by the essays in this book on a modernity whose fractured character invites diffuse and inconclusive analysis. One returns to the issues raised in two essays that close the book. With regard to study of the United States, the disenchantment with Enlightenment scenarios of progress stressed by Hochgeschwender has played out in the attempt to provincialize American history described by Finzsch. Structuralist, 1960s-style modernization theory was the last major model of United States that presented the country not as a place, space, or nation-state but as an archetype. To provincialize the United States would amount to normalizing it, to weaving the country into humanity's typical story of struggle, confusion, fragmentation, and interchange. Especially over the past decade, other peoples, including the German scholars of the United States who wrote most of this book, have displayed a deep desire for the North American republic to grow into a normal country in this sense. For the most part, however, Americans have reacted with hostility to an agenda that would probably benefit them, and American scholars have shown only sporadic interest in it. Germans themselves have engaged in an intense debate over what, if anything, could finally make their scarred country *normal*. Germans have a great deal to say to Americans about the danger of treating one's country as an archetype and projecting one's nation to the world as an ideal.

Summary

Die Einleitung geht von der Beobachtung aus, dass die Beiträge des Bandes von einer großen Bandbreite im amerikanischen Diskurs um die "Moderne" zeugen. Offensichtlich waren in den USA des ausgehenden 19. und der ersten Jahrzehnte des 20. Jahrhunderts „moderne“ Positionen derart dominant, dass sie auch in den Randbereichen und „dunklen“ Seiten der amerikanischen Gesellschaft eine Rolle spielten. Deshalb beschäftigen sich die meisten Beiträge des Bandes exemplarisch mit solchen hybriden oder negativen Dimensionen der amerikanischen „Moderne“ und der Debatten darüber. Das wirft die Frage auf, ob der amerikanische Diskurs um „Modernität“ intensiver und durchdringender gewesen ist als in der „Geburtsregion der Moderne“, dem westlichen Europa. Wenn man, wie die Ein-

leitung vorschlägt, „Modernismus“ als affirmativen ideologischen Ausdruck und „Modernität“ als Struktur- und Prozessmodus unterscheidet, kann man diese Frage bejahen, weil dann ein Großteil der positiven Zuschreibungen von Erscheinungen einer von Europa aus als solcher beurteilten „Ultramodernität“ in den USA in der Rhetorik des „Amerikanismus“ formuliert wurde, während man mancherorts „Modernismus“ als europäische Marotte oder gar Verfallserscheinung abtat. Die besondere Intensität der amerikanischen Debatte erklärt sich dann aus einem größeren Bedarf an Ordnungsentscheidungen, die als „Tabula rasa“-Situationen empfunden wurden, weil der Rückgriff auf traditionelle Werte, Institutionen und Strukturmuster in den USA, anders als in Europa, nicht möglich war. Das deutet zugleich auf den Charakter „der Moderne“ hin, die nicht in eine – immer noch begrenzte – Anzahl von Einzelentwicklungen zerfiel („multiple modernities“), sondern sich als unumkehrbare historische Epoche erweist, deren Grundmodus permanenter Wandel ist und deren gestaltlose Landschaft von den Ruinen immer neuer Ordnungsentwürfe gesäumt wird, die – vergeblich – auf Dauer zielen. Insofern haben wir es mit einer fragmentierten, geborstenen, zerklüfteten „Moderne“ – „fractured modernity“ – zu tun.