Modernity-to-Come

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Confronted by a ferocious viral pandemic that immobilized the entire world and heightened the need for new hygiene, new public health concerns, new sociality, etc., the sociopolitical role of science has reached unexpected levels of prominence and controversy. The reliability of reason has come under attack by political parties. Progress, as value, is not universally valued. The question of how truly modern we are becomes acutely unanswerable. An interconnected world necessitates a new form of modernity but then again, the current contradictions of modernity itself foil our attempts on a stable contemporary definition. This paper reviews three argumentative dimensions for an updated understanding: Modernity as a historical construct, Modernity as a common-place etymology, and Modernity as a social imaginary. The paper proposes a new iteration as an explanation of a contemporary and global state of flux in which the contradictory understandings and practices of Modernity could be reconceptualized – in the form of a Modernity-to-Come.

Introduction

This paper retraces the main problematics of modernity, modernization, and their application as observed today. We will argue that a redefinition of Modernity benefits from postcolonial critique, which has been efficient in its delocalizing the geography of modernity as we see it. At the beginning of the third decade of the twenty-first century, there is no possible conceptual revival of modernity and modernization without acknowledging the global dimensions in which they are firmly situated. We are not interested here in sectorial definitions. For this reason, this paper will not go over the current debate about modernity in all its variations. Rather, what we present here is the outcomes of a cross-disciplinary conversation, supported by several scholars from different disciplines and geographies. The results we propose are a synthesis of current perspectives on modernity in an age of global crises and opportunities.[1]

Engaging with the concept of modernity today reveals more hurdles than just a few decades ago. After having been at the core of historical, philosophical, and sociological perspectives, modernity and modernization appear more cumbersome to handle; even useless, for a veritable understanding of our current moment in history. In this article, we posit a reading of modernity born out of cross-disciplinary reflections and resulting in a flux condition of how we view of Modernity today, an almost stateless state of

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[1] This paper is the outcome of a two-year collaborative process across diverse academic disciplines with participants who are deliberately selected to be geographically and culturally dispersed. We wanted to see how we can capture in a single volume the perspectives of scholars who come from diverse backgrounds as they engage, theoretically and empirically, with questions of modernity and modernization. The ensuing work revealed approaches that aimed at displacing and replacing those already worn-out Eurocentric frames of understanding Modernity. Among those who contributed, we count disciplines like mathematics, environmental studies, medicine and genetics, philosophy, political science, artificial intelligence, visual theory, literary theory, digital arts and technology, sociology (Akil, Maddanu 2022).

engagement, a Modernity that is not yet capturable, or ever capturable at all, a Modernity-to-Come. Our reflections here collect theoretical as well as empirical applications of modernity and modernization in different fields, from natural sciences to social sciences.[2] While acknowledging Latour's argument (1993) about the social construction of science itself – and therefore the resulting hybrids that ensue – we discuss the possibility of a modernity-to-come that could promise to revive a global awareness of human and environmental crises, injustices, and inequalities. A modernity whose concern is not the challenges of a certain culture or ideology but a modernity that must respond to imminent existential challenges at the level of the species as a whole.

In order to reduce the essential state of the art, we have established three main argumentative dimensions of modernity. Although each does not encompass a unique, congruent, or coherent approach or perspective, the so selected three argumentative dimensions help us identify logical frameworks and major scopes:

1. Modernity as a historic, societal event, Eurocentric in its conception and extent, corresponding to the transformation of Western societies that culminated in colonialism and capitalism (in this order). Particularly, we can see there the construction and deconstruction, from different perspectives, of narratives (Lyotard 1984; Touraine 1992; 1969, Latour 1993; Gôle 1996; Eisenstadt 1973; 2003) and "myths" (Bhambra 2007). This is the modernity that gives us our understanding of modern culture, secularism, modern nation-state, and industrialism – and the corresponding criticism by the postmodernity studies as well as the postcolonials (Spivak 1998; Chakrabarty 2000; Bhabha 1994; Mignolo 2000; 2007). In these argumentative dimensions, we can also place analyses that centralize reflexivity and global perspective (Bauman 1998; Beck, Giddens, Lash 1994; Giddens 1990; Robertson 1992; Featherstone, Lash, Robertson 1995).

2. Modernity in its etymology, as the most recent, constant transformation and reinvention (including tradition) of human organization and existence. In these terms, modernization led by dominant institutions, and fashion trends (see the *Philosophy of Money* by Simmel) represent the dynamic forces of change and flux, in which technology – fueled by positivism – represents the horizon of the human journey (and beyond). In this understanding, modernity is also commonly understood as *the newest* and in that which is in constant progress. In this dimension, transhumanism, science, medicine, genetics, and artificial intelligence, etc., find their assumptions and definitions of evolution. By acknowledging the current forms of capitalism, modernity is understood as a global modernity (Dirlik 2005; 2007).

3. Modernity as the *capacity* to create an imaginary "something" better, a project for the future. This last aspect is inspired by Edgar Morin in "Humanity of Humanity" (2001) and Alain Touraine's *In Defense of Modernity* (2018), which posits the historicity of human beings, particularly in their effort (imperative) to address global ethics, and "social imaginaries" (Taylor 2004). This third argumentative dimension of modernity will be the main focus of this article.

While considering empirical aspects of a global perspective on Modernity, our argument will posit a theoretical parallel between the concepts of

modernity/modernization and Derrida's *democracy-to-come*. Following Derrida, we argue that Modernity "must have the structure of a promise" (2005, 85), "and thus the memory of that which carries the future, the to-come, here and now" (1992, 78). We follow that promise.

1. Modernity's Disenchantments

We started our conversation by asking when and how have we started being modern? The simple idea that modernity represents major switches from what we define as *tradition*, may not be enough. For a Western historian, the answer might be quite easy, while a mathematician, a physicist or a musicologist could hesitate. The same would happen in disciplines like visual arts and literature. We could say that modernity was born out of Enlightenment ethics, which itself was born out of Renaissance aesthetics. As a project, modernity centralizes the human body as a measurement of beauty, and reason as the key to efficacy, progress, and fulfilment. But even before modernity led us down in a rope over the abyss of self-annihilation in World Wars I and II, the modernists were beginning to recognize the impossibility of verisimilitude and the impotence of reason as the answer to all the questions of the modern human. For what is modernism indeed if not anti-naturalism, the abandonment of pure reason, and the novel exploration of universal truths?[3] Facing a disenchanted world whose reality is impossible or, at minimum, impossible to represent through the means of verisimilitude, modernists sought refuge in the abstractions of cubism, the non-rationality of Surrealism, the randomness of Dada, and the abandonment of language of Concrete Poetry. If there was one word that describes the modernist project (in rebellion against the ethics of modernity), it would be iconoclasm.

According to David Harvey in *The Condition of Postmodernity*, the Enlightenment "took it as axiomatic that there was only one possible answer to any question. From this it followed that the world could be controlled and rationally ordered if we could only picture and represent it rightly" (Harvey 1989, 27). In a way, one would imagine that for the Modernity project to work, it needed to not only be based on a foundation of reason, but also that the image of this rational world be represented in a certain realistic way at the center of which is the triumph of Man. Harvey goes on to explain the necessity of this mode of representation. He says "[b]ut this presumed that there existed a single correct mode of representation which if we could uncover it (and this was what the scientific mathematical endeavours were all about), would provide the means to Enlightenment ends" (*ibidem*).

Nevertheless, the failures of modernity to deliver on its promises led to new revelations and the need for new modes of representation. Harvey goes on to explain about the emergence of modernism:

"It is important to keep in mind, therefore, that the modernism that emerged before the First World War was more of a reaction to the new conditions of production (the machine, the factory, urbanization), circulation (the new systems of transport and communications), and consumption (the rise of mass markets, advertising, mass fashion) than it was a pioneer in the production of such changes" (Harvey 1989, 23).

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[3] It was not until with Postmodernism that the idea of relative and multiple truths becomes more apparent. See Malpas (1992).

It would not be fair (or sufficient) not to acknowledge Max Weber's assertion in his reference to modernity that "the fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization," in his reference to modernity (Weber *et al.* 2004, 30) It would also be equally unreasonable not to accept that his prophetic notion of the disenchantment of the world predicted the motivation for the emergence of Modernism. In its rejection of rationality and naturalistic perspectives, the modernism of Kandinsky, Picasso, Pollack, E. E. Cummings, Alfred Jarry, Antonin Artaud, Beckett, Ionesco, Baudelaire, Apollinaire and the rest of them, could indeed be seen as interacting with this condition of disenchantment.

Nevertheless, we cannot conceive of the movement from modernity's rationality to modernist anti-rationality solely in terms of failures, disillusionments, and disenchantments of the (modern) world in the role of Reason. One would seek to find something in Modernism, in the rejection of verisimilitude that is a legitimate way of experiencing and expressing the world (not necessarily representing it, *per se*), that goes beyond its reaction to the inadequacies of the modernity's project.

Does the resurgence of the concept of Modernity in social sciences correspond to its revision – or its end? Critiques about modernity as a narrative end up declaring a *post* condition (Lyotard 1979), whereas others point out the fundamental change from a post-industrial society (Bell 1974) to a programmed or communication society (Touraine 1969; Castells 1996). Particularly, since the seventies we observe a clear disenchantment with the ideas of Progress and Reason as vectors of social evolution (Habermas 1980; Touraine 1992). This criticism, goes with the formation of new paradigms cognizant of both the environment (Carson 1962; Meadows *et al* 1972; Catton, Dunlap 1980; Pepper, Perkins, Youngs 1986) and common goods (Ostrom 1990; Dardot, Laval 2014): Technological progress, rationality, and modernization are leading towards ruin and inequality for humanity if not controlled and harmonized by ethics and common projects. This now classic environmental argument, though, does not connect directly to other deconstructive claims upon modernity. Social Sciences still delineated modernity as a European discovery, although radicalized, hyper more rather than post (Giddens 1990), and characterized by risk and reflexivity (Id.; Beck 1992). But the necessary passage to deconstruct the alleged Western uniqueness of the condition of modernity, in our argument, must be addressed through a postcolonial critique (White 1980; Goody 2006; Mignolo 2000, 2007).

Particularly, postcolonial studies have recentered the argument of modernity as a dominant rhetoric that underlies the Eurocentric, Western view of world history – thus entangling philosophy and politics. Strictly related to capitalist dominance, modernity represents, in this view, a levelling machine that reinforces an alleged coupling of *western culture/superior civilization…* Criticizing this narrative requires deconstructing histories, stories and topologies. Postcolonial scholars like Spivak (1988), Chakrabarty (2000), Bhabha (1994) and others have successfully reviewed the colonizing narratives and practices of modernity, and have repositioned the role of the subaltern within processes of colonization/modernization. The conceptualization of "connected histories" (Subrahmanyam 2005; Douki, Minard 2007) would be mending such a "theft" in telling history (Goody 2006). The same idea of connection can, thus, be posited for disciplines like sociology, as Bhambra (2014) suggests ("Connected Sociologies"), not before having exposed modernity's dominant narratives as myths,

including the Renaissance, the French revolution, and the industrial revolution (Bhambra 2007).

In between, fundamental works posit multiple modernities (Göle 2000) and alternative modernities (Eisenstadt 2003). These readings are essential to acknowledge the assertion of different practical understandings of modernity, zones of contact and "interpenetrations" Western/Eastern, Islam/Europe (Göle 2005, 2015). By acknowledging the processes of modernization around the world, peculiar social and historical processes – also in spheres like secularity, laws, education, and economy – both hybrid identity and cultural perspectives finally emerge. The counter argument developed by Arif Dirlik is that there is a global modernity – singular, not plural. Even acknowledging the disenchantment and postcolonial critiques of modernity – especially in its European narratives – Dirlik affirms only one global modernity embedded in current capitalism (2007). By defining one global capitalism in the twenty-first century, Dirlik posits the end of colonialism (2005).

2. Modernity as a flux

An update of the idea of Modernity as a notion and a condition is inescapably global and cross-disciplinary but at the same time, it cannot ignore the literal meaning and common use of the word *modern* – as used and internalized both in scientific disciplines as well as among ordinary people in society. Such a pragmatic and phenomenological approach can be deployed as a tool that will bridge connections and harmonize meanings in this article. In our academic introductory courses, we often ask students to define the idea of *the modern*. Students might mimic the gesture of something unfolding in time, rolling forward, implying movement, the newest, the most recent in a sequence. *Something* modern is expected to be better, in progress, a perfection and never a demotion. When asked about connections between modernity and Islam, Muslim social actors interviewed in Europe, often disregarded the historical use of modernity. Rather, they would focus on their "modern way" to dress and live not dissimilarly to others in western countries, while practicing their religion.[4] By acknowledging the common use of the terms *modern,* we also take into consideration the reflexivity of society, and social sciences as well (Giddens 1990, 15-17, 36-39). A certain flux, expressed in an exemplary way by Simmel in his *The Philosophy of Money* (1978), evidences that the value of Capitalism represents a conception of modernity itself; We find the same in David Frisby's concept of "presentness" (2011) and in the importance Simmel attributed to metropolitan life (xxi-xxv). The overload stimulation of a metropolitan life accelerates changes and cognitive processes, which for some (Rogge 2011) become a key feature of late modernity.[5]

In this vein, the appropriation of (the term) modernity by common parlance and practice unfolds in a flux observed through fashion, technology, aesthetic canons, cultural processes, communications and their networks. In this argumentative dimension, *the modern* represents a constantly updated movement, towards an

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[4] Several Empirical research about the young generation of Muslims in Italy and Europe were conducted between 2007 and 2012. See Maddanu (2009, 2013, 2014).

[5] Following Simmel, Benedict Rogge retraces the "agentic boredom": A hyper stimulation of human cognition, "cultural arrhythmia" (Brissett, Snow 1993) in the metropolitan life can be source of *ennui* – boredom (Klapp 1986; Aho 2007; Rosa 2009) – and consequent change of psychosocial "alterations" (Rogge 2010, 296-297).

unidentifiable future – perfected, better, or just *new* future. From cultural studies to technology, to artificial intelligence, to genetics and applied sciences, the imaginary of modernity is shaped by words such as "transformation", "innovation", and "novelty".

A funny thing happened on the way to Modernity. The modernity that gave us the coupling Progress/Modernity and led to disastrous plundering of the environment in many parts of the world and leading to our current ecological stalemate is now reasserting the role of science as a fundamental part of reaffirming the same notion of modernity. Those who were only a few years ago doubting the social objectivity of science (Latour 1993) seem to seek refuge in science to protect the environment today (Farro 2022).

New approaches to the understanding of modernity are continuously appearing in different centers of the world in ways that both question the established certitudes about rigid definitions of Modernity while re-asserting *the modern* in Modernity in mostly opposing stances: religious fundamentalists use the latest communications technologies in order to propagate their political struggle against the modern world, the indefatigability of cultural traditions witnessed in countries throughout the world, developed and developing, the global diffusion of sociotechnical systems and their connections to the issues of global migrations and refugees (Akil 2016), the role of faith-based politics in officially secular countries such as the in the US, the persistence of socioeconomic inequities at the same time that there is an app for anything except for social and economic justice, the mutual subversive relationships between scientific advancements and the environment (fracking and Monsanto are among the most obvious examples), the advancements in biomedical sciences (pharmaceuticals) and retractions in global wellness for most of the world population, and the paradoxical co-realities between social media and social disconnection (Turkle 2011; Castells 2012). Probably there is no better manifestation of this apparent conflict than in the views supporting and opposing the mandate for a universal application of COVID-19 vaccinations within the medical community itself.[6]

The contradictions found in these dichotomies can be considered not as inconsistencies in the condition of Modernity but as an intrinsic quality that communicates the very meaning of progress that is born out of internal dialectics. Not only should one factor the global consequences of this modernity, as Zigmund Bauman might argue (Bauman 1998), but the very idea of progress should be reconsidered in ways that would embrace the necessary and urgent changes that humanity needs right now.

One might ask the question of whether a re-definition of Modernity is even possible today. Not only are we confronted with these intrinsic dichotomies in interpretation on the level of the idea itself, but also on the level of its daily use as praxis. It seems that an answer to Latour's question "are we modern?" is finally at hand. The answer is yes and no. An observer is bound to acknowledge that these dichotomies undeniably exist in modern societies and are practiced by modern people who think of themselves as

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[6] As examples, we could refer to two cases, in France and the US, which certainly do not lack in scientific knowledge and praise for science as major elements of their modernization process as modern states. See https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/26/nyregion/health-workers-vaccination.html and
https://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2021/06/18/covid-19-pourquoi-la-vaccination-plafonne-chez-les-infirmiers-et-les-aides-soignants_6084616_3244.html accessed on 30 October 2021.

modern without regard to the contradictions with the textbook definition of the term. This observation clearly reveals that modernity is a fleeting definition and that the state of being modern can be, in fact, captured only in its state of flux. We are not modern; we are in a state of becoming modern. Modernity today can be seen not as a static condition or an immutable attribution that we have arrived at. It is a condition that is yet to come.

3. In the Shadow of Pandemic

A simple assertion that modernity represents the major switch from tradition, the use of science and the scientific method, rationality and individualization, etc., only serves to re-echo the worn-out leitmotif of European positivism (Eisenstadt 1973). The classic narrative of modernity is often one in which the Western world seems to carry the burden of the civilizational project. This view might be accompanied by the idea of civilization as *modern manners* – so aptly described by Norbert Elias (1969). In this view of *civilization*, we could also see the interpenetration of attitudes and hygienic practices, which introduce the acceptance of medical experimentation in a world devastated by recurrent epidemics (Deming 2012). In this vein, it is also worth mentioning how epidemics and pandemic periods can trigger social changes in different aspects of social life (Gottfried 1983; Byrne 2006; Cantor 2001). Following the link between modernity, modernization and hygienic practices, it is interesting to note new precautions in restaurants in China following a domestic debate about food safety. Restaurants in malls and upper-class districts clearly advertise the use of gloves and masks in the kitchen, which are sometimes open, visible by the customers (glass wall separation). More in general, the introduction of public health concerns and related hygiene practices can be seen as a conscious passage to a modern China (Rogaski 2014).

Concerns about human species in an already connected world might awaken a "planetary" human identity (Morin 2001). The emergence of imminent global threats, like existing or future pandemics – to which extent are unknown – and the responses taken to address these threats certainly reveal weaknesses in the very making and nature of society itself. Nevertheless, we will argue that these global threats do accelerate reflexive questioning of our societies and the different processes of modernization. While declaring the Sars-Cov2 pandemic, Tedros Ghebreyesus, Director-General, World Health Organization (WHO), pointed out[7] that this was not the first pandemic humanity has faced, but it was the first time that humanity could handle it. Such a statement represents a major global acknowledgment by an international institution, while facing the unknown extents of a partially known virus. The solemnity of that statement reverberated around the world with alarm and fear. Uncertainty and precariousness are characteristics of our time: crises like climate change and COVID-19, current and potential, amplify these states of mind and condition (Morin 2000; Id Yassine, Mesa 2022). Environmental awareness and public health have been raised as priorities, but they must still struggle to be culturally understood and socially legitimate. In this process democracy plays a pivotal role.

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[7] See Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus' opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19 https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19-18-january-2022, 11-march-2020.

What are the limits of Derrida's democracy couplings, between freedom/equality and authority/control? The COVID-19 pandemic has constituted itself as a political experiment in which democratic political institutions and their necessary entanglements with science must cope with the extent of an information age (Castells 1996), social media (Kirby 2009), and the rise of populism (Eatwell, Goodwin 2018; Norris, Inglehart 2019; Fitzi, Mackert, Turner 2019a, 2019b; Stockemer 2019; Farro, Maddanu 2020), in all its forms (Laclau 2005; Gerbaudo 2017; Mouffe 2018). While some supranational institutions are criticized for their technocratic apparatus (Wallace, Smith 2007), they still represent the latest structuration of a complex society, in which rights, risk assessments and public health must find a synthesis. Different – but similar – policies are in this third decade of the twenty-first century inflaming and challenging the nexus of democracy. On the one side we observe the assertion of the ethical superiority of public health, common good and the collective interest, the rising role of science and politics, and rational management and effects control (Cooper 2022; Dobbins 2022). On the other side, we see a governance that alternates or reinforces lockdowns, mask mandates, movement limitations, real-time location tracking, Green Pass (Digital Covid Certificate, also passports for traveling), etc., which are, beyond any doubt, an unprecedented freedom restriction enabled by new technological tools.[8] Rejection of such limitations and biopower control lies in a more and less justified criticism against practical applications of scientific data.

As observed by studies on "who guards the guardians", the military (as an institution) embodies the very essence of bureaucracy – which is inherently the framework of the modern state.[9] We see in it the force of a goal-oriented modernization that can, at any moment and for different reasons, trigger the Agambian "State of Exception" (Agamben 2003 [2005]): to enjoy exceptional shields, also in form of secrecy, from civil responsibility, for instance, pollution, natural disasters, or disease (Esu, Maddanu 2022); to protect the legal institutions or occupy them in their name (i.e. the monopoly of violence) like the concept of sovereignty in Derrida's democracy contradiction; to carry out modernization processes of a different nature, including public health, civil protection, or ethnic cleansing (*sic*!). The nature of modernization, which is led by any of the three bureaucratic institutions – Government, Economy, and Military[10] – does not imply any good or bad, by itself: without ethics and social progress, modernization is the neutral, dry process that applies rationality, technology and logistics, no matter their scope. Modernization does what the legal authority programs.

The perpetual pursuit of modernization processes constantly carries with it societal transformations (or the perception thereof) in different spheres of society. However, what the current modernization processes in major countries around the world are showing is a similar, if not identical, process of military, technological, research and scientific modernization programs. From the USA to China, from Pakistan to India

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[8] In the midst of such controversy, the philosopher of the "State of Exception" Giorgio Agamben plays an important role, although not without facing strong rejections from other academics. See *The Revenge of the Real Politics for a Post-Pandemic World* by Benjamin Bratton.

[9] This note might not be necessary for our readers here. However, we want to remind of Max Weber's understanding of bureaucracy and its extent, as the apparatus that supports the legal power, thus the modern authority itself.

[10] We are referring here to the three institutions that C. Wright Mills defines as dominant in industrial societies in his Power Elite (1956).

and Israel, we observe a global competition in fields such as the military and securitarian technology – including "panopticon" devices to spy on competitors or control citizens, science, research labs, medicine, finance, and foodstuffs. As long as transnational capital remains as the driving force leading globalization in a system of uncentered dependency. However, social aspects, equality and individual rights might lag behind, showing advancements and an accelerated modernization without assertion of ethics and social progress.

Modernization processes are no longer characterized by unidirectional colonial dependence and subalternity. This does not deny any postcolonial *raison d'être*. Rather, the argument harks back to Immanuel Wallerstein's understanding of globalization as an interdependent system, and governmental lack of control (Sassen 1996, 2008). New superpowers, like China, are emerging with all their rational force, their bureaucracy, and their strong government. These processes are not driven by decoloniality – which would include a cultural reckoning and a challenge of colonial power and hegemony. Rather, they are driven by financialization, and economic nationalism on the one hand and, on the other, a self-serving economy – i.e. society at the service of the economy, not the other way around.

Modernization appears as a leveling force, but empty without an ethical guidance. Modernization, as described above, remains a transformative social force that does not affirm the triad of Reason, Science, and Justice *per se*. For this reason, we focus on a reconceptualization of modernity (a defense?) as a common moral/ethical ground for asserting equality and justice for humanity. Unlike modernization – which happens in disproportionate ways in different parts of the world, where the powerful forces lean toward – principles of modernity such as processes of awareness and liberation, assertions of justice and equality, can be claimed and triggered in different parts of the world, even in the poorest and remote. Social actors, individuals and collectives, can assert these principles in Syria or Eastern Europe, in the Global South or Australia, in the US or in Chile. The extreme fluidity and "overload" stimuli flowing through our global communication, are not just favoring new hybrids; they are also carrying empathy, and community as humans. Nevertheless, there remains a resistance to the ratification of the end of Modernity. As suggested by Touraine's *In Defense of Modernity*, there remains a necessity for a global ethics. In the shadow of a pandemic and looming global catastrophes (i.e. climate change and its outcomes), we come back to the essential idea of *the modern* as a state of awareness in which humans define themselves as the protagonist of their time. By leaning on previous theorizations of multiple and alternative modernities (Eisenstadt 2003; Göle 1996), and modern social imaginaries (Taylor 2004), rather than disconnections, we see increasing capacities for connecting modernities. COVID-19 as a global crisis has the potential to usher the possibility of a civilizational detour that is founded on the need for a public health ethics and strategies for global equity, and leading us towards a modernity-to-come, renewing a global awareness of the triad of Reason, Science, and Justice while remaining cognizant of the common goods and redistribution. As such, a resurgent thesis, echoing Derrida's *democracie à venir* (to come), is revealed. It does not define a horizon but posits a continuous flux in which a conscious, ethical, and equitable action can now unfold.

3.1 Democracy and Modernity-to-Come

The meanings and extents of modernity have been challenged, in the idea itself of science, in its declared rationality and its modernization processes (Latour, Mongili, Mignolo). We move through the classic postcolonial criticism, including the issues of subalternity (Spivak), decentralization (Chakrabarty), and cultural identity (Gilroy). Hybridization, confirmed in transnational studies and approaches (Gilroy, Appadurai) in connected histories (Chakrabarty, Douki and Minard) and sociologies (Bhambra), suggesting global approaches to current processes. However, we do not ratify the end of modernity.

By connecting different conceptions and understandings of modernity and its extents – including modernization – in our volume, Global Modernity from Coloniality to Pandemic, we attempt to follow an update that shows how modernity has been changed by globalization, climate change, new technology, and populism. The wide spectrum of cross-disciplinary contributions to the volume show, if nothing else, the diverse and multifarious ways we can talk about modernity. Researchers from disparate disciplines such as math and medicine, computer technology and political science, visual culture and sociology, etc., all internalize various aspects of modernity and reach wildly divergent conclusions. Far from being a unified concept, modernity, instead, turns out appearing more like a promise and a horizon. If we are still talking about the possible horizon of modernity, it is because the purpose and directions of modernization can still be defined and redefined (Akil, Maddanu, 2022, 380-90).

After having agreed on the colonial character of modernity and modernization in its Eurocentric perspective, we want to insist on a different characteristic of modernity, that, in our view, meets universally accepted human ethics. As Alain Touraine suggests in his *Defense of Modernity*, some universal ethics generated from the enlightenment idea of modernity still apply to the societal conditions. By reaffirming the emergence of the Subject and subjectivation in what he calls "hypermodernity", Touraine aims at highlighting two main social actors today: women and advocates of migrants and refugees. The main argument is that we still need a universal horizon of principles to combat oppression and inequity. Different social actors, global actors, lead movements that directly address the main challenges of our time, be them in defense of the planet, the role of women, or in support of international migrants and refugees (Touraine 2022).

Derrida's notion of a *democracy-to-come* dates back to 1989 (*The Other Heading*), but it is only in "Rogues: Two Essays on Reason" (2005) that the French philosopher dissects this concept. We see in this notion a useful tool to re-define modernity today. Derrida's fluid democracy retraces over significances and extents of *Demos* and *Kratos*, the latter referring to the possibility that something goes rogue, wrong, in democracy. While Kratos represents the necessity to rule, Democracy represents the risk implied in the exceptional force that *sovereignty* can exercise – where sovereignty is the ultimate authority of the State. However, some aspects remain central: *freedom/equality* (in a necessary balance dynamic, and *sovereignty* – the necessary constraint that is required to maintain the democratic institution. It would be imprudent and hasty, in truth hardly reasonable, to oppose unconditionally, that is, head on, a sovereignty that is in itself unconditional and indivisible. One cannot combat, head on, all sovereignty, sovereignty in general, without threatening at the same time, beyond

the nation-state figure of sovereignty, the classic principles of freedom and self-determination. (Derrida 2005, 158)

Derrida pauses the theoretical reflection on sovereignty and the possibility of a "rogue state" (*Voyou*, in the original French) to engage with specific events, or *tranchants*, as Ricoeur would call them, that mark a change in the balance between democratic freedom and the power of the democratic authority, exceptionally going beyond its limits, or reconsidering its limits. Particularly, Derrida cites the Algerian election in 1991[11] – which consequently led to civil war, and the fragility felt in the US after September 11. In the first case, Derrida observes the "rogue" risk in democracy while it faces events that are interpreted as a potential danger for the very existence of Democracy – i.e. the democratic victory of a party that would end Democracy, if in charge. In the second case, Derrida sees the fragility of a democracy, a superpower that is attacked from within, by a former ally – i.e. victim of its own politics.[12] These reflections on democracy versus sovereignty appear to be even more pertinent today, in the age of social media, populism and fake news. Mutatis Mutandis, we posit a parallel modernity-to-come by highlighting two major events that challenge our final conceptualization of global modernity: climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic. Are we entering an era of global awareness in which institutions and civil society will share responsibilities for both everyday life and systemic production? Even if that would be the case, it does not mean that conflicts, resistances and reactionary movements are not actively challenging whatever project the new era unfolds. Modernity, not unlike Democracy, must be "freed from all ontology or teleology" (Derrida 2005, 87). As Derrida often repeats, *to-come* clearly lacks a verb. In order to avoid misunderstanding about the idealistic nature of the expression, he reminds that "the to-come announces nothing" (90). There is no accomplished form of Democracy – it is time to think the same of Modernity. We have never been modern, Latour said; and we will never be! Again, as Derrida says, the expression first and foremost "translate[s] or call for a militant and interminable political critique" (86). In the same way, modernity-to-come announces constant criticisms, *within and without* science and politics, media and civil society. Individuals and collective awareness must now be awakened to face global crises and challenges confronting us not as individuals, not as countries, or cultures, or organizations, but as a species.

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[11] The first multiparty democratic election in 1991 saw the Islamist party, FIS (Front Islamic du Salut), win 48% of votes in the first round of election. Under fear that the Islamist party would establish an Islamic regime, wiping out the secular tradition followed since the Algerian independence led by the FNL (*Front National de Libération*), a Coup d'Etat by the military avoided the transition of power. A decade of terror followed the event. For a complete analysis, see Stora (2000).

[12] However, Derrida does not mention the securitarian policies in the aftermath of September 11 which can themselves be seen as "rogue" action. Particularly, we are referring to the surveillance procedures enabled with the Patriot Act, signed by President George W. Bush in 2001, as well as other anti-terrorism measures that led to the tightening of border controls, unilateral military interventions, etc.

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