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MODERN SUBJECTIVITIES IN WORLD SOCIETY

Global Structures and Local Practices



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Modern Subjectivities in World Society

Global Structures and Local Practices

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February 2018

Dietrich Jung
Stephan Stetter

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Modern Subjectivity and the Emergence of Global Modernity: Syntax and Semantics of Modern Times

Dietrich Jung

INTRODUCTION

Today the routines of everyday life challenge religion. Many old gods ascend from their graves; they are disenchanting and hence take the form of impersonal forces. They strive to gain power over our lives and again they resume their eternal struggle with one another (Weber 1917, 149).

On 7 November 1917, Max Weber, in his lecture *Wissenschaft als Beruf* (Science as Vocation), described the increasing modern differentiation of social spheres using the metaphorical words cited above. In his essay *Zwischenbetrachtungen* (Intermediate Reflections) he had already compared the macro structures of modernity with a form of worldly polytheism that is characterized by the competition of different and relatively autonomous spheres of value such as economics, politics, religion,

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science, eroticism, and the arts (Weber 1915).¹ About 30 years later, the Egyptian Said Qutb, a key intellectual figure in the ideological formation of contemporary radical Islamist thought, described the modern world in very similar terms. He strongly believed the world was living in a time of “ignorance”, in a modern *jahlīyya*, referring to the polytheist period that preceded the revelation of the Quran. According to Qutb, Muslims had departed from the straight path of worshipping the one and only God by adhering to the many gods of a materialist world with its artistic, economic, legal, and political spheres. He advocated the idea of Islamic governance, which is conceived to replace modern fragmentation in establishing the unity of God’s authority over men. Only Islamic governance would guarantee the essential unity of “worship and work, political and economic theory, legal demands and spiritual exhortations, faith and conduct, this world and the world to come” (Qutb 1948).

In experiencing modernity as a process of increasing social differentiation challenging religion, both the German sociologist and the Egyptian Islamist employed the metaphor of polytheism in their description of the modern condition. Their examples point to the unity in the individual experience of modernity as a fragmented, impersonal, and therefore, highly contingent form of social order. While Weber and Qutb agreed in their diagnosis of modernity, they strongly differed with regard to the ways in which they imagined human individuals coping with these challenges of the modern world. In Weber’s eyes, modern subjects simply have to live with the imperative demands of these social structures. Said Qutb, instead, called for the reintegration of functionally separated social spheres into a holistically interpreted Islamic order.

In their diverging responses to a mutually shared diagnosis, Weber and Qutb embody the abstract core question of this volume, that is to say the question about the nature of the interlacement of global structures with different local practices. Taking this illustrative comparison between the German sociologist and the Egyptian Islamist as my point of departure, this chapter attempts to give a very preliminary answer to the question as to the way in which we can conceptualize the interplay of macro and micro levels of global modernity. How is global modernity as the simultaneity of “world society” and the “autonomous subject” to be understood? I will attempt to explain this by combining theories of world society, in particular Modern Systems Theory, with an approach to modern subjectivity formation that is informed by post-structuralist thinking. Whereas the former provides a cross-cultural general theory

of world society based on functional differentiation, the latter helps me shift the focus from particularities, from the idiosyncratic responses of individual and collective actors, to the generalizing forces of world society. In doing so, I base my concept of modern subjectivity on a Foucauldian understanding of the modern subject, referring to its paradoxical nature of being both subject of its own creation and subjected to the formative power of cultural structures that ultimately decide about the social recognition of forms of meaningful selfhoods.

In the following, I will design a very sketchy heuristic framework in three steps. It represents a step toward a paradigm for interpretative research into the complex nature of the historically contingent interlacement of the global and the local in modern times.² At the same time, it is a theoretically guided critique of the equation of modernization with Westernization, a critique that I will underpin with short examples from my empirical research on the Muslim world. First, I introduce the concept of social emergence linked to elements of Luhmann's Modern Systems Theory and post-structuralist theories of the subject. This theoretical setting serves me as an encompassing framework of modernity in which the connection between the macro and the micro levels is thought in terms of "constitutive interdependence" (cf. Zahavi 2015). The second section puts its focus on theories of functional differentiation and sociological institutionalism in order to conceptualize the macro level of global modernity as world society. I argue that the functional separation of different value spheres is not a property of so-called Western modernity, but an inherent feature of modern world history. In the third section, I shift to the micro level of social practices. This section introduces my distinction between the syntax and semantics of modernity, the latter attaching specific, historically contingent meanings to the former, and the emerging structures of world society. Finally, I sum up my argumentation and conclude with some open questions for further research.

EMERGENT MODERNITY AND THE CONSTITUTIVE INTERDEPENDENCE OF SOCIAL MACRO AND MICRO LEVELS

Addressing the question regarding the relationship between macro and micro levels of modernity brings me back to my departure point in the Weberian description of modernity as a form of "disenchanted polytheism". When following the interpretation of Weber's work by Wilhelm Hennis, it was the historically specific formation of the modern subject,

the condition and “nature” of modern human beings (*das moderne Menschentum*), which was at the center of Weber’s lifelong enquiries. This specific interest strongly impacted on his methodology (Hennis 1987, 32). According to Hennis, Weber’s central theme was the tension between social order and the individual. Modern subjects must construct themselves as selves. They are supposed to represent holistic unities in a fragmented world of relatively autonomous social value spheres (1987, 70–73). Weber saw the modern individual in the midst of formally rationalized and therewith impersonal spheres of social life. These modern value spheres are in a constant struggle with each other and obstruct the attempt of the individual to construct a meaningful and holistic form of selfhood, or to live a “good life”. In Hennis’ reading, the central question of Weber’s work was embedded in the understanding of modernity as a double reality of systemic imperatives and individual desires, in social science parlance often expressed as the methodological dichotomy of structure and agency or macro and micro levels. Consequently, Weber’s methodological departure point in order to understand the modern condition was the individual. Yet despite this methodological individualism, his sociology arrived at a very detailed and influential description of social macro structures. Weber’s iron cage of modernity consists of systemic macro structures such as capitalism, bureaucratization, and the modern state. These impersonal “forces” indisputably condition the individual’s search for meaning in life.

In light of this interpretation of Weberian sociology, I suggest conceptualizing modernity as the simultaneity of a systemic social order and a multiplicity of particular social practices. I do so with the help of two strands of social theory: differentiation theory and hermeneutical/post-structuralist approaches to modern subjectivity formation. While functional differentiation represents modernity at the macro level, Weber’s disenchanting gods, the individual’s task to construct him-/herself as a subject is the particular feature of modernity at the micro level. Theoretically speaking, global modernity is generally characterized by structural differentiation and historically contingent forms of the modern subject. In order to make these two theoretical perspectives compatible, I anchor my reading of them within a framework of theories of emergence. To be sure, my references to theories of emergence are very selective and tend to gloss over the variety of ways in which this concept—ranging from weak to strong forms of emergence—has been understood. So far emergence as a theoretical paradigm has remained relatively “ill defined”

(Holland 1998, 221). My application of this concept in this chapter, therefore, is only inspired by the general controversy about the different meanings of emergence, in particular as this discussion has been taking place in the field of the social sciences.

Looking at the application of the concept in the social sciences, the paradigm of social emergence provides us with a multilevel description of the world. It combines at least three levels of analysis: the individual, the interaction between individuals and collectives, and emerging macro structures. A general assumption in this multilevel description of social reality is that properties of the higher levels are not reducible to the micro-dynamics of the individual level, even if the level of the individual may be considered to have ontological priority. From this perspective, our understanding of the social cannot be grounded in a complete explanatory reduction of social structures to individual actions. Instead, we must assume a kind of relative autonomy of nevertheless strongly interdependent levels of reality (Clayton 2006; Urry 2003). Consequently, the dominant modus of functional differentiation at the systemic level of world society, the “polytheism” of global modernity, is the result of a process of sociocultural evolution which could not have been predicted to occur based alone on those properties that can be found at the individual level (cf. Emmeche et al. 1997, 83; El-Hani and Pihlström 2002). The macro structures of modernity, therefore, dispose over properties distinct from the properties of individuals.

In combining random mutations, selection, and forms of self-organization, global modernity has emerged as the historical and accidental result of sociocultural evolution (cf. Kaufmann 1993, 3). Even if the complex higher-level entity of world society may have emerged from the lower-level entity of individuals, we can consider functionally differentiated world society as being characterized by genuinely novel properties (cf. El-Hani and Pihlström 2002). Modern Systems theory (over)emphasizes this point of unpredictable and autonomous properties at the macro level in the theoretical assumption of the autopoietic nature of social systems. Instead of separating “psychological” and social levels, that is to say the individual and society, entirely from each other, as Luhmann does, theories of emergence give room to perceive them as connected through forms of social and discursive interaction. As a meta-theoretical framework, emergence allows us to relate different levels of reality to each other, and it makes visible the problem of passage between the individual and the structural levels (Emmeche et al. 1997, 90).

The relationship between the individual and the social levels may be characterized, on the one hand, by a specific form of “supervenience”, this is to say by the ontological priority of the individual. On the other hand, the structural level exerts a specific form of “downward causation”. Even if we consider the individual level as ontologically prior to the structural level, this macro level may exert causal powers downwards onto the micro level, contributing to social changes there. Causation here should not be understood in terms of law-governed relations, but as a form of external opportunities and constraints on the development of modern individuals in a Durkheimian sense (Sawyer 2001, 558). Consequently, modern society and modern subjects stand in a systemic relationship of mutual constitutive interdependence. Modern individuals are different from pre-modern individuals in the way in which this form of constitutive interdependence with the social level of functional differentiation has developed. This specifically modern development of the relationship between individual and social levels I try to conceptualize further with the help of Foucault’s definition of subjectivity. From the theoretical perspective of Foucault, the modern individual is understood as a subject in two opposite and even contradicting ways. The modern individual is both subjected to the constructive power of larger social structures and the result of a process of self-creation through individual subjectivation.

In the language of emergence, individuals as such may represent the foundational level of the social, whereas their cultural molding, and therefore, the concrete historical forms in which they appear may be partly explained—methodologically speaking—as the result of instances of “downward causation”. It is in this sense that macro and micro levels appear in a process of constitutive interdependence. Said Qutb’s imagination of a modern form of Islamic governance and Max Weber’s description of modernity as an iron cage are meaningful responses to this structural impact of functional differentiation. From this perspective, in processes of subjectivation, individuals reflect upon the discursive reality of functional differentiation and, at the same time, they construct historically specific cultural types molded by their local social environments. Modernization, therefore, has often been understood as the increasing separation of individual and social levels of reality. Yet, at the same time these levels become increasingly more interdependent and we can observe a multiplicity of responses from social actors in furnishing these levels of reality with meaning.

MODERNITY, WORLD SOCIETY, AND FUNCTIONAL DIFFERENTIATION

Historical individuals are not the carriers of transhistorical, anthropologically constant properties. Both structural and individual levels are subject to processes of sociocultural evolution and historical change. In the sociological tradition of differentiation, sociocultural evolution has been addressed by the quantitative and qualitative increase in social differentiation. At the structural level, human life became more complex and shifted from forms of segmented differentiation via hierarchical stratification to functional differentiation as its prime form of differentiation. We can therefore define global modernity in its generic meaning by the emerging structural dominance of functional differentiation as the distinctive macro feature of modern society.³ Here, Niklas Luhmann's Modern Systems Theory seems to be good choice for understanding modernity as an emerging level of the social in its global macro dimension.

Luhmann conceptualizes modern society as world society, as an all-encompassing global system of communication. Consequently, he refuses to conceive of society in the liberal meaning as a corporate actor based on relations between individuals. This definition of modern society does not know any cultural or territorial limits. Modern systems theory further differentiates modern society into functionally defined, equally self-referential subsystems, such as politics, economy, law, education, science, and religion, closely reminding us of the many gods of Weber's value sphere.⁴ In Luhmann's eyes, these subsystems operate according to their own distinct communicative codes. Based on this self-referential modus of operation, they are clearly separated from their environments. The self-reference of these subsystems is based on specific binary codes deciding on the compatibility of communications. The legal system, for instance, operates with the code legal/illegal, science with true/untrue, religion with transcendent/immanent, and economics with to have/to have not. It is through these codes that functional systems draw sharply differentiated boundaries to their environments and guarantee their operational closure as self-referential social systems (Luhmann 1986a, 124, 183).

While Luhmann's Modern Systems Theory works on a very high level of abstraction, the school of sociological institutionalism around John W. Meyer, the so-called Stanford School of sociological institutionalism,

has developed a macro-sociological theory of world society that works with more concrete empirical substantiations. Meyer and his colleagues define world society as a world culture based on universal cognitive, normative, and ontological models. They point to the high degree of social isomorphism that characterizes economic, educational, political, and scientific institutions (Meyer et al. 1997, 152–153). In their theory, Luhmann's functionally separated sub-systems of global communications have been translated into a morphology of global institutional models. These models are visible, for example, in the worldwide expansion of higher education throughout the twentieth century (Schofer and Meyer 2005). For Meyer and his colleagues, modernity is characterized by "shared understandings of nature, humans, and society", by a form of "mimetic isomorphism" which stands for the "un-reflected incorporation of institutional rules by actors" (Meyer 2009, 41). In principle following a theory of functional differentiation, the Stanford School underlines the constitutional interdependence between social macrostructures and social actors. In criticizing theories making rationalized individual actorhood into the ontological fundament of the social, Meyer's sociological institutionalism claims a certain degree of downward causation in the construction of rationalized social actors.

Both Luhmann's Modern Systems Theory and the sociological institutionalism of the Stanford School make functional differentiation a core element of their description of global modernity. Putting these theories of world society in the meta-theoretical framework of sociocultural evolution and emergence, we can forcefully argue against the Eurocentric assumption of the "Western" origin of modernity from a theoretical perspective.⁵ Emergence as a theoretical paradigm does not know origins, and the rise of world society defined through the social modus of functional differentiation must not be confused with Westernization. Such a generic concept of modernity enables us to approach the analysis of non-European histories as an inherent part of the evolution of world society. Turning to the history of Muslim peoples, we are indeed able to point to various instances of the emergence of functionally differentiated domains such as politics, economics, and the sciences. A number of studies about pre-modern Islam have discussed these emerging social spheres and therewith can give empirical evidence for the theoretical assertion of an emerging global modernity with indigenous traits in the Muslim world.

In his study on Islamic political theory, Hamid Enayat, for example, referred to the relative autonomization of the political sphere in

pre-modern Islamic states by the term “Sunni Realism” (Enayat 1982). He argued that the failure of the ideal classical theories of the caliphate became evident with the decline of the early Islamic empires. The political ideal of the theories of the caliphate had their origin in the eighth and ninth centuries and tried to establish a political theory in harmony with the divine will. Yet instead of sharing the charismatic authority of the Prophet, the legitimacy of Islamic rulers increasingly became rooted in the factual power to dispense justice and maintain internal and external security by coercive means. This practice of political authority, the almost unconditioned obedience to the rulers by the ruled, only later was gradually able to achieve a religious justification in the doctrines of Sunni orthodoxy, a form of religious legitimacy, however, which never remained undisputed (Jung 2007, 27–28).

A second example refers to the field of economics. In a book of almost classical status, the French Sociologist and Islamologist Maxime Rodinson pointed to signs of capitalist developments in the Islamic world previous to the imposition of a colonial world market. According to Rodinson, the idea of the fundamental incompatibility of Islam and capitalism is nothing more than a myth. He discerned elements of capitalist production in the economic activities of the pre-modern Muslim world and argued that the normative prescriptions of Islam as such were not able to fundamentally obstruct the development of capitalist economics. In the language of this chapter, Rodinson’s study closely observed the emergence of a specifically economic sphere and the boundary negotiations between economics and religion among Muslims. In his very detailed historical analysis, Rodinson underpinned his thesis with a broad range of historical evidence drawn from the ideas and practices of economic interaction in Islamic history (Rodinson 1966).

Finally, there is the work of George Saliba, who confronts us with a revisionist account of the history of science and the alleged origin of modern science in the Western world (Saliba 2007). In *Islamic Science and the Making of the European Renaissance*, Saliba presents an alternative reading to the “classical narrative” in the History of Ideas, describing the “golden age” of Islamic science as a mere re-enactment of the so-called ancient sciences, in particular Greek science (2007, 2). In taking astronomy as his case, Saliba argues that the Muslim world witnessed “a genuine original and revolutionary production” in science far beyond the death of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1111) whose anti-scientific writings often have been considered to mark the termination of the flourishing

of the sciences in the Muslim world (2007, 21). Saliba emphasizes both the entanglement of different cultural and religious complexes and the specific Islamic contribution in the emergence of modern scientific discourse. Moreover, he links the boundary demarcation between science, politics, and religion which he observes during the Abbasid period (750–1258) to a social transformation in the administrative fabric of the Abbasid Empire.

It is not necessary to fully endorse the arguments of these three authors in order to see the way in which their work provides us with a host of empirical evidence for the emergence of relatively autonomous and functionally separated spheres of social action in the Muslim world. The three studies clearly indicate the emergence of social value spheres such as politics, economics, and science in Islamic civilization, parallel to those that we can observe in European history.⁶ In this way these studies can support one of the central claims of this chapter that we may understand the rise of global modernity as a process of social emergence whose general features have appeared without specific origins in time and space. The next section will show the ways in which we can analyze the construction of individual forms of subjectivity within the context of these globally emerging spheres of functional social differentiation.

MODERN SUBJECTIVITY FORMATION: SYNTAX AND SEMANTICS OF MODERNITY

With the publication of *Soziale Systeme* (Social Systems), Niklas Luhmann attempted to present a general theory of society that was to be valid for all social phenomena (Luhmann 1984, 1986b, 132). In doing so, he excluded the individual level from the social level, defining individuals as psychic systems that operate by thoughts and not by communications. In his theory design, Luhmann took the idea of the autonomy of the social as far as possible, excluding individual and collective actors from the social realm. Contrary to this extreme version of social autonomy, I would like to stress here the idea of constitutional interdependence between the micro, meso, and macro levels when it comes to the analysis of observable forms of the social. Departing from Alex Viskovatoff's critique of Luhmann, I consider social systems as a fundamental category of the social for defining modernity at the macro level. However, I do not endorse Luhmann's proposition of the autopoietic

nature of social systems. Instead, I argue with Viskovatoff that systemic communication only becomes meaningful through the properties of individual and collective actors. It is social agents who act as the essential carriers of meaning (Viskovatoff 1999).

Taking his conceptual tools from linguistic theory, Viskovatoff suggested understanding the individual and the systemic levels of the social in terms of the semantics and the syntax of modernity. Social systems, then, build on expectation structures, which are characterized by a complex collection of formal rules. In this way, they produce and reproduce bodies of formal knowledge such as science, law, politics, and economics. Yet it is the intentionality of the subject that adds concrete meaning to these rules. At the level of individual and collective actors, the abstract communications of social systems are transformed into the meaningful semantics of “multiple modernities”.⁷ While the syntax of modernity represents modernity as a generic concept, the semantics of modernity generates the observable varieties in its historical realizations. How are the semantics and the constitutive interdependence of social systems and individual actors to be understood?

In trying to conceptualize this specifically modern relationship between individual and systemic levels, I take my theoretical point of departure in Foucault’s hermeneutical definition of subjectivity (Foucault 1980). With reference to Baudelaire, Foucault once defined modernity through the ultimate task of modern individuals to produce themselves as subjects: the task is to “to take oneself as object of a complex and difficult elaboration” (Foucault 1984, 41). This complex elaboration of oneself is behind the post-structuralist concept of modern subjectivity formation. It refers to the paradoxical nature of the modern subject as being both subject of its own creation and subjected to cultural structures that ultimately decide about the social recognition of forms of meaningful selfhoods. As a historical cultural form, the modern subject is the complex result of processes of self-elaboration and subjugation. In the words of Judith Butler: “I am never simply formed, nor am I ever fully self-forming” (Butler 2015, 6). With this paradoxical concept of the modern subject, Foucault and Butler have essentially criticized the hegemonic liberal imagination of the modern subject, building on the idea of the autonomous emancipation of a reflexive, rational, self-interested, and expressive individual. It is precisely this point, their critique of the idea of autonomous rational actorhood, where post-structuralist thinkers and Meyer’s institutionalism meet.⁸

The post-structuralist critique of the liberal imaginary of the subject has emphasized the hybrid nature of modern subjects, basing the diverse hybrid and historical forms of the subject on competing orders of social and discursive practices. I claim that these observable competing orders of knowledge result from the historically contingent forms in which the constitutive interdependence of the individual and the systemic level of the social have developed. While individuals as such might be the ontological foundations of the social, the cultural molding of these individuals, and therefore, their concrete historical forms are, methodologically speaking, in a constant process of reformulation in contact with the higher level. From this perspective, processes of subjectivation reflect the discursive reality of functional differentiation and the communicative imperatives of the syntactic level of modernity to which concrete forms of modern semantics must refer.

Individual and collective social actors have to juggle with the relatively autonomous social spheres defined by globally relevant systems of communication. In defining their own identities, invoking Weber, they must negotiate among the competing ethical demands of "modern gods". Meaningful modern selfhoods depend on the social inclusion in the world of politics, economics, or science. However, the concrete historical form of these inclusions is up to processes of social negotiation and construction of culturally acknowledged types of subjectivity. While modernity in its generic sense is represented by functional systems of communication such as the arts, politics, economics, law, science, education, religion, etc., and the isomorphic institutions through which this communication is organized and processed, multiple modernities emerge in the interpretative properties of social actors whose varying semantics constantly attach meaning to these abstract communications, applying this syntax of modernity through their daily discursive and bodily practices.

The modern Islamist discourse of Said Qutb is one historical form in which these semantics of modernity have appeared in the Muslim world. We can trace back his thoughts about Islamic governance and the nature of the modern Muslim subject to the new semantics of Islamic reform that was initiated in the second half of the nineteenth century. Muslim thinkers such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838–1897), Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905), Ziya Gökalp (1876–1924), Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938), Namik Kemal (1840–1888), Seyd Ahmed Khan (1817–1898), and Rashid Rida (1865–1935) began to articulate their

demands for economic, political, religious, and social reforms with various references to the conceptual reservoir of Islamic religious traditions. In the deliberations of these Muslim activists and intellectuals, we can discern the negotiation about modern boundary demarcations between functionally differentiated social spheres. Driven by specifically modern questions such as the relationship between religion and science or the social function of modern education, they initiated a thorough revision of the core vocabulary of Islam. In this revision, the syntax of modernity—the functionally differentiated social spheres of an emerging world society—was a central point of reference. In addition, they constructed normative ideal types of modern Muslim subjectivities in which the adherence to newly interpreted religious Islamic traditions became one of the central points of reference for the definition of moral subjects. In light of this new syntax, Islamic reformers turned the re-interpretation of pristine Islamic principles into a core feature for the construction of a new discursive world of specifically Islamic semantics of modernity from which subsequent Islamic thinkers have drawn (Jung 2011, Chapter 6; Jung and Sinclair 2015).⁹

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have sketched out a heuristic framework for the understanding of modernity in terms of both a generic global order at the macro level and a multiplicity of social forms at the meso and micro levels. In this way, the perspective of global modernity enables us to view the global and the local, the universal and the particular as two intertwined dimensions of modernity. I developed this framework with reference to three strands of theories: social emergence, Modern Systems Theory, and post-structuralist theories of modern subjectivities. I argue that theories of social emergence facilitate an integration of macro and micro levels as the two outer poles of modern social life. They allow me to construct global modernity in form of different levels of a social reality, which has resulted from a process of sociocultural evolution. I conceptualize these two levels of reality with the help of theories of world society and modern subjectivity formation. In the third section, then, I employ the concept of functional differentiation in order to translate Weber's impersonal forces of modernity into analytically applicable concepts. With a brief excursion in Islamic history, I tried to show how in theoretical terms this framework of global modernity provides a valid critique of the confusion of modernization with Westernization.

In the fourth section, I shift from the macro to the micro perspective and the latter's connection to the level of world society. Drawing on Viskovatoff's critique of Luhmann, I define the macro and the micro levels in terms of the syntax and the semantics of modernity. This dichotomy brings together the universal dimension of modernity and its historical enactment by particular forms. This mutual relationship of constitutive interdependence, I conceptualize further with reference to theories of modern subjectivity, in particular Michel Foucault's approach of the double nature of the modern subject. From this post-structuralist angle, I interpret the rise of the multiple semantics of modernity as a result of the struggle of individual and collective actors with Weber's disenchanted gods which "strive to gain power over our lives". Contrary to Luhmann and Meyer, however, I adopt Max Weber's approach and consider modernization as an essentially conflictive process that continuously contains the potential for struggles among different value spheres. In this conflictive structural setting, social actors compete with each other in their attempts of establishing hegemonic semantics of modernity.

There is no doubt, in this chapter, I have been painting with a broad brush on a vast canvas. Serving its heuristic purpose, this picture raises a number of questions for further research. I will end by highlighting three of them. First, taking my point of departure in Max Weber, I emphasized the conflictive nature of my theoretical perspective on modernity. Global modernity is a scene of conflict and contestation. Given the predominant focus on systemic stability in Luhmann's work, further theoretical elaboration must deal with the question regarding the compatibility of this Weberian conflict theory with the concept of functional differentiation that is strongly linked to a theoretical school more occupied by social equilibrium and system stabilization.

Second, in order to show the validity of my heuristic perspective of global modernity, it is necessary to develop the theoretical framework further with respect to the broad meso level of the social. Here the findings of organizational sociology and social movement theory could make essential contributions, as the meso level is particularly rich in forms of social organization. The discourse of Islamic reform, for instance, has evolved into a hegemonic semantic formation through the social action of the intellectual networks of the nineteenth-century, the populist Muslim Brotherhood founded in Egypt 1928, or more recent Islamic youth and charity organizations (Jung et al. 2014). While this semantics is enacted by collective and individual actors, its discursive power also

shapes the very types of social actorhood on which it thrives. Here the meso level is the crucial intersection of the macro and the micro level, here the global and the local actually meet. How does this meso level relate to the specific properties of the macro and the micro levels? Does the meso level also represent a level of social reality with its own distinct properties? In what ways do the syntax and semantics of modernity historically converge on this level?

Finally, functional differentiation might be the dominant form of social differentiation in modernity, but it is far from being the only one. World society has historically also been structured by stratification and segmentation. The international system of states, for example, is based on both national states as its segmented like-units and a hierarchical stratification of the relationships among these segments. Furthermore, social reality is differentiated by class and gender structures, which impact on the construction of modern semantics and shape different forms of actorhood. Again this raises the question of how to understand social processes on the meso level, where these forms of differentiation constantly intersect. In short, large parts of my canvas still remain white.

NOTES

1. This essay was translated into English under the somehow misleading title: *Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions*, see Weber (1915) in the list of references.
2. In my definition of a paradigm and its role in research, I am following here Merton (1968: 70–71).
3. The claim here is only a predominance of functional differentiation over stratification and segmentation in the social differentiation of world society. Functional differentiation has not replaced, but subordinated these forms of social differentiation, which nevertheless play an important role in the internal differentiation of social systems.
4. It should be noted that, contrary to Luhmann, Weber saw these functional realms of society, his functionally differentiated value spheres, as conflicting ethics of modernity. He therefore designed a conflict theory of modern society that is quite different from Luhmann's theory and its focus of systemic integration.
5. Theories of emergence are helpful in correcting the strongly Eurocentric bias of the Stanford School. Contrary to the argument in this chapter, Meyer and his colleagues declare the legal and religious history of the West to be the sole origin of the world cultural principles which they observe (Meyer and Jepperson 2000, 108).

6. The interesting question here is when and why forms of functional differentiation became the dominant features of social differentiation. This is only possible by informed empirical analysis and would certainly go beyond the scope of this chapter.
7. Originally, the concept of multiple modernities was coined by S.N. Eisenstadt (2000, 2001). Meanwhile it is almost randomly applied as an expression for diversity, as rightly criticized by Thomassen (2010). For my own critical appreciation of this concept, see Jung (2017, Chapter 1).
8. This is my interpretation of these different theories. Personally I have not come across any references between them.
9. This new semantic platform of the Islamic reform movement has developed in many directions, of which the militant version of Saïd Qutb is nothing more than one example. In the course of the twentieth century, ideas of an Islamic modernity have been combined with other globally relevant discourses such as socialism, liberalism, anti-imperialism, or state-centered militarism, see, for instance: Bayat (2007), Cesari (2004), Euben and Zaman (2009), Hunter (2009), Kamrava (2007), Kurzman (1998, 2002), and Tripp (2006).

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