Rival Conceptions of Modernity: Arnason and Honneth Compared

By

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CONTENTS

SUMMARY

How should we think about modernity? Classic accounts explain modernity in terms of a convergent grand narrative with universal application. More recent theories are sceptical of such universality and more inclined to emphasise the diversity of modern experience. In this context, Johann Arnason and Axel Honneth have developed rival conceptions of modernity that seem at first sight to contrast sharply. Honneth outlines a classically universalist account in which struggles for recognition animate moral progress to the extent that recognition is afforded to an ever-widening array of groups and individuals. Arnason describes a field of tensions in which modernity is irreducibly multiple, shaped by civilisational legacies, intercivilisational encounters and cultural interpretations. Honneth discusses the trajectory he thinks modernity ought to take, whereas Arnason avoids normative claims. I argue, however, that the views of the two thinkers are, to a degree, complementary. Within Arnason's theory there are implicit normative commitments indicative of something like the notion of recognition found in Honneth. On the other hand, I show that marginal themes in Honneth's approach open onto a more complicated view of recognition struggles analogous to the tensions indicated by Arnason. Indeed, Arnason provides a richer account than Honneth of the broader horizons of social interaction, staggered societal trajectories and different cultural reference points that might shape the contours of modernity. Whereas Honneth is more compelling when it comes to why conflicts might emerge from different experiences of modernity and why we should care about them. Ultimately, I will suggest that their rival approaches complement each other.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

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Signed.....

Date.....11/02/2022.....

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INTRODUCTION: WHY MODERNITY? WHY ARNASON AND HONNETH?

Why should we think about modernity? The short answer is that, whether we like it or not, '[m]odernity is the dominant frame for social and political thought not just in the West, but in the rest of the world' (Bhambra 2007:1).[1] Some of the most provocative claims and disputes of our time move within its orbit. On the one hand, there are currently numerous conflicts within nation-states about the role and distribution of power between different groups; on the other hand, there is also a transposition of similar concerns to a geopolitical level, with political leaders making claims on behalf of nation-states in response to the increased global interdependence between peoples (Greven 2016: 1; Moran 2020: 258-260; Bonikowski 2016: 428; Berberoglu 2020: 1-5; Kurowska 2014: 492; van Krieken 2019: 87-89). While not without institutional constraints, such tensions are also underwritten by various interpretations of what modernity is and ought to be, what global capitalism has delivered to some and not others, which economic, political and cultural arrangements ought to be renounced and which ought to be retained. These discontents implicitly reference guiding ideas of modernity in terms of various norms, such as the unrealised or eroded scope of human autonomy—whether individual or collective—and they anticipate possibilities for human interventions in the world to change these situations for the better (Wagner 2016: 152; Kaya 2004: 38; Eisenstadt 1999: 56-59).

A further question is, *how* should we think of modernity—that is, how should modernity be theorised? Conceptions of modernity have underwritten various theoretical accounts within philosophical and sociological discourse since at least the end of the eighteenth century. Central narratives include: an anticipation of future Enlightenment through human reason, the global spread of industrial capitalism, a transition towards societies with more differentiated and specialised human activities, tendencies towards more extreme bureaucratic and instrumental orientations and institutions, an unfinished project of dialogue and mutual understanding, restrictive Western narratives that have become redundant as an expression of Eurocentric colonial power, and a previously misunderstood set of diverse human patterns in need of reassessment (Kant 2005[1784a]: 57-58; Marx: 2002[1848]: 223; Durkheim 1984[1893]: 338; Parsons 1964: 340; Weber 1968: 983; Habermas 1992[1986]:100-101; 1997[1981]: 52-52; Lyotard 1984: xxiv, 27;

[1] Even if this is a controversial claim, the controversy would be impossible without a context in which the validity of conceptual claims within the production of knowledge are instituted as challengeable rather than sacred. Such challenges rely upon ongoing debate as to how accurately and appropriately human concepts describe social-cultural patterns. Indeed, the debates over the validity or accuracy of modernity as a concept invoke the Habermasian notion of a modern self-understanding built on valid reasoning. This perspective will be further discussed in chapter 1 below. The upshot is that even in arguing against the usefulness, accuracy or necessity of modernity as a concept, one implicitly argues within its epistemic horizon.

Quijano 2000: 542-550; Eisenstadt 2000: 1-3).

Modernity rests upon an assumption that a new human epoch would inevitably triumph over traditional orders which had exhibited more widespread agrarianism, a greater disparity between rulers and the ruled, a greater acceptance of inherited rights and privileges, and limited the accessibility of knowledge to a select few (Bendix 1967: 321-322). However, an oversimplistic use of the term can draw too sharp a distinction between a 'before-and-after' socio-cultural condition. Instead, contingent aspects are also important features. These include pre-industrial contexts, incentives for development, the 'impact and timing of dramatic events' and the complex tensions between societies confronting the challenge to 'catch-up' to the pace setting 'reference societ[ies]' while preserving features of their own established cultures (Bendix 1967: 317, 334). Indeed, the possibility that traditions are a 'historical basis and structural component of modernity' and not 'stagnant' predecessors gained more attention across the course of the twentieth century, particularly in historical sociology (Spohn 2011a: 285-286). While modernity is an umbrella term for large-scale social changes in the economic, political and cultural arenas of social life, the staggered trajectories of any such shifts, along with the geopolitical terms under which they are elicited, renders the presumption of uniform results across different cultural and historical backgrounds inadequate for the task of description. The general implication is that the answer to how modernity should be thought about has changed amid the shifting contours of social-historical patterns and sensitivities, along with scholarly debates about them.

The multiplicity of narratives of modernity hints at yet another basic question: should we think of modernity as 'one or many'? (Wagner 2001a: 42; Wittrock 2000: 54-56) This issue has arisen for numerous reasons, some of which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 1. In the last two decades of the twentieth century, social-theoretical sensitivities emerged regarding excluded human experiences of modernity within earlier accounts. Such sensitivities are detectible within the conceptual revisions of critical-theorical, post-modern, post-structuralist, post-colonial, and comparative historical sociological approaches broadly construed. Amid this intellectual ferment, concerns about Eurocentric readings of history, oversimplified distinctions between the modern and traditional, excluded forms of knowledge and unacknowledged imperial and colonial legacies, mark any account with aspirations to outline universal normative commitments as suspect (Delanty 2006: 267, 272-273; Kurasawa 2004: 2-7; Denzin 1986: 194-195; Cooper 2005: 132-148; Go 2012: 26-28, 32-34). The general suspicion is that such accounts could not possibly do representational justice to the diverse groups which are impacted by, but also which contribute to, modernity. By implication this is not only a descriptive error, but an unjust misrepresentation of differences built into the very theoretical schemes which focus the activities of knowledge

production within the social sciences and humanities.

It is amidst the heightened social-theoretical self-consciousness of the 1980s that Johann Arnason and Axel Honneth developed responses to the question of how to think about modernity. While both theorists developed their early ideas within the orbit of Frankfurt Critical Theory and the work of Jürgen Habermas during the 1970s and early 1980s respectively, they went on to elaborate perspectives which contrasted with Habermas's about the central conflicts of modernity. Both thinkers reach beyond Habermas's notion of communicative interaction to consider other aspects which have some bearing upon the preconditions of human interactions, encounters with others and different experiences of history.

Yet Arnason and Honneth also contrast sharply in approach, and their central contrast is illuminatingly representative of the debate between theorists of 'one modernity' versus theorists of 'multiple modernities'. Honneth casts modernity as a single broad struggle for recognition whereby moral progress occurs to the degree that a widening array of groups and individuals secure recognition. For Arnason, by contrast, modernity is a field of tensions shaped by civilisational legacies, intercivilisational encounters and conflicting cultural interpretations. Honneth's view rests upon normative commitments to unrealised potentials for social justice through a greater appreciation of others in modernity. Arnason's approach is geared towards developing concepts that describe different forms of modernity that emerge in response to Western expansion. Honneth is concerned with one modernity whereas Arnason is prepared to consider alternatives. The two theorists provide different interpretive lenses for discussing modernity, human diversity, and conflict. They offer rival conceptions of modernity.

These differences suggest yet another question: between Arnason and Honneth, which provides the more convincing account of the human orientations which animate modernity? I take this as my central question and I shall argue that the answer is complex. To begin with, the apparent contrast between Honneth and Arnason is not as complete or uncomplicated as it appears. On close examination, Arnason's theory contains implicit normative commitments indicative of something like the notion of recognition found in Honneth. On the other hand, I show that marginal themes in Honneth's approach open onto a more complicated view of recognition struggles analogous to the tensions indicated by Arnason. It is also the case that Arnason does a better job of outlining the cultural preconditions for human diversity and of explaining how older interpretive reference points—civilisational legacies—may be invoked modern conflicts. Yet while both of their approaches presuppose that human diversity and conflict are important features of modernity, Honneth is more compelling on two main fronts: why different experiences of modernity might

result in conflict, and why we should care about these matters.

The significance of my argument emerges in relation to the literature which has been generated around the writings of the two thinkers. In the case of Arnason, there are broadly two areas of focus. First, there is engagement with the nuanced implications of his conceptions of interpretation, culture, civilisations and intercivilisational encounters for potentially decentred identities in encounters with cultural others, the intercultural transmission of ideas and the lasting impressions of such encounters upon modernity (Adams 2009: 258-262; Fuchs 2000: 78-79; Delanty 2010: 51; Linkenbach 2000: 42; Smith 2017: 39-40; Knöbl 2011: 19-20). Second, there are lingering questions about what the normative importance of Arnason's approach is and whether it provides a critical perspective on modernity or moral-political insight (McLennan 2000: 287-288; Delanty 2010: 46-47; Arnason, Blokker and Delanty 2011: 123-124; Adams and Arnason 2016: 155; Wagner 2021: no pagination).

While the results of these theoretical engagements have explicated the subtleties of Arnason's approach, it remains to expose the normative commitments that underwrite Arnason's *oeuvre* with greater clarity. Peter Wagner attempts to do so in his forthcoming article in *Thesis Eleven*, 'Johann Arnason's Unanswered Question: To What End does one Combine Historical-Comparative Sociology with Social and Political Philosophy' (2021). Wagner's conclusions imply that a balanced scepticism towards strong normative commitments along with an awareness of ongoing tensions between autonomy and equality and of the potentials for global instabilities are all worthy lessons from Arnason's thought (Wagner 2021).[2]

However, this still suggests that some self-limiting and tempered approach to theorising modernity and its diverse orientations is important. Why is this the case? The following thesis aims to contribute to these discussions by showing that Arnason does indeed have normative commitments, and that these can be brought into focus by pivoting off analogous concerns that are found in thinking through Honneth's notion of struggles for recognition.

As for Honneth's approach, the response to it has been receptive yet critical, and there are three main issues broadly construed. First, there is the claim that Honneth has become too focused on identity formation and recognition relations between people while neglecting the coercive aspects of political-economic institutions through which people interact (Thompson 2014:780-781; Fraser 2001: 26-28; Zurn 2005: 92, 117). Second, there is the implication that Honneth's notion of modernity and the direction of struggles for recognition is too linear—it unilaterally devalues

[2] This article was accessed online and was not presented in paginated format. As such, the URL is provided in the reference list.

premodern ways of life or overplays the tendencies towards justice and mutual self-realisation as the result of struggles for recognition (Deranty and Dunstall 2017: 815; Zurn 2000: 121; Kompridis 2007: 286-287). Third, there have been discussions within international relations literature as to the relevance of Honneth's approach to recognition for features of geopolitics that cannot be reduced to recognition claims of individuals within states, nor to the instrumental orientations of politicians (Haake 2005: 193; Heins 2010: 161-165; Lindemann 2012: 210-211; Iser 2015: 31, 34; Dimitrova 2013: 665).

The present thesis introduces a novel angle on Honneth's approach by drawing comparisons with Arnason's perspective. The Arnasonian themes may seem alien to Honneth but they are relevant to those aspects of his work that are less developed. Moreover, Arnason touches on the broader horizons of human identity formation and their implications for political and economic institutions, diverse and conflictual historical trajectories, combinations of tradition and modernity, and interactions between states which are not reducible to individual intentions nor to purely instrumental imperatives. By looking beyond recognition discourse narrowly construed through the lens of modernity and alternative modernities, the following study aims to generate an original way of understanding both thinkers and to confront the possibility that one of the two theorists points to a more convincing central idea which animates human diversity and conflict irrespectively of whether modernity is considered to be one or many.

Ultimately, I will side more with Honneth. This does not mean that Honneth's entire theory is convincing and without difficulties. Indeed, it is possible to argue with and against Honneth to suggest that struggles for recognition are both far more inclusive and problematic than a more linear reading of his ideas might imply – indeed, I will show that Honneth admits this. Arnason, too, provides some additional considerations as to why this might be the case. Arnason raises the issue of staggered trajectories and dramatic interactions between geopolitical units with different civilisational backgrounds which give rise to alternative visions of the past and future. But in the end, I will suggest that the reason Arnason does so hinges upon something like Honneth's notion of recognition. This is not to suggest that recognition itself is the silver bullet of concepts – to the contrary, it is problematic to a degree and rather inconclusive in the extent to which it can be shown to have been actually attained. However, as a concept it touches on the anthropic requirement for broader socio-cultural idioms of value through which people can understand themselves in a fair and positive light in relation to others. In this respect, recognition offers at least some sort of purchase upon the question of why one ought to care about others and why others ought to care

about oneself, and also upon problems that might emerge when such care is not forthcoming.[3] To my mind, some appreciation of that dimension is still a prerequisite for the argument that we should pay attention to the interpretive preconditions of cultural diversity and the various implications of interaction between people of different cultural backgrounds. If my position as expressed here appears reductive and naïve, then I hope that it can be conveyed with more subtlety in the chapters to follow.

The diversity-accommodating pedigree of Honneth's or Arnason's theories cannot be taken for granted, and indeed there are arguments to the contrary. Arnason has not given any sustained attention to 'colonial modernities … nor colonial settler societies in the Americas or the Pacific', and his main contributions demonstrate a focus upon civilisations of the North which mutated into states and imperial formations (Smith 2017: 17, 44-45, 51). Honneth has also been charged with a progressive reading of history which does not do enough to distance itself from an 'imperialist metanarrative' of Western exceptionalism (Allen 2016: 3-4).

We could go further and invoke Arnason's and Honneth's male gender and European heritage as grounds for suspicion, and certainly their classical sources have not gone unscathed on similar grounds. Raewyn Connell argues that sociological canonisation is partly a by-product of the privileged positions that male intellectuals of the metropole (Western Europe) such as Durkheim and Weber occupied at a point in history which allowed them to undertake 'grand ethnography' from the 'the imperial gaze' through the one-way extraction of information from the periphery (Connell 1997: 1516-1518, 1523-1526). The narratives of modernity that emerge in the so-called classics are based upon the evolutionary progress of the rest towards the path trodden by the West and invoke 'a synoptic view (of the social-world) from a great height' (Connell 1997: 1519-1521, 1525). Connell's provocative insight dispenses with the notion of a detached, neutral observer who can make grand statements about the social world untouched by imperial trappings of their own socio-cultural context. She is right to take this view. As Stewart Clegg and Robert van Krieken have argued, Connell's critical observation should not be dismissed as a 'mere polemical guilt trip' or what is parochially known in Australia as the 'black armband' view (Clegg and van Krieken 2006: 4). Instead, it draws our attention to aspects of power which were the social-historical precondition for sociological accounts of modernity and their selective rendering (Clegg and van Krieken 2006: 2-4).

Even so, the critical thrust of Connell's intervention issues from the presupposition that we are morally better off by becoming aware of a more complex past with respect to others who have

[3] I am not using the term 'care' here in any philosophical sense that I am aware of—Heidegger or anyone else—in its more conventional usage. To to show concern, interest, appreciation, and/or affection for others.

not been adequately considered in classical accounts of modernity. In essence, this rests on an appeal to something like the recognition that is explicit in Honneth and implicit in Arnason. Certainly, Honneth and Arnason are not without their own use of classical sources, nor are they without theoretical and analytical deficits. Nonetheless, at the level of fundamental concepts they both outline concern about and the preconditions for human diversity, in ways that even their would-be critics at some level must presuppose. This is what makes their respective accounts of modernity interesting and worth wrestling with.

Arnason and Honneth

As briefly mentioned above, both Arnason and Honneth developed their early thinking in relation to Frankfurt Critical Theory. While Honneth remained affiliated with the Frankfurt tradition, Arnason departed with it and found more affinity with the philosophy of Cornelius Castoriadis. Compared with the Frankfurt tradition, Castoriadis had made a clearer break from structuralism and functionalism in general, but also from Marxism in particular. The reasons Arnason's shift in this direction also will become clearer over the course of Chapters 1 and 3. Suffice it to say that despite some initial common ground, the interaction between Arnason and Honneth has been minimal. Before discussing the scant references of each to the other's work, I will briefly provide some basic biographical detail on each figure.

Arnason was born in Iceland in 1940 and his formative studies in philosophy and history took place at Prague from 1960-66 before moving onto sociology at Frankfurt in 1968 and Bielefeld in the 1970s, then Melbourne from 1975 till 2006 (Adams, Smith and Vlahov 2011: 3). In the early years, Arnason's background in phenomenological Marxism shaped the terms of his engagement with the Frankfurt School, in which he attempted to give philosophy a social theoretical overhaul (Adams 2009: 253). As a student of Habermas, Arnason was 'never convinced' that the latter's theory of communicative action, outlining the linguistic prerequisites for modern mutual understandings, could adequately accommodate the social-historical diversity of meaningful human experience (Adams and Arnason 2016: 155, 8; Arnason 1991[1986]: 182).

In the 1980s Arnason shifted away from Marx and made a more decisive hermeneutical turn in which 'culture' became couched in terms of an interpretive 'human encounter with the world' (Adams, Smith and Vlahov 2011: 4). Arnason opted for a post-functionalist and post-Marxist approach that no longer accepted a 'dominant image of society' as an over-integrated system, self-regulating according to functional necessity (Arnason 1986a: 139-138). In his first major work, *Praxis and Interpretation* (1988), Arnason advanced a critical appraisal of Marx, Weber, Habermas and Castoriadis. He outlined a multi-directional view of modernity which shifted the focus beyond

capitalism, to consider the tensions posed by counter-cultural currents, post-industrialism and totalitarianism (Howard 1988: 476, 480; Harrison 1991: 152). He became increasingly critical of Habermas's theory of modernity and its relevance for non-Western traditions with differing historical backgrounds and experiences (Arnason 1986a: 139-138). For Arnason, modernity is a 'field of tensions' related to 'divergent interpretations' of the past, the future and cultural others (Arnason 1991: 186, 207-211; 1997a: 34-35). Through a parallel engagement with Weber, Merleau-Ponty and Castoriadis, Arnason outlined a view of culture as conflicting patterns of world interpretation and articulation which rely upon imaginary significations (Arnason 1989a: 38-40; 1993a: 92-96; 1992: 248; 1994: 157-169).

Arnason took a comparative-historical turn in the 1990s, producing two major works on alternative modernities to the Western constellation: *The Future that Failed: Origins and Destinies of the Soviet Model* (1993b) and *Social Theory and the Japanese Experience: The Dual Civilisation* (1997b). He increasingly engaged in debate with Shmuel N. Eisenstadt regarding plural civilisations and their relevance for multiple modernities (Spohn 2011b: 26). In the early 2000s Arnason outlined a theoretical approach to civilisational analysis in *Civilisations in Dispute: Historical Questions and Theoretical Traditions* (2003). This elaborate contribution has been an ongoing reference point for social-theoretical debate, especially in relation to his reinterpretation of Benjamin Nelson's account of intercivilisational encounters (Knöbl 2011: 24; Salvatore 2007: 328; Smith 2011: 45; Adams 2009, 259-260; Inglis 2010: 140).

Over the course of Arnason's intellectual journey he has co-edited ten additional books on topics as vast as the Roman Empire, Religion and Politics and Nordic modernity and published over 100 journal articles and book chapters in English alone (aside from those in Czech, Russian, French, Italian and Icelandic). He has been honoured by special journal issues exploring his work by *Thesis Eleven* (2000) no. 61, *The European Journal of Social Theory* (2011) no 14, vol. 1, and *Social Imaginaries* (2016) no. 2, vol. 2, which was guest-edited by Peter Wagner. Arnason also received the Research Prize from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation in 2008 and the Palacký Medal for Social Sciences from the Czech Academy of Social Sciences in 2012. His most recent contribution is *The Labyrinth of Modernity* (2020).

The second figure at the centre of this thesis is the social philosopher Axel Honneth, who was born in Essen, West Germany, in 1949 (Petherbridge 2013: 2). As the son of a medical doctor in a region primarily populated by coal-mining families, Honneth noticed, during his school years, both an upward trend in educational participation amongst working class peers and also a lingering shame that they felt towards their own backgrounds (Marcelo 2013: 214). Upon finishing secondary

school, Honneth felt disconnected from his own affluent background and began to identify with the student movement and progressive politics of the late 60s (Marcelo 2013: 214). In the early 70s he became engaged with philosophical and sociological literature and received a master's degree in philosophy from Bochum University in 1974, then going onto doctoral study at the Institute of Sociology at the Free University of Berlin from 1974-82 (Zurn 2015: 2).

During the late 1970s, Honneth, along with colleague Rainer Paris, became critical of structuralist, functionalist and particularly Marxist assumptions that societal reproduction occurred according to 'supra-individual processes' (Teixeria 2017: 588). Instead, Honneth claimed that such approaches need to take more seriously the interplay between broader patterns, processes of socialisation and contexts of interaction (Teixeira 2017: 590). In the early 1980s, Honneth and his colleague Hans Joas published *Social Action and Human Nature* (1988[1980]), which reconstructed various philosophical-anthropological notions of human nature emergent in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Within an outline of Habermas's reinterpretation of historical materialism, the two authors indicate a renewed attempt to ground Critical Theory in practice, a motif which becomes central in Honneth's thought. Specifically, they argue that the theory of historical materialism cannot disclose the universal laws of development, for the theory itself is animated by normative commitments and political practices which emerge amidst historical experience (Honneth and Joas 1988: 152).

From 1982 to 1983, Honneth undertook further study via a research grant under Jürgen Habermas at the Max Planck Institute in Starnberg and submitted his doctoral dissertation in 1983 on theories of power (Zurn 2015: 2). Honneth then moved to the Goethe University in Frankfurt to lecture in philosophy. During that time, he published an extended version of his doctoral thesis entitled *The Critique of Power: Reflective Stages in a Critical Theory* (1988[1985]) (Zurn 2015: 2). In this publication, Honneth deals with critical theories of culture and power in Adorno, Foucault and Habermas. He indicates what he sees as their respective closed schemas of human action, allergies to the normative dimension of human experience, and implausible combinations of action-theoretic and systems-theoretic approaches which, by his reckoning, make these theorists' critical interpretations of modernity questionable (Honneth 1991: xiii-xxxii).

In 1990, Honneth completed his Habilitation, entitled *The Struggle for Recognition*, which was extended and published in English in 1995 (Zurn 2015: 2-3). In this study, Honneth reconstructed the terrain of intersubjectivity found in both G. W. F. Hegel and George Herbert Mead, and advanced the claim that 'it is by way of morally motivated struggles of groups—their collective attempt to establish, institutionally and culturally, expanded forms of reciprocal

recognition—that the normatively directional change of societies proceeds' (Honneth 1995: 92-93). He thought through the intersubjective aspects in Hegelian philosophy and Mead's social-psychology in tandem with the object-relations theories of early childhood experience and identity-formation developed by Donald Winnicott and Jessica Benjamin (Anderson 1995[1992]: xii-xiii; Teixeria 2017: 595). He also combined T.H Marshall's sociological considerations on the development of modern law and the extension of legal rights to a greater array of individuals and groups (Honneth 1995: 115-116). This marks the interpretive reconstruction of a recognition paradigm spanning questions of freedom, identity and justice that have occupied Honneth ever since (Kompridis 2007: 277). During the 1990s he went on to hold positions at the Free University of Berlin and the University of Konstanz, before being appointed chair of social philosophy at the Goethe University (Petherbridge 2013: 1). In 2001 he went onto become director of the Institute of Social Research at Frankfurt and in 2011 he was appointed professor of Humanities at the University of Columbia in New York (Zurn 2013: 3). Currently, he splits his time between New York and Frankfurt (Honneth 2017: 132). His most recent work is *Recognition—A Chapter in the History of European Ideas* (2021).

Despite their similar intellectual roots within the orbit of Critical Theory, Arnason and Honneth have seldom interacted. Early in his theoretical trajectory, Honneth cites Arnason's critical engagement with Marx and Habermas as indicative that capitalism is not to be solely understood as unequal material distribution, but also as 'the asymmetrical distribution of cultural and psychological life chances' (Honneth 2007a[1980]: 92). Further discussing the underexplored implications of Adorno's thought on the non-identical correspondence between nature and human practices, Honneth notes Arnason's thought in *Zwichen Natur and Gesellschaft: Studien zu einer Kristischen Theories des Subjekts* (1976) as an extended consideration on 'the cultural interpretation of nature ... as a central dimension of social reproduction' (Honneth 1991 [1985]: xxii). However, besides admissions that Arnason's approach may offer insights into the cultural dimensions of modernity, there is no further explicit links made by Honneth.

On Arnason's side, there has been no published acknowledgement of Honneth until recently. When queried, in an interview, on his farewell to Critical Theory, Arnason made the following cryptic statement:

> As for recent developments in Critical Theory, such as Axel Honneth's theory of recognition, I think civilisational analysis can relate to that idea. Civilisations are among other things frameworks of recognition, and we can point to interesting contrasts between them in that regard. (Adams and Arnason 2016: 155)

It is certainly a lot easier to relate Honneth's references to Arnason's considerations about culture to the contours of modernity than it is to connect Arnason's reference to Honneth on the prospect of civilisational recognition frameworks. Surely, Arnason is not implying that civilisations remain intact within modernity; rather, he is referring to historical civilisations. An alternative and more plausible consideration would be that civilisational legacies become interpretive reference points amidst struggles for recognition. As we shall see, this is a possible implication of Arnason's own analysis of alternative modernities.

In short, there is scant evidence of actual interaction between the two thinkers.[4] Nevertheless, I shall highlight significant points of mutual receptivity in their work that I believe yield fruitful insights. In effect, I make Arnason and Honneth engage in the conversation they never had. Nonetheless, the parameters of that conversation are rather complex because the two theorists draw on different sources, which shape the way they direct their respective attentions to the features of human orientation, social conflict and modernity.

Honneth's perspective is shaped by both empirical and philosophical literatures. On the empirical side he looks at psychoanalytical, psychological and sociological studies, and at surveys and qualitative interviews undertaken by his colleagues at the Institute of Social Research Frankfurt. He focuses especially on early childhood development, on experiences of injustice within capitalist societies, and on the forms of resistance and protest that emerge in response to such issues (Honneth and Whitebook 2016: 170; Honneth 2003: 131-133; Honneth, Peterson and Willig 2002: 265-269). For Honneth, struggles and discontents in these arenas of life are not merely isolated or contingent events. He sees them as animated by a human capacity for moral learning and reasoning through which unjust circumstances are experienced as both obstacles to positive identities and violations of normative expectations that social relations should be fairer (Teixeira 2017: 593-596; Heidegren 2002: 435).

In this way, Honneth uses both empirical and philosophical literature to inform both 'an anthropology and social philosophy of recognition' (Heidegren 2002: 435). As we shall see, his approach is ultimately a 'philosophy of modernity' which lays out the social-historical conditions in which the diversification of identity formation and struggles for recognition becomes much more widespread than in societies organised around traditional status arrangements (Wagner 2012: 44; Heidegren 2002: 442-443; Duranty and Dunstall 2017: 816). As such, Honneth's view is still

[4] Peter Wagner notes that Arnason has criticised Honneth recently for privileging individual autonomy as the core motif of 'societal self-understanding' in modernity over collective autonomy (Wagner 2021: forthcoming). Nonetheless the Arnason article that Wagner cites is an unpublished paper written in German so I have not detailed that interaction at length here.

anchored by Hegelian presuppositions that socially constitutive identity formation within modern variations of family, law and community contain within their immanent structure, the potential for moral progress to the extent that struggles for recognition achieve resolutions which expand the scope of recognition within these domains of social life (Duranty and Dunstall 2017: 815-816).

While Honneth could be accused of an overly normative framing of social theoretical description, he does not see a strict division of labour between the two approaches. Instead, he sees the relationship between a descriptive account of the social world and a normative account as a mutually informing 'hermeneutic circle' (Honneth and Markle 2004: 390). In his own words:

> we can't start the endeavour of a normative theory without having…certain intuitions about the state of our society which are somewhat descriptive, and then once we step into the normative field by establishing certain principles of justice, we then have to correct these principles by certain intuitions that are of a descriptive type. (Honneth and Markle 2004: 390).

On the surface, this hermeneutical circle between normative and descriptive approaches is less apparent in Arnason's approach. By his own account, he has been sceptical of 'the normative commitments that can or ought to be built into theory', aiming instead to 'clarify the presuppositions and limits of normative commitments' (Adams and Arnason 2016: 156). Arnason is preoccupied with the conceptual problems that issue from descriptions of modernity which impose historical sequences of Western experience upon other times and places as the historical destiny of those others (Spohn 2011b: 32-33). This is both a response to mid-twentieth century modernisation theories and to Marxist approaches that posited impersonal functional and structural forces which were operative in a generally similar way irrespective of emergent human orientations across societies, staggered trajectories of modernisation and different experiences of imperialism (Wagner 2021; Knöbl 2011: 19). Arnason brings theoretical considerations to bear upon empirical—primarily sociological and historical—literature in a way that 'goes beyond the self-referentiality of specialist national histories, conservative area studies and under-theorised empirical sociologies' (Smith 2002: 226).

Nonetheless, he also brings empirical—often historical—sources to bear upon the adequacy of theoretical assumptions themselves, particularly when contrasts between patterns of modernity that emerge are not adequately described by existing conceptual conventions and categories (Wagner 2021; Knöbl 2000: 2, 13-18). In this way Arnason casts a much broader net than Honneth in terms of the sources he engages with to refine his ideas. Furthermore, his considerations concerning the impacts of different civilisational backgrounds and intercivilisational encounters upon patterns of modernity raise the possibility that traditions are not merely supplanted by

modernisation but become interpretive reference points for alternative patterns of culture and power—they become alternative modernities (Smith 2002: 237; Knöbl 2011: 10; Spohn 2011b: 30). But this does beg the question, why have alternative patterns to Western modernity emerged, and why does Arnason think it is important to understand them in this way?

The purpose of this thesis is to confront such questions, but a way into that debate will be sought by addressing the more fundamental question staked out above: 'Arnason or Honneth: who provides the more compelling account of the orientations that animate modernity?' Finding an answer to that question is by no means a simple task but I will come to a position on this through three main steps. First, I outline an understanding of the changing conceptions of modernity and of how Arnason and Honneth broadly respond to this broad field of ideas, considerations and criticisms. Second, I present the contours of their theories along with explicit and implicit implications. This approach is less concerned with recording the raw bodies of literature which Arnason and Honneth employ to orient their own approaches. Its purpose is, rather, to interpret the broad perspectives on modernity which emerge from their respective writings and from their engagements with interlocutors—the whole far exceeds the sum of its parts. Third, I will set up a dialogue between two apparently contrasting approaches to modernity in order to work towards a more satisfying understanding of that multi-dimensional phenomenon.

Methodology and Limitations

My treatment of Arnason and Honneth is based on hermeneutics, which is a form of textual analysis and 'art of interpretation' (Grondin 1994: 1). More specifically, hermeneutics is 'the art of discerning the discourse in the work ... that is only given in and through the structures of the work' (Ricoeur 1981: 138). The hermeneutic circle provides a metaphor for this interpretative endeavour whereby immersion in the text via thorough reading, re-reading, reflection and writing allows re-engagement with the text's particulars and its totality (Moules 2002: 15). Within this 'circular-process' the art of interpretation and textual reconstruction spirals through levels of explanation and understanding (Ricoeur 1976: 77). In explanation we 'unfold the range of propositions and meanings', whereas in understanding 'we grasp the whole chain of partial meanings in one act of synthesis' (Ricoeur 1976: 72). Explanation is more concerned with the 'analytic structure of the text', while understanding is more concerned with the 'intentional unity of discourse' (the broader implications of the text) (Ricoeur 1976: 74; 1981: 134). Interpretation traverses back and forth between initial naïve understandings of the textual whole. It then applies 'explanatory procedures' to finer points, finally returning to a more complex understanding supported by explanation (Ricoeur 1976: 74). Granted, it is impossible for the interpreter to avoid a particular presupposed textual whole in 'the recognition of the parts' (Ricoeur 1976: 77). However, interpretation is

tempered, as far as possible, by an appeal to the textual propositions themselves as opposed to the intentions of the author (Ricoeur 1981:143).

Paul Ricoeur outlines two main concerns for hermeneutics: the reality that we have 'a belongingness to language, tradition and history' and the possibility of critical distance from them (Grondin 2014: 150). Accordingly, there are two main avenues of interpretation: trust and suspicion (Grondin 2014: 154). The first avenue is characteristic of sympathetic exegesis which replicates and explains the text; the second denotes the suspicion that the text privileges some aspects at the expense of others and may even preserve a hidden agenda of power (Grondin 2014: 154-155). These considerations apply not only to the text but also to the interpreter. Amidst too much trust in one's own interpretation, 'the cold shower of distrust' [suspicion] via a return to the text, enables 'a more accurate and humble understanding' (Grondin 2014: 155).

While there may be numerous ways to construe a text, 'it is not true that all interpretations are equal', because the semantic autonomy of the text limits what can be argued for by the interpreter (Ricoeur 1976: 79). The validity of interpretation depends on argument which aims not only at a probable interpretation, but also at an interpretation that is more probable than another, to avoid the vicious circularity of 'self-confirmability' (Ricoeur 1976: 79). In turn, the 'interpreter's preconceptions are transformed ... beyond what is immediately bestowed by reading' (Alevesson and Sköldberg 2009: 99-100). Sound interpretation 'seems more fruitful, more promising ... [and] seems to make more and better sense of the text and opens up greater horizons of meaning' (Madison 1988: 15). Hermeneutics opens and transforms a 'provocative conversation that was already going on before our arrival' (Moules 2002: 13). This understanding of how to relate to the text will be applied to my reading of both Arnason and Honneth.

I will reconstruct Arnason's thought on modernity primarily via journal articles, books and interviews emerging between 1982 and 2010. Special attention will be given to his two books on the Soviet model and Meiji Japan and to the social-theoretical texts which pre-date and overlap the period in which those books were published. The rationale for this is that, while Arnason did publish an article on the 'Multiplication of Modernity'(2001b), his most sustained engagement with the idea of more than one trajectory of modernity emerges in those two earlier books in terms of alternative modernities. So, those two accounts and related considerations around the same period seem the most appropriate objects of study. For these reasons there is less focus upon *Civilisations in Dispute* (2003a), which while important for a broader discussion of civilisations is less focused on modernity.

I will also utilise the same types of primary sources from Honneth and reconstruct the

mainsprings of his outlines of recognition that span the period 1992-2014. I will devote more attention to his account of *The Struggle for Recognition* (1995 [1992]), which emerged around the same period as Arnason's two comparative Soviet and Japan books. This text is the main foundation for the successive elaborations of Honneth's ideas and debates. Even though he elaborates his considerations on recognition in *Freedom's Right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life* (2014 [2011]), the general thrust is still very similar to the original articulation of the idea. Overall, Honneth's ideas are generally more internally consistent than Arnason's because he has a clearer social-philosophical motivation.

I will devote more space to explaining Arnason than Honneth. This is a deliberate choice motivated in part by the fact that Arnason is the less familiar thinker and in part by my judgement that his texts are somewhat less accessible, less direct, and less internally consistent than Honneth's. I will introduce secondary literature where helpful, but the main approach will be to lay out Arnason's social-theoretical considerations and come to an understanding of how they fit together.

Reflecting the nature of hermeneutics, my broad approach to the two theorists balances trust and suspicion. Some trust is afforded to both thinkers in the first instance, in that their respective approaches must be set out in a generous and accurate manner that is also broadly confirmed across the secondary literature. However, suspicion will also be raised via various direct criticisms, levelled at each of them by either their contemporaries or myself. Suspicion will also be applied by indirect criticisms that emerge from considering the implications of their work for broader debates around themes which are central to both Arnason's and Honneth's thought, such as modernity. Such implications can be used as tools to ask how Arnason or Honneth might deal with such a critique. Some trust has to be extended to each thinker for it presupposes that they can respond, even if only in a limited and not entirely conclusive way. This serves to make better sense of how parts of their theories relate to the whole, allowing certain lines of emphasis that reveal their respective strengths and weaknesses. However, it also allows us to situate their respective theories as parts in a broader whole of theoretical discourse and a greater understanding of their respective limitations, despite the intentions or the possible meanings of both thinkers' more conceptually ambitious claims.

The limitations of this project are of a different order from those of research geared towards ascertaining factual truth or quantitative probabilities (Moules 2002: 16; Guba and Lincoln: 106). This is primarily because the findings are at the level of theory which, while indispensable for directing our attention to certain phenomena, have not been established via primary data collection at the phenomenal level (Joas and Knöbl 2009: 9). Granted, there is a vast terrain of historical-empirical sources which Arnason in particular has gathered and explored in his comparative

historical analysis. However, I have no formal training in history, and whether the historical details are entirely accurate exceeds my expertise. I will have to limit myself to the question of how the historical claims made by Arnason and Honneth relate to their theoretical frameworks. The validity of my project lies in its capacity to provide a theoretically coherent account of the relevant texts (Moules 2002: 16).

Further limitations of the project must be noted. There is very little mention of Arnason's most recent work *The Labyrinth of Modernity* (2020). In my view this book is mainly a summary of Arnason's previous work and contains no major departure from the central presuppositions around culture and power laid out in his earlier writing.

When it comes to broader topical limitations, there are numerous and, as we shall see in Chapter 1, an ever-expanding vista of concerns and considerations that would be difficult to accommodate within the scope of this thesis. For example, there is no sustained engagement with feminist thought, but while the feminist constellation of debates also offers valuable critical insights upon modernity and the contours of injustice, there must be limits placed on what can accommodated in relation to modernity, particularly considering the high level of abstraction at which Arnason operates. True, Honneth's approach is more amenable to feminist considerations. But for the most part I will be thinking about the terms of modernity in terms of states, groups, individuals, institutions and ideas, since these are the fundamentals to which Arnason and Honneth both attend. Admittedly, there is a bias towards what Connell criticises as 'Northern Theory' (Connell 2007: 268). Arnason's primary examples are based on the imperial centres of Europe and Asia, and Honneth focuses primarily what he sees as the beneficial knock-on effects of the democratic revolutions in France and North America. Nevertheless, the work of both thinkers, as we shall see, opens onto ideas and implications that are sensitive to the complexities of power and exclusion.

Chapter Outline

Chapter 1 introduces the notion of modernity and traces various ways in which it has been conceptualised. I follow the development of affirmative and negative positions broadly construed and then the fragmentation of these positions into more complex views with a greater sensitivity to both human diversity and implicit aspects of power less acknowledged in earlier accounts. I situate Arnason and Honneth within this broader discourse to give some general shape to where they fit in relation to the various considerations raised.

In Chapter 2 I reconstruct the key features of Honneth's notion of a struggle for recognition

and the story of modernity it depicts. I refer to his internalist perspective that implies one modernity moving towards an increased scope for recognition of individuals and groups within states, which accompanies more liberal-democratic forms of statehood. I also examine his reflections about recognition in broader global context in terms of universal human rights and recognition between states. I show that at both levels the linear reading of an expanded scope of recognition as progress is problematised by aspects of cultural conflicts which Honneth raises but does not pursue in depth.

Chapter 3 sets out the picture of modernity presented by Arnason through his understanding of cultural diversity, power, and civilisations. My primary sources are Arnason's social-theoretical journal articles. I show that Arnason develops a complex interpretive notion of culture that he relativises in global space without implying a closed horizon of meaning or recurrent loops of institutional reproduction. This allows him to consider modernity as a field of tensions which arises from different cultural interpretations of power. These interpretations are channelled into conflicting human institutions of imperialism, sovereignty, capitalism, revolution, democracy and nation, particularly in response to Western expansion and dominance. I then reconstruct his account of plural civilisations, in which families of societies move within the orbit of broader traditions. This allows Arnason to further his case that it is possible that alternative modernities emerged through the impacts of intercivilisational encounters over time. In particular, alternative modernities develop out of the challenges posed by Western modernity and the partial preservation of civilisational legacies.

I next engage with Arnason's two comparative books on the Soviet model and Japan as alternative modernities, the subject of Chapter 4. I trace his outlines of six elements of Western modernity in terms of imperialism, sovereignty, capitalism, revolution, democracy, nation. I then go on to compare the expression of these aspects in the Soviet and Japanese instances, pointing to contrasts and similarities. Attention will be paid both to what makes the Soviet and Japanese cases genuinely alternative modernities, and also to the way such alternatives emerged due to internal cultural or civilisational and external geopolitical factors. The chapter closes by hinting at my main thesis, that Arnason's accounts of alternative modernities harbour implicit assumptions of something like the struggle for recognition highlighted by Honneth.

Chapter 5 confronts the central question of the thesis: 'Arnason or Honneth who provides the most convincing account of the human orientations which animate modernity?' I argue that although the two thinkers take theoretical approaches that do different things, the question is not so artificial if there are similarities at a deeper level. In general, Arnason presents his project as descriptive and as avoiding normative claims, while Honneth wears his norms on his sleeve.

However, I show that Arnason's work implies a significant set of values after all. Moreover, the keynote of Arnason's normative commitments turns out to be a version of the recognition explicitly advocated by Honneth. Only if the claims of different individuals and groups ought to be recognised does it make sense to insist on the level of diversity demanded by Arnason. For this reason, I side more with Honneth because his core concept of recognition is more explicit and compelling even if the broader horizons of human diversity are not as well laid out in comparison to Arnason's approach. Still, I also give Arnason his due and stress that he has something important to contribute to this picture. It is just that this only emerges when thinking of his approach as a type of recognition theory.

I conclude by suggesting that both approaches are complementary. Thinking with both theorists in combination allows us to be attentive to aspects of the contemporary social world which would not be as apparent by relying on either of their assumptions in isolation.

CHAPTER 1: CHANGING CONCEPTIONS OF MODERNITY

Introduction

The concept of 'modernity' has only become a fixture in social-theoretical vocabulary since the last two decades of the twentieth century (Wagner 2001b: 9949).[5] Earlier in the twentieth century, notions of 'modern society' or 'Modernisation' were employed to refer to historical, institutional and cultural changes to the terms of human coexistence. Relevant considerations about modernity emerge in late eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century philosophical reflection on reason and history and make their way into classical social theory.

The current chapter will provide background on the notion of modernity in some of its affirmative and/or critical explications. It will not be an exhaustive survey, but rather a selective theoretical story that allows me to situate Johann Arnason's and Axel Honneth's respective approaches within a broader field of discussion. By doing so, I will aim to arrive at a provisional outline of what their respective contributions might be in order to bring the scope of the following chapters into focus. However, before moving onto the various theoretical perspectives, it is appropriate to outline three broad implications of the term 'modernity'. This allows me to locate the notion in the passage of human time and circumstance, but also to outline some of the general features of an otherwise expansive topic.

First, in historical terms modernity is commonly discussed as an epoch distinct from classical antiquity and the medieval period (Arnason 1997a: 34-36; Koselleck 2004[1979]: 17). The distinctness of the epoch is generally marked by a series of events often cast as milestones in the development and organisation of the societies we currently have. They include the fifteenth-century Italian Renaissance; fifteenth/sixteenth-century European maritime voyages initiating both missionary and managerial colonial expansion;[6] the Reformation/Counter reformation schism within European Christendom; the scientific revolutions;[7] the European Enlightenment [8]; the late-

[5] The etymological origins of the term modernity are claimed to be derived from Latin term *modernus*, used to distinguish between the fall of Roman Empire, it's supposedly pagan orientation and the emergence of a new era of Christianity (Harrington 2005: 17).

[6] As Lightfoot et al (2013: 102-103, 112) indicate managerial and missionary colonial occupations where undertaken by Portugal and Spain occurred in the Caribbean, Meso-America, South America and South Asia form the late fifteenth century onward. Across the seventeenth century, England, France, Sweden, the Netherlands, Denmark followed suit and extending colonial interests in India, North America, Asia, Oceania and Africa from the seventeenth into the nineteenth centuries. Managerial and missionary colonialism based on resource extraction, trade opportunities and the spread of Christianity, often preceded settler colonialism.

[7] The scientific revolution is often cast as the developments in observation and experimentation that emerged following Galileo's seventeenth century vindication of Copernicus's helio-centric theory in via the telescope amidst attempts at

eighteenth century industrial revolution in Western Europe and the democratic revolutions in France and North America (Harrington 2005: 17; Gillen and Ghosh 2007: 15-25; Quijano 2007: 170; Lightfoot et al 2013: 102; Wittrock 2000: 31-37; Wagner 2012: 1; Eisenstadt 1978: 175). Nonetheless, strict periodisation is difficult because there are multiple contexts and staggered trajectories which were affected by these events in different ways (Arnason 2020: 90-94). The most we can say is that there is some loose consensus, albeit by no means uncontested, that the inception of modernity—at least its Western European and its trans-Atlantic offshoot, the Americas—slowly emerges between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Second, modernity is associated the development of social-institutional patterns such as: industrial production; market-driven economies (capitalism); democratic polity; impersonal secular law; bureaucratic management; empirical-analytical science and the nation-state; mass-media; the spread of literacy and urbanisation (Habermas 1987: 174-179; Wagner 2008: 6-8; Wittrock 2000: 34; Gaonkar 1999: 2). A problem with this definition is that if democratic institutional arrangements are a requirement for modernity there would be very few, if any, Western European countries which could claim to be entirely modern before the end of the First World War (Wittrock 2000: 34-35; Wagner 2007: 42). The notion that modern societies exhibit a particular and complete set of institutions is also troubled by forms of modernity which are non-democratic and by those which do not place an emphasis upon secular law (Dirlik 2013: 20; Salvatore 2009: 286-294). In response to these difficulties, the term 'multiple modernities' has entered social-theoretical vernacular to describe forms of institutionally varied patterns of modernity shaped by cultural differences and plural civilisational backgrounds (Eisenstadt 2000a: 1-3; Kaya 2004: 48-55). Additionally, some attention has been given to 'alternative modernities' such as the Soviet model and Meiji Japan, which emerge in opposition to dominant political and economic patterns (Arnason 2001a: 147).

In a third sense, modernity is a matter of worldview or culture or outlook. Modern human orientations are acutely preoccupied by a constellation of contestable interpretations and meanings concerning the relevance of history, institutions and the possibility of human intervention in the course of events. Central to this aspect of modernity is a heightened sense of historical

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censure by the Papacy. Isaac Newton's outline of the laws of gravity and motion are also seen as part of this trajectory (Harrington 2005: 20).

[8] Central motifs of modernity gained articulate expression within Enlightenment intellectual movements—emerging from the seventeenth century into the early nineteenth across Holland, France, England, Scotland, Italy and Germany (Israel 2006a: 26-27, 59, 2006b: 525). Normative preferences now often accepted in Western modernity such as democracy, republicanism, racial and sexual equality, toleration, individual freedom, abolition of both slavery and colonialism, all found articulation in radical enlightenment views (Israel 2006b: 529). However, these orientations were also in tension with more conservative—primarily British—enlightenment perspectives, with preferences for 'limited monarchy, aristocracy, racial hierarchy and empire' (Israel 2006b: 531). As such it is difficult to paint the concerns and outcomes of the Enlightenment with a broad stroke although affirmative and negative views benefit from such caricature.

consciousness which interprets the present in relation to the past (Delanty 2006: 270; Arnason 1997a: 34-37). This can entail an anticipation of future improvement as something humanly attainable by either building upon previous institutional achievements or renouncing institutions understood as obstructive (Therborn 2003: 294). Consequently, modern understandings are often described as interpreting social relations as renegotiable human ends in contrast to premodern understandings that are predisposed to interpreting the social world as fixed in advance and determined by deities or nature (Habermas 1984: 51, 71; Markus 1994: 15-16). Moreover, modernity entails explicitly human-centric solutions to the shared rules for co-existence, the terms of valid knowledge and the satisfaction of needs (Wagner 2008: 12).

Within this interpretive sense of modernity, the European Enlightenment is often cast as a catalyst for reflection upon the scope of human autonomy (Israel 2006b: 529-530). In its wake, notions of human autonomy—individual or collective—gained broader appeal in opposition to forms of traditional and/or political authority (Eisenstadt 2000a: 5-6). The emphasis on human autonomy is also marked by an ongoing tension between those seen as the central beneficiaries of modern institutions and those considered more peripheral, along with struggles to restructure the terms of such relations (Eisenstadt 2000a: 6). In this way, the contested interpretations of modernity turn upon notions of human agency and social participation and are thematised in terms of 'equality…freedom, justice, autonomy, solidarity and identity' (Eisenstadt 2000a: 3-6).

Along with the political dimension, another feature of the Enlightenment legacy is the tendency in modern orientations toward the rational mastery of nature and technocracy (Eisenstadt 1999: 58). Moreover, the development of science extended beyond the aspiration to understand nature toward the mastery and control of nature for human benefit and this—to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the context—has extended to the mastery of human nature and institutional arrangements for the common good 'by those in the know' (Eisenstadt 1999: 57-58).

The Enlightenment legacy of rationality stands in tension with the legacy of Romanticism (Taylor 1979: 11-14, 70-71; Gouldner 1973: 90-92; Arnason 2003a: 48; Wagner 2008: 252). Romantic orientations are associated with the concern that Enlightenment reason leads to reductive descriptions of nature and a lost human communion with the natural world (Löwy and Sayre 2001: 26, 37, 135). Romantic orientations are also associated with 'expressivist' notions of the human condition which claim that individual 'fulfilment is unique and cannot be foreseen, much less prescribed' (Taylor 1979: 70). Romantic sensibilities animate incentives to reinvigorate those meaningful aspects of the past which have been lost, eroded or marginalised by both modern capitalism and human interactions based on calculation (Arnason 1997b: 374-375; Löwy and Sayre

2001: 22-23, 35). The ‘crisis of meaning’ initiated by the Enlightenment prompted romantic ‘interest in other (supposedly more self-contained and integrated) civilisations’ as the last bastions of cultural authenticity (Arnason 1997b: 375). But Romantic orientations have also been viewed with suspicion for fabricating an essentialist caricature of non-Western cultures—Orientalism—as an exotic and unchanging realm of strangeness, which has paved the way for attributions of backwardness in relation to the modernising West by Western scholars (Said 2003[1978]: 118-121; 260-261).

The third way of understanding of modernity—primarily as contestable interpretations and judgements concerning the terms of human autonomy—has become more complex following the late twentieth century ‘cultural turn’ within the social sciences and humanities. The cultural turn overlaps the emergence of the post-mode—post-structuralist, post-modern and post- or decolonial perspectives—which critique Eurocentric and universalist grand narratives of modernity (Therborn 2006: 186-189; Delanty 2006: 267-268; McLennan 2000: 279; Bhambra 2011a: 653-654, 2015: 694; Kurasawa 2004; 7-8, 166-167). The spectre of a Eurocentric social-theoretical legacy—speaking for everybody else as the yardstick of history—loomed large at the close of the twentieth century.

For some scholars, the post-mode has led to a retreat to theorising local contexts, micro-analysis and more inward-looking perspectives within the social sciences and humanities (Kurasawa 2000: 12). For others, particularly those of historical-sociological or post- and decolonial persuasion, an interest in long-term historical interactions and relational histories has remained (Smith 2015: 5, 7). However, for those who focus upon colonialism and its legacies, the inherited social-theoretical constructions of modernity still reflect the ‘political discourse (of) the older imperial centres’ and require post- and decolonial critique (Smith 2015: 6). Even the move by comparative historical sociologists to consider multiple modernities underwritten by cultural differences and diverse civilisational backgrounds is suspected of implicit Eurocentric self-congratulation by continuing to centre Europe as the institutional innovator in relation to which all other forms of modernity are distinguished (Bhambra 2010: 132-135).

It is amidst heightened sensitivities to diverse historical experiences and asymmetries of power within modernity, that Arnason’s and Honneth’s respective attempts to rethink the problematic emerge. Consequently, it is important to revisit the changing conceptions of modernity to see how we got here. This will allow us to get a sense of where Arnason’s and Honneth’s responses fit into a broader picture.

1.1 Classical Social-Theoretical Interpretations of Modernity

In the late eighteenth century, the Prussian philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) provides an answer to the question 'What is Enlightenment?' (2005a [1784]). Kant's answer is significant because his reflections on history and reason cast a long shadow over subsequent affirmations or critiques, finding their way into classical social theories of modernity and beyond. As Kant sees it, the public must be given the opportunity to think for themselves and the freedom to formally criticise monarchical and religious authority through written means (Kant 2005a: 55-59). Enlightenment becomes a reason-based passage away from arbitrary rule and the possibility of historical progress through the uninhibited use of reason as the key to refinement of knowledge by successive generations (Kant 2005a: 57-58). For Kant, the necessity of enlightenment is universal in scope because to halt its progress would be a 'crime against human nature, whose original destiny lies in such progress' (Kant 2005a: 57).

While Kant is convinced that the possibility for enlightenment has universal relevance, he is not pointing to a better future built upon scientific knowledge alone but rather one which is determined by autonomous human reason. In his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) and *Critique of Judgement* (1790), Kant distinguishes between the theoretical reasoning necessary for science (pure reason), the moral reasoning necessary for social life (practical reason) and the assessments of purpose and beauty in nature and art (judgement) (Engstrom 2002: xv). It is primarily the development of practical reason that Kant sees as crucial for human autonomy because describing what *is* the case within the observable world via pure reason does not disclose how people *ought* to conduct themselves in social relations (Kant 1998[1781]: 675-677, 697). Rather, as Kant sees it, practical reason is animated by individual will and is exercised in the autonomous regulation of subjective impulses, enabling respect for others as equals and preventing the use of others as a means to an end (Kant 2002 [1788]: 48-49, 167). For Kant, practical reason is a prerequisite for 'a coalition of wills' necessary for a civil and lawful state which secures particular political institutions (Kant 2005b [1792]: 74-79). As he sees it, such institutions would allow the free pursuit of happiness in so far as such pursuits do not infringe upon the freedoms of others, formal equality under the law, and independent rights to vote on what laws are just (Kant 2005b: 74-79).

Although Kant presupposed that the relevance of such institutions would be universally applicable, there are tensions intrinsic to Kant's position because of two fundamentally interrelated issues. The first is the division between is and ought, or to put it another way, the division between description and prescription. Pure reason describes states of affairs that exist independently of

human determinations—that we occupy a celestial spherical mass orbiting the sun that we call earth—even if, as Kant sees it, pure reason is related to *a priori* human categories of understanding that constitute our experiences of such states of affairs (Engstrom 2002: xvii-xix). Practical reason relates to states of affairs that humanity brings into existence and are results of human intervention, such as assistance to those in distress, co-operation with those whom we previously had conflict, or even a pursuit of knowledge which subordinates implications of pure reason to practical purposes (Engstrom 2002: xix-xx). If it turns out that enlightenment is primarily a rational prescription of what *ought* to be by human will—a decision that intervenes in our immediate impulses and brings about states of affairs qualitatively different from those that were previously the case—how can it be the destiny of human nature? We end up with a dualism between what is already determined and may continue to be so on the one hand, and what is alterable through human intervention on the other.

Second, there is no guarantee that the 'coalition of wills'—a prerequisite for the liberal-democratic political institutions that we now associate with modernity—would emerge if morality is left up to autonomous individual reason alone. Honneth argues that Kant posits an atomism of individuals whereby ethical orientations are the achievements of 'reason purified of all empirical inclinations and needs of human nature' (Honneth 1992a: 204). There must be something important about the relationship between our physical bodily entities that directs our attention to the purposes of others, affects how we subject our own impulses to reason and understands our own purposes.

This issue was not lost on Kant's philosophical successors such as G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831). As Charles Taylor points out, Hegel tries to synthesise Kant's notion of 'rational autonomy' and the notion of 'expressive unity' found in the Romantic criticisms of the Enlightenment (Taylor 1979: 1-14). In this way, Hegel attempts to reconcile dualisms between freedom and nature, subject and object, individual and society, and so on. (Taylor 1979: 1-14).

In *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (1991[1820]) Hegel points to a dialectical movement of reason through history as a form of 'immanent progression' (Hegel 1991: 60). In this historical dialectic, human determinations run up against conflicts and contradictions, animate negations of previous determinations and reconcile human consciousness with a more comprehensive unity between 'actuality' and 'reason' (Hegel 1991: 60-61). However, Hegel suggests that the dialectic also animates more comprehensive stages of social integration, from 'family, tribe, kinship group, mass (of people), etc., to the condition of a state' (Hegel 1991: 375).

For Hegel, the state emerges as the historical zenith of reconciliation between 'objective truth and freedom' (Hegel 1991 64, 375-380). A key aspect in the crystallisation of the modern state is

the formalisation of processes in terms of a constitution or constitutional law (Hegel 1991: 281). In this way, Hegel sees the state as an extension of relationships which people require for a broadened sense of ethical life. While the family unit affords individuals with an immediate sense of personhood, and the '[social] institutions' of civil society allow individuals to discover 'their essential self-consciousness…(and) the universal aspect of their particular interests', ultimately the state protects the rights and interests of its individual citizens to the extent that citizens also uphold obligations to each other (Hegel 1991: 283-287). Consequently, Hegel claims that a primary characteristic of 'the modern state' is that the freedom of particularity is reconciled with a universal end (Hegel 1991: 283).

Hegel's progressive view of history, which affirms the modern state as the reconciliation of human consciousness with reality, is rejected by Karl Marx in *The German Ideology: Part 1* (1978a[1932]). Marx casts Hegelian philosophy as ideology, an interpretation of the world in which 'circumstances appear upside-down', because Hegel is preoccupied with the development of human consciousness and does not provide an accurate representation of 'historical material' conditions, past or present, which shape the terms of practical activity and consciousness (Marx 1978a: 148-155). According to Marx, the application of Newtonian physics in England and France accelerated the development of industrial mechanisation and opened up the possibility of an unparalleled level of industrial competition—particularly once revolutions against monarchical power had occurred in those regions during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Marx 1978a: 184-185). The emergent combination of private property, industrial manufacture, capital investment and preoccupations with profit created a condition in which the propertied (the bourgeoisie) owned the means of material production and became its primary beneficiaries (Marx 1978a: 160-163). By contrast, the propertyless industrial working class (the proletariat), increasingly experienced material production as an involuntary division of labour and were subjected to a precarious existence in which their own labour power was disposable and interchangeable (Marx 1978a: 160-163). In light of these conditions, Marx is sceptical about the potential for modern law to uphold the rights of the proletariat to the same degree as that enjoyed by the property-owning primary beneficiaries of production (Marx 1978a: 186-200).

Despite his critique of Hegel, Marx still borrows Hegel's schematic of history as 'immanent progression'. Yet the reconciliation of consciousness with reality is more firmly tied to the human reproduction of material existence. The progression of history appears as a series of negations, whereby previous stages of productive forces are superseded by more developed and efficient productive forces (Marx 1978a: 194-195). These negations of previous stages begin with discontents about the terms of material conditions and proceed to animate 'collisions of various

classes, contradiction(s) of consciousness, battle(s) of ideas (and) political conflict' (Marx 1978a: 194-197). Indeed, Marx sees capitalism as a contradiction to be surpassed.

In 'The Coming Upheaval', Marx discusses capitalism as a precondition for 'total revolution' in which the proletariat will seize the instruments of production from the bourgeoisie in the name of 'common interests' and initiate the 'creation of a new society' (Marx 1978b [1847]: 218-219). For Marx, 'the old civil society' will be negated and replaced by 'an association which will exclude classes and their antagonism, and there will be no more political power' (Marx 1978b: 218-217).

Irrespective of the differences between the views of Kant, Hegel and Marx, there are some enduring similarities between their ideas. On Kant's view, where enlightenment increases, so too does the possibility of the mitigation of hostile relations within and between states by legal frameworks and economic activity (Kant 2005c [1784]: 47-48, 50-51). He claims that such developments are inevitable in the longer-term in order to limit the distress that humans cause one another (Kant 2005c: 48, 50-53). Indeed, he believes we ought to want this and help to bring it to fruition: 'we might by our own rational projects accelerate the coming of this period which will be so welcome by our descendants' (Kant 2005c: 50).

Similarly, for Hegel, a fully developed civil society is compelled to extend itself beyond its territory—due to population growth and/or to find new markets and fields of industrial activity when its own production exceeds consumption (Hegel 1991: 269). Additionally, 'civilised nations' are entitled to 'treat as barbarians those … nations which are less advanced' and do not uphold rights to the same degree (Hegel 1991: 376). The conflicts that emerge propel the opposed forces towards 'absolute universality' (Hegel 1991: 376-377). Similarly, although in a more polemic tenor, Marx claims that the 'bourgeois mode of production … compels all nations, on pain of extinction ... to introduce what it calls civilisation into their midst' (Marx and Engels 2002: 224). Whether through expediency or domination, the industrial and political developments within Western Europe and America become understood as the pace-setting events in history and an inevitable global pattern.

Yet as Marx indicates, modernity is not without its problems. The assumed global expansion of novel social patterns, bringing with it the possibility of new social problems, is further discernible in the development of classical social theory. In *The Division of Labour,* the French sociologist Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) claims that, while the expansion of 'civilisation tends to level differences between collective types, whether …provincial or national,' a progressive division of labour brings about greater diversity in human activities at an individual level (1984 [1893]: 91-92). For Durkheim the division of labour multiplies with the greater specialisation of social

functions, whether economic, political, administrative, juridical, artistic or scientific (Durkheim 1984: 337-338). In his view, 'organised societies' exhibit increased specialisation of roles, social functions and interdependence between people, creating pressures for social co-operation and tendencies toward organic solidarity in contrast to mechanical solidarity (Durkheim 1984: 85, 126, 132, 276, 316, 338).

For Durkheim, mechanical solidarity is more evident in 'segmentary societies' where 'conformity of individual consciousness to a common type' is enforced by forms of repressive penal laws which inflict punishments upon social members who fail to observe particular combinations of 'ritual, etiquette, ceremonial and religious practices' (Durkheim 1984: 33, 49-50). Yet such penal approaches remain a more diffuse mode of social sanction, in which the group may also get involved in dishing out punishment to the offender (Durkheim 1984: 59, 68). The shift to organic solidarity is marked by the recession of penal law and the development of restitutive law. For Durkheim, restitutive law deals more with injustices committed by one person to another and aims to turn back the clock prior to the offence through some form of compensation (Durkheim 1984: 68). This reparation serves to redraw boundaries and ease disintegrative affects to solidarity that have emerged out of rapid social changes (Durkheim 1984: 68). With organic solidarity, legal activities also begin to be undertaken by legal specialists within courts and tribunals differentiated according to specified jurisdictions (Durkheim 1984: 69-70).

Nonetheless, Durkheim's view is not a wholesale affirmation of modern society as the realisation of organic solidarity. He admits that the division of labour can have socially disintegrative effects and lead people to a state of anomie (Durkheim 1984: 304). There are three main states of anomie: an indifference to the broader social networks of co-operation due to specialised interests, forced labour in an occupation which does not reflect one's preferences and capabilities, and a lack of co-ordination between social functions (Durkheim 1984: 292, 304, 311, 323). However, in contrast to Marx's revolutionary position that advocates total transformation, Durkheim implies a more reformist position which points towards improved regulation and consent. As Durkheim sees it, anomic symptoms can be counter-balanced by more nuanced, just and meritocratic rules for social relations and economic competition—both legal and informal voluntary agreements—so that individuals have more scope to pursue activity without coercion and are better integrated into an interdependent nexus of social functions (Durkheim 1984: 316, 323, 338). Nevertheless, there are affinities with the statism of the latter Hegel in Durkheim's characterisation. As Giddens rightly notes, Durkheim overestimated the capacity of the modern state—under conditions of organic solidarity—to accommodate and co-ordinate the interests of populations, and he underestimated the persistence of anomie and conflict (Giddens 1978: 108-110).

A more sobering outlook on modernity is presented by the German Sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920). Granted, in the opening of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism,* Weber suggests that 'in Western civilisation, cultural phenomena have appeared which (as we like to think) lie in line of development having universal significance and value' (Weber 2005[1930]: xix). However, in light of Weber's various insights, it is more plausible to interpret his statement as a cautionary pause for reflection rather than Western self-congratulation.

To be sure, Weber acknowledges that Western modernity is not without a list of partial achievements. In *Economy and Society,* he outlines that the right of freedom from state or religious coercion, freedom to pursue economic interests, freedom of contract, freedom of occupational choice and the freedom from violation of personal property, reach their most ambitious justification amidst 'the belief in Enlightenment…(and) the workings of individual reason' (Weber 1968: 866, 1209). He also acknowledges a democratic shift in orientation towards wider participation in the selection of executive leaders, equal rights of the governed and equality before the law, which in principle aims to prevent closed-status groups and the arbitrary authority of officials (Weber 1968: 983-985). However, Weber also indicates that the 'levelling of social differences' emerges in tandem with increasingly bureaucratic forms of social discipline and control that, once established, cannot be entirely undone (Weber 1968: 983, 987).

Weber claims that part of the significance of bureaucracy in 'modern culture' is owed to a preoccupation with the 'calculability' of technical and economic outcomes in an attempt to eliminate from 'official business…all purely personal, irrational and emotional elements which escape calculation' (Weber 1968: 973-975). Bureaucracy demands accuracy, clarity, speed, file-keeping, conviction-free obedience, cost effectiveness, confidentiality and control over communication networks (Weber 1968: 973, 982, 992). It is primarily through bureaucratic management on behalf of the state that military training and technologies could develop into professional standing armies involved in the pacification of territories and international warfare (Weber 1968: 980-981).

While the increasing importance of bureaucratic and impersonal methods allowed the administrative roles once bestowed by inherited 'honorific privilege' to be gradually replaced by rationally trained specialists, bureaucracy is still primarily a formal process without concern for individual people or their particular circumstances (Weber 1968: 975, 980). The emergence of democratic sensibilities does not necessarily alter the centrality of bureaucracy either. On the one hand, democratic demands aim to limit terms of political office through elections and reforms, on the other they also aim to limit the eligibility of civil/public services to those who are expertly

qualified, not those with inherited status privileges (Weber 1968: 985). Weber argues that democratic demands can unwittingly create new and more durable status groups in terms of 'the levelling of the governed in the face of the governing and bureaucratically articulated group' (Weber 1968: 985).

Weber does not see capitalist activity as the last outpost of human autonomy in opposition to the modern state either. While Weber acknowledges that freedom of contract in modern law affords a much broader range of possible associations in the exchange of goods and services than working solely for the estates of feudal lords, he also argues that freedom to enter contracts does not translate to freedom of employees to determine the terms of their work (Weber 1968: 729). Freedom within a legal community depends upon property distribution, and modern law primarily affords more protections and provisions for those with property than for those without (Weber 1968: 730). While all have to surrender and adapt to the impersonal rationalisation of the market, Weber notes that the propertyless are more vulnerable to coercive situations (Weber 1968: 731). On this point he has an affinity with Marx.

Broadly construed, Weber outlines the paradox of the Enlightenment legacy. In 'Science as a Vocation' he suggests that the early twentieth century was characterised by 'intellectualisation and rationalisation' (1958 [1922]: 139). Weber was not referring to people being more knowledgeable per se; rather, they become receptive to the belief that everything can be mastered through calculation. He calls this kind of understanding the 'disenchantment of the world' (Weber 1958: 139, 155). However, Weber does not reduce scientific endeavours to this understanding wholesale, for he acknowledges that ideas and inspiration are just as important for scientists as they are for artists (Weber 1958: 135-136). It is just that, unlike art, science is 'chained to the course of progress … *infinitum*' (Weber 1958: 137-138). Additionally, while the activities of scientists can clarify and organise interrelated facts and solve technical problems, they cannot tell us what we ought to do or how we ought to order our lives (Weber 1958: 140-143; 152-153). For Weber, scientific methods cannot prove that something is even 'worth being known' (Weber 1958: 143). This signals a re-emergence of the Kantian split between pure and practical reason, is and ought. It raises the question of whether progress along the technical dimension is reconcilable with moral progress. For Weber, attempts to bridge this chasm are inevitably inconclusive, for as he sees it, 'possible attitudes towards life are irreconcilable' and an 'unceasing struggle' (Weber 1958: 153). Weber depicts a modernity characterised by the rationalisation of institutions according to impersonal norms and processes in tension with individual lives characterised by a struggle with personal moral convictions and values.

The above characterisations of modernity are important in relation to Arnason and Honneth because both thinkers—as we shall see more clearly in successive chapters—develop their own approaches through alternative readings of the classics, in particular Arnason of Weber and Honneth of Hegel, but also Weber. The consequences of this give them both unique vantage points on the limits of both Marx's materialism and Durkheim's functionalism, but also shape their particular views on the relationship between human autonomy and progress initially signalled by Kant. Yet Arnason's and Honneth's reinterpretations of classical social-theoretical writings are also animated by twentieth-century discontents with the characterisations of modernity in these older sources. Modernisation theories and Frankfurt Critical Theory are especially significant here.

1.2 Modernisation and Critical Theory

In general, Modernisation theory is an affirmation of modern societies as the realisation of Enlightenment and progress, whereas Critical Theory presents a negative interpretation of the unrealised potentials and promise initially staked out by Enlightenment claims. This is not all that surprising given that many Modernisation theorists resided in post-Second World War America and had not experienced the implosion of the West in their own backyard. By contrast the Critical Theorists, many of whom were Jewish, experienced the rise of National Socialism and sought exile in America once the social situation became dire. Both perspectives build upon certain aspects of the philosophical and social-theoretical perspectives presented above, but with the unmistakable accents of their respective circumstances.

During the 1960s, Modernisation theory emerged as a prominent paradigm of sociological inquiry. There is no all-encompassing canon of Modernisation theory per se, more so a field of related assumptions about large-scale social-historical developments and their relevance for the history of humanity which became tied to empirical sociological research (Knöbl, 2003: 96). Modernisation theorising developed in the post-War United States while communist aspirations were gaining traction in both Russia and China at the onset of the Cold War (Tipps 1973: 200). The context in which Modernisation theories and assumptions emerge is particularly important. The incentive for Modernisation paradigms can be partly considered a by-product of international events and a programmatic solution to the sense of crisis associated with the prospect of the Soviet Union extending its influence among decolonising territories (Houbert 1992: 479; Christopher 2002: 213-217). American elites became focused on Asia, Africa and Latin America, and considered the prospects of 'economic development, political stability, social and cultural change' (Tipps 1973: 200). Various US government projects were initiated to stave off communism in 'underdeveloped regions' through the exportation of American technology and expertise (Knobl 2003: 97). However,

there were many obstacles to these projects due to 'unfamiliar social structures and cultural patterns,' and various American scholars of history, political science, anthropology and sociology were employed to develop more adequate knowledge of these patterns (Knobl 2003: 97). To come to terms with the drivers of large-scale socio-cultural change, Modernisation theorists often employed both structural-functionalist and evolutionary models (Eisenstadt 1974: 227). An extensive survey will not be presented here. Instead, I provide a brief overview of key aspects and highlight criticisms relevant to the current study.

While Kant, Hegel, Marx, Durkheim and Weber exhibited different degrees of optimism, critique and pessimism, aspects of their theories imply that Western European forms of social organisation would achieve replication across the globe, if only—as Marx thought—to bring about another revolution. Modernisation approaches rachet up the affirmative tenor of these interpretations and can be broadly understood as an optimistic synthesis of Kant's and Hegel's notions of progress, Durkheim's shift from mechanical to organic solidarity and Weber's rationalisation. In contrast to Marx outlining a class conflict and catalyst of revolution, Modernisation theories generally indicate that liberal-democratic-capitalist institutions form socially integrative systems of increasing functional interdependency.

Talcott Parsons (1902-1979) focuses upon 'Evolutionary Universals in Society' (1964). Parsons suggests that societal evolution from a 'primitive stage' to a modern one is possible only once a population achieves adaptive control over nature (Parsons 1964: 340, 342, 351). As he sees it, this control enables more scope for contesting the legitimacy of traditions, whereby social order could potentially differentiate beyond the authority of kinship, opening up further spheres of religious and then potentially political legitimation (Parsons 1964: 342-344). A central presupposition of Parsons's approach is that societal evolution occurs to the extent that increasingly differentiated specialisations are matched by evermore complex forms of legitimation maintaining the overall functional stability of the social system (Harrison 2003: 35-36). Parsons argues that the evolutionary crystallisation of modern society is epitomised by bureaucratic organisation, monetised markets, legal universalism and representative democracy, which enable an adaptive superiority in comparison to societies lacking these arrangements (Parsons 1964: 356). As Wagner notes, structural-functionalist approaches tend to rely on an image of society based on 'strong ties between human beings guaranteeing coherence and a stable political order' (Wagner 2011: 90). A brief review of other Modernisation claims highlights a similar perspective.

Daniel Lerner (1917-1980) suggests that people in traditional societies form identities primarily on the basis of immediate kinship groups and base choices primarily on local situations

and persons known to them (Lerner 1965[1958]: 50). In contrast, people in modern societies start to create a rural versus urban division of labour, develop needs for economic independence, yet also achieve abstract appreciations for broader levels of interdependence through national ideologies (Lerner 1965: 50). Edward A. Shils (1910-1995) claims that Modernisation materialises via the development of professional communities which create 'new modern objects of attachment', toning down political radicalism and leading to 'a civilised culture through ... a field of sober, realistic and responsible judgement' (Shils 1963: 76-77). According to Marion J. Levy (1918-2002), 'relatively modernised societies' are distinguishable from those which are not modernised by a greater emphasis on three key aspects: the utilisation of scientifically justified knowledge (rationality), meritocratic participation in social life (universality) and specialised social relations (functional specificity) (Levy 1965: 31). In contrast, 'relatively non-modernised' societies are characterised by an emphasis on inherited knowledge (tradition), privileged hierarchies (particularism) and less specialised roles (functional diffuseness) (Levy 1965: 31). Irrespective of the specifics of each theorist, the general direction and conclusions are clear. As Wittrock highlights, Modernisation theory heralds the United States and Western Europe the 'self-evident yardstick' of human evolutionary achievement (Wittrock 2001: 28-30).

Self-congratulatory implications aside, a central oversight of many Modernisation accounts is that they generally obscure the pre-conditions of their possibility—they subordinate questions of meaning and power to the utility of function. As Tipps argues, such narratives imply internalist accounts of societal development and neglect global interactions such as 'war, conquest, colonial domination, international political and military relationships (and) international trade' which are experienced differently and contribute to diverse 'struggles for political and economic autonomy' (Tipps 1973: 212).

There are notable exceptions. In 'Stages of Economic Growth,' the American Economist Walt Rostow (1916-2003) notes a political incentive which contributes to industrialisation—reducing the ease by which 'more advanced societies can impose their will on the less advanced' (Rostow 1959: 6). Rostow suggests that the 'affront to human and national dignity ... by the intrusion of more advanced powers,' can animate 'reactive nationalism' as a variety of defensive Modernisation (Rostow 1959: 6). These episodes emerge amid 'real or believed external wrongs and humiliations to be righted', and he cites the developments in Japan, Russia and China in response to nineteenth-century Western aggressions as cases in point (Rostow 1959: 6).

Similar considerations are proposed in 'The Transformation of Social, Political Cultural Orders in Modernisation' (1965) by Shmuel N. Eisenstadt (1923-2010), a student of Parsons who

later becomes an important figure in the debates on civilisations and modernity. Early on, Eisenstadt acknowledges that Modernisation within China, India and Islamic societies emerged through 'encounters with foreign forces, an encounter beset with the difficulties and ambivalences of colonial or semi-colonial relations' (Eisenstadt 1965: 670). Eisenstadt also suggests that some societies in the Americas, Eastern and Southern Europe, Asia and Africa were forcibly compelled to modernise by Western intrusions (Eisenstadt 1965: 659-660). These intrusions enabled the emergence of new elites which began to fashion national identities in relation to such encounters (Eisenstadt 1965: 670). Yet Eisenstadt's earlier writings, like those of Parsons before him, still cast Modernisation in functionalist terms, as an increasingly flexible institutional framework that was more adaptive to emergent human problems than premodern societies (Eisenstadt 1965: 659). The notion of a self-correcting system emerges – that is, of a system which, by its own autonomous logic, overcomes aspects of institutional inflexibility and is reconciled with utility at a broader level.

Affirmative narratives of increasing functional stability do not fit well with the internal discontents of American and European states throughout the 1960s. During this period there was an upwelling of social movements which challenged the legitimacy of social conventions along the lines of gender, sexuality, race, war, economic distribution, and political authority (Wagner 1994: 135-137, 144-146, 235; Lemert 1997: 32, 35). In the early 1970s, this development was characterised by Jürgen Habermas as the 'legitimation crisis' of advanced capitalism: a discrepancy between the 'motives' proclaimed by state, educational and employment domains on the one side and those implicit in culture on the other (Habermas 1975[1973]: 74-75). Nevertheless, the discrepancy between the established institutional patterns of modernity and the expectations of expanded human autonomy had been simmering since before the Second World War amidst the Frankfurt critical theorists. If Modernisation theories can be generally understood as an affirmative assessment of Western modernity and in some sense a selective conflation of is and ought (since existing conditions are broadly endorsed), Frankfurt Critical Theory can be understood as its negative counter-depiction in that whatever ought to be the case at the present level of human capabilities remains unrealised.

Frankfurt Critical Theory emerges as a reassessment of Marxism by European intellectuals in the 1920s. This was in part a response to the fragmentation of the Second International during the First World War, in which workers and social democrats mobilised for nation-states rather than revolutionary solidarity (Kautzer 2017: 48). The Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, established in 1923, aimed at understanding what had hobbled the workers' revolution and at coming to terms with the emergent realities of Stalinism and Fascism (Thompson 2017: 8). These aims became motivations for comprehensive critiques of modern society, particularly after Max Horkheimer

assumed directorship of the Institute in 1930 (Bronner and Kellner 1989: 4). The general strategy was to attempt comprehensive interpretations of the social world which would point to the possibility of normative commitments already partly expressed in human relations but remaining unrealised or distorted by obstructive social conditions (Delanty 2011: 71-73). In this sense, the early Frankfurt thinkers can be understood as Left-Hegelian in orientation. They initially saw history as susceptible to human intervention and emancipatory social change, provided that human consciousness had become ripe for the possibility.[9] Consequently, they understood themselves as contributors to this end.

Max Horkheimer (1895-1973) makes a programmatic distinction between 'Traditional Theory and Critical Theory' (1972 [1936]). Traditional theory is cast as the default orientation of early twentieth-century science: unreflective upon the social-historical conditions of its own possibility, divorced from the broader normative implications of the increased capacity for human control over materiality, and preoccupied with criteria of accountability assumed to be internal to knowledge itself (Horkheimer 1972 [1930]: 194-195, 216). In contrast, Critical Theory was to be concerned with both the social orientations taken for granted in the pursuit of human knowledge and the complicities of traditional theory with monopolies of industrial and state power, inhibiting the 'reasonable conditions of social life' (Horkheimer 1972: 209, 233-236). The aim of Critical Theory was to highlight the unrealised potentials for social justice and provide a theoretical clarity that could be drawn upon by the worker's movement (Horkheimer 1972: 216, 242).

In 'Philosophy and Critical Theory' (2009 [1937]), Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979) reiterates a similar position in his attempt to distinguish Critical Theory from what he sees as the affirmative aspects of Kantian and Hegelian philosophy. On his view, both Kant and Hegel presuppose that one can only be free in so far as one can reconcile the immediate demands of social conditions with what is actually necessary. He argues that this thread in Kant and Hegel merely leads to internalised resignation and to the preservation of a status quo whereby achievement is understood as independence from others (Marcuse 2009: 101-102). In the spirit of Marx, Marcuse suggests that reason can only be realised to the extent that social systems meet people's needs and enable their happiness, rather than people meeting the needs of social systems to realise their capacity for reason (Marcuse 2009: 104). He argues that reasonable social arrangements demand a progressive orientation toward universal parity between production and necessity (Marcuse 2009:104, 112).

[9] Martin Jay has indicated that the concerns of the early first-generation Frankfurt school and Georg Lukács were initially trying to reanimate important philosophical aspects of Left-Hegelian thought. This current of thought had first inspired Marx in the 1840s but had been eroded by the rise of scientistic 'Vulgar Marxism' in the latter the nineteenth century based upon 'passive materialism'. In contrast the Left-Hegelian current emphasises human 'consciousness as constitutive of the world' and therefore amenable to social transformation via human intervention (Jay 1973: 40-43).

Despite the initial emancipatory intentions of early Critical Theory Horkheimer and his colleague Theodore Adorno (1903-1969) advanced a radical and sweeping critique in the wake of their migration to the US from Nazi Germany to escape Jewish persecution. In *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (2002 [1944]) Horkheimer and Adorno put forward a progress-as-regress thesis. They argue that long-term processes of Western civilisation—on their view, the passage from Olympian religion, to the Renaissance, through the Reformation and then onto the Enlightenment—is undergirded by human attempts to overcome the uncontrollable aspects of existence through the domination of nature, unleashing the self-destructive tendencies of instrumental reason (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002: 6-7, 31, 23-25). The modern preoccupation with the domination of nature animates intellectual attempts to eliminate all that lies outside of what is predictable. This orientation also finds its complement in the formulaic culture industry that serves to dominate inner human nature in the twentieth century (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002: 18, 24, 113, 93-95, 36). A broader polemic emerges that Enlightenment is less victory over myth and tradition than the reinstatement of mythical aspirations to overcome uncertainty (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002: 8). Consequently, the Enlightenment tends towards its own self-cancellation. However, to support this claim, Horkheimer and Adorno employ a subject/object concept of human reason and cast the movement of humanity in terms of a macro-subject of history whose primary drive, from Ancient Greece to modernity, has been to dominate nature. Horkheimer and Adorno suggest that the technological advances propelling the collision course of the warring nation-states in the first half of the twentieth century are analogous to the historical thrust of not only Western Europe but of world history at large. Whereas the post-war Modernisation theorists tend to focus on isolated territorial units, first-generation Critical Theorists tend to emphasise a broad system of domination maintained by a particular culture of conformity.

While this bleak depiction of modernity looms large in the post-war writings of the first-generation Frankfurt school, there are partial concessions to aspects of culture irreducible to systemised features. In ‘Culture and Administration’, Adorno highlights that the term culture—especially in the German lexicon—is understood as a human dimension less amenable to the complete grip of strategic planning or technical concerns (Adorno 1978[1960]: 93-94). Adorno contrasts culture to modern bureaucracy in that the latter has become the most effective mode of organisation, undertaken by those educated to be specialists in a hierarchical chain of documented tasks which form a co-ordinated matrix that subdues individual interests (Adorno 1978: 94-96). He also contrasts culture to the natural sciences and suggests that there is a cultural surplus which provides an idiom for experience and quality, and that exceeds both scientific pursuits and the compulsion to master nature (Adorno 1978: 97-98, 107). On his view, science and bureaucratic

administration are claims to generality, whereas culture is associated with claims to particularity (Adorno 1978: 97, 104).

While Adorno characterises culture as a qualitative dimension irreducible to the 'naked necessity of life', he also suggests that culture as expressed through avant-garde art has a latent practical character as a critique of both the status quo and 'levelling unification' (Adorno 1978: 94, 100). However, Adorno claims that this potential in art has been largely neutralised by 'official institutions' which present audiences with a curated and organised version of culture, which for him is nothing more than a tokenistic subversion that serves as 'lubricant for the system' (Adorno 1978: 101). Adorno goes as far as to claim explicitly that 'social modernity' is an 'administrated world' in which 'autonomy, spontaneity and criticism' have been largely absorbed into to what has been laid out by 'total planning' (Adorno 1978: 103).

There is a strong tension in Adorno's position. On the one hand, he represents a negative counterpart to the functionalist take on Modernisation, in that every further attempt to 'assemble, distribute, evaluate and organise' the features of human activity, threatens to dilute culture and impoverish the scope of human experience (Adorno 1978: 93). On the other hand, Adorno claims that culture is still required for the possibility of any human reality as culture 'is involved in the instructions of its realisation' (Adorno 1978: 107). Yet, despite this admission, Adorno ultimately implies that this meaning bestowing aspect of culture is too diffuse and elusive to actually provide an enduring counterpoint to administrative tendencies.

Marcuse also comes to a similar conclusion. In *One-Dimensional Man*, he highlights the widespread internalisation of the 'false needs' peddled by the advertising industry, such as modes of relaxation, entertainment and consumption that perpetuate stupefying forms of work, increased waste but also anxiety about deficits in decorative consumption (Marcuse 2002 [1964]: 6-10, 14). Generally, Marcuse envisages a situation in which 'goods and services sustain social controls' and provide the precondition for 'immediate identification of the individual with his/her society' (Marcuse 2002: 10-12). As a result, he also claims that 'advanced industrial civilisation' has become animated by 'one-dimensional thought and behaviour' (Marcuse 2002: 3, 12).

In the end, first-generation Frankfurt Critical Theory pits a strong reading of Weber's rationalisation thesis against the emancipatory aspirations of Kant's notion of enlightenment. For the Frankfurt theorists, the institutions of modernity are largely aligned with an instrumentalised reason, obstructive to both the autonomous use of reason and to Marx's vision of overcoming the contradictions between enhanced productive capacities and material disparities. Tastes, mores and social expectations become determined via the media dissemination of cultural aesthetics, but also

in the ordering of culture by experts.

However, first-generation Critical Theory, with its conclusions about institutional stability and social integration, has—like Modernisation theory—been noted for its social theoretical shortcomings particularly when the participatory and situated aspects of critical theorists are taken into account. As various interlocutors have highlighted, either the stranglehold of the one-dimensional rationalisation process is not as entrenched as portrayed, or Critical Theory has to concede the impossibility of its own position. Indeed, the prospects of Critical Theory became impossible in two respects. First, if such domination was as all-penetrating as Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse had implied, it is unlikely that they themselves could peel back the veil of their own socio-historical situation to illuminate such malignant dynamics (Benhabib 1981: 49). Second, as Mendelson indicates, such an over-socialised image of society would leave Critical Theory without addressees. How could Critical Theory locate a community receptive to its diagnosis and mobilise opposition to an all-penetrating dynamic of system maintenance? (Mendelson 1979: 48)

Arnason's criticisms of first-generation Critical Theory are directed towards the descriptive deficits which obscure the contextual aspects. He argues that the streamlined emphasis on the reproduction of a social system has to confront the possibility that 'national and cultural dispositions and the capacities of individuals are neither derivable from, nor automatically co-ordinated with the logic of the system' (Arnason 1986b: 82).

Similarly, Honneth suggests that the early Frankfurt school's 'institution-theoretic concept of culture', overemphasises the 'socially integrative function' (Honneth 1991[1985]: 28). He argues that this lopsided conceptualisation obscures the potential for 'group specific' grievances and 'social struggle' that gives rise to the possibility of critique (Honneth 1991: 28). Both Arnason and Honneth suspect that culture—even under the conditions of modernity and perhaps because of it—is more pliable and conflict prone than the first-generation Critical Theorists were willing to concede. It is with this in mind that Arnason and Honneth both acknowledge that there are still lessons to be taken from the less conclusive implications in Adorno's thought.

In *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno argues that the ideological core sustaining the administered world was identitarian thought—a commitment to conclusive definition and to the non-contradictory correspondence between human concepts and things, subject and object (Adorno 2004[1966]:148-149). Unlike Hegel, who suggests a historically contingent reconciliation of subject and object, or Marx, who reconciliation of production with what is necessary for a bearable life, Adorno further touches upon a surplus dimension which escapes concepts amidst the ongoing human processes of dialectical synthesis (Adorno 2004: 5-6, 190-191). Adorno points out that

despite comprehensive attempts to grasp the object of history, no collection of concepts adds up, step-by-step, to a conclusive cover-concept. Instead, concepts become part of a 'constellation' through which theory captures the character of things from a particular vantage point, yet also confronts an array of contingent historical interrelations which it can circle around but never secure as a conclusive identity (Adorno 2004: 162-163). Adorno argues that the pretention to unmediated access to reality and to fixed notions of universal history exhibits a hostility to otherness that has been more amenable to the expansion of human weaponry than to the progress of humanitarianism (Adorno 2004: 191, 320).

Arnason is sympathetic to threads of Adorno's thought—in both *Negative Dialectics* and 'Culture and Administration'—which suggest that there are aspects of human experience which cannot be entirely accounted for by fixed categories of identity or compulsions to master nature (Arnason 1989b: 132). According to Arnason, Adorno stumbled upon something important with regard to the dynamics of human meaning, but he argues that by emphasising a human tendency toward the instrumental domination of nature as primordial to interpretation, Adorno comes to the wrong conclusion that art and philosophy—provided that their unsettling and puzzling implications are properly appreciated—are the last ailing defenders of diverse human experiences in modernity (Arnason 1989b: 129-134). Instead, Arnason sees Adorno's critique of identitarian thought as having an affinity with Castoriadis's insight—to be discussed at length below—that the meaningful organisation of societies cannot be understood as a direct extension of what is demanded by nature, nor can societies be seen as the results of necessary and sufficient reason alone (Arnason 1989b: 135-136). Similarly, Arnason claims that the marginal implications of Adorno's thought suggest that what holds societies together are 'particular constellations' of meaning which resist 'global conceptualisation' (Arnason 1989b: 133, 146). Two main interrelated points emerge from Arnason's engagement with Adorno. First, he discerns the possibility of a more complex and contextual appreciation for social-historical creativity, interpretation and experience that does not fit with the uniform extension of human mastery of nature. Second, he suggests that Critical Theory would have to presuppose that these dynamics are a feature of the human condition in order to point towards the possibility of an alternative future that ought to be, to critique what is.

Honneth also acknowledges that Adorno's reflections on the 'non-identical' and 'non-instrumental' point beyond the cultural spheres of art and philosophy towards a more anthropological conception of culture that is 'decisive within a society for organising and regulating the exchange with the natural world' (Honneth 1991[1985]: xxi). However, this tension with the more deterministic assertions of first-generation Critical Theory alone is not what Honneth sees as most important. For him, it is the implicit moral aspect of Adorno's thinking which suggests that

justice claims can only be recovered through reference to what is 'non-identical' and particular about persons and social groups (2007b[1995]: 100). Honneth suggests that, in Adorno's thought, non-identitarian forms of morality move beyond abstract presumptions of 'socially equal treatment' towards a 'heightening of attention for the particularity of the other' (Honneth 2007b: 100, 108, 112). Indeed, Honneth sees this as an intersubjective correction to Kant's atomistic notion of individuals acting morally based on an autonomous will and the presuppositions of universal oughts (Honneth 2007b: 109). For Honneth, appropriate sensitivity to the possible sufferings of others is the launching pad towards the development of more equal treatment (Honneth 2007b: 109-121).

While both Arnason and Honneth note a marginal tendency in Adorno's thought to outline meaningful aspects of human experience which escape systemic aspects of modernity, each comes to a different conclusion about the importance of this dynamic. For Arnason, it is mainly the interpretive basis of human meaning which is indicative of possible cultural differences in historical experience. For Honneth, it is the normative dimension whereby justice requires the acknowledgement of asymmetrical features of social relations and of how this may impinge upon the experiences of others. Nonetheless, both Arnason and Honneth indulge in rather creative reinterpretations of Adorno's thought to support their respective theoretical preferences. The more readily discernible dystopian characterisations of modernity and the misanthropic view of humanity in first-generation Critical Theory do not fit well with its original emancipatory aspirations. This problem became the basis for a comprehensive rethink of Critical Theory by one of Arnason's and Honneth's most immediate and influential social-theoretical predecessors, Habermas.

1.3 Habermas: Modernity as an Unfinished Project of Enlightenment

Jürgen Habermas, a self-proclaimed post-Fascist 'child of re-education', spearheaded second-generation Critical Theory and endeavoured from the late 1950s onward to retrieve the initial optimism that had animated the Frankfurt tradition prior to its post-War critical-theoretical cul-de-sac (Dubiel 1992: 6-8; Bernstein, 1985: 7-8; Held 1980: 249). Habermas argues that Horkheimer and Adorno did not take the emancipatory potential latent in the developments of liberal-democratic-capitalism seriously enough (Habermas 1992 [1986]: 99). In the maturation of his own position, he becomes convinced that the 'normative foundations' of Critical Theory can only be tied to a developmental cognitive dimension that underwrites democracy and the constitutional state and cannot be reducible to human mastery over nature (Habermas 1992: 98-99). On his view, this learning process was misunderstood by his predecessors because they collapsed the emancipatory potentials of reason into the relations of production and gave up on this when the Marxist philosophy of history remained unrealised (Habermas 1992: 98-99).

In his most definitive social-theoretical depiction of modernity—*The Theory of Communicative Action* (1984 [1981]; 1987 [1981])—Habermas resuscitates the Enlightenment theme of reason as promise and project. While the first-generation Frankfurt theorists cast Enlightenment reason as an instrumentalised subject/object relation which found its expression in domination of outer/inner nature, state over individual and administration over culture, Habermas departs from this view. Habermas prefers the term 'functionalist reason' as opposed to instrumental reason so he can distinguish between rationality that is steered by systems and rationality that is guided by conscious (inter)action (Habermas 1987: 333). Functionalist reason/rationality refers to the tacit acceptance of management, control and material reproduction (Habermas 1987: 150, 350-351). By avoiding the term 'instrumental', Habermas avoids conflating system-maintaining patterns with the conscious purpose of actors (Habermas 1987: 333). This also allows him to distinguish his approach from the Modernisation theorists who subordinated questions of legitimacy and power to functional utility. A major innovation is that he also analytically secures the normative potentials of reason by placing it within the architecture of intersubjective communication geared toward mutual understanding—communicative rationality (Habermas 1992: 100). This allows Habermas analytically to separate out interpretive and linguistic aspects of interaction from already existing modes of large-scale economic and political organisation. He does this by reappropriating both phenomenological and hermeneutical understandings on the one hand and functionalist aspects on the other, through which he develops a general analytical distinction between 'the lifeworld' and 'the system.'

The lifeworld encompasses the taken-for-granted backdrop of beliefs and intuitions which we draw upon in shared situations to make sense of the world (Habermas 1987: 124). This backdrop is a catalogue of 'culturally transmitted and linguistically organised ... interpretive patterns' inherited from previous generations and situations (Habermas 1987: 124; 1984: 70). Such patterns are conveyed through a vast array of symbolic segments produced through speech, goal-directed and/or co-operative action and (secondarily) through text, tradition, documentation, art, theory, material objects and techniques (Habermas 1984: 108). The lifeworld is therefore a phenomenological-hermeneutical concept by which Habermas preserves a cultural dimension of surplus human meanings. [10]

[10] The notion of 'the lifeworld' has its origins in Philosopher Edmund Husserl's formulations of phenomenology. The lifeworld refers to the taken-for-granted world of experience tied to historically situated traditions of thinking ('horizons') which are still smuggled in unwittingly within scientific claims to objectivity and the objects considered worthy of investigation (Husserl 1970[1954]: 50; Husserl 2002[1939]: 106-107). Husserl (2002: 107) also referred to this in simpler terms as the 'pre-scientific cultural world'. Nonetheless, he notes this also presupposes a broader world-horizon and standing amongst others in it, even if the world is not accessible in totality and others are not all present (2002: 97). Phenomenology finds its compliment in hermeneutics. Despite epistemological/methodological variations of

In contrast, the system encompasses formally organised sub-systems—the economy and state bureaucracy—which Habermas sees as preserved by forms of reason primarily geared toward functional system maintenance (Habermas 1987: 155, 333). He claims that these sub-systems have become increasingly autonomous, complex and largely linked to one another by the 'delinguistified media ... of money and power,' (Habermas 1987: 154, 183). Such media can abbreviate or bypass genuine attempts at intersubjective communication via 'symbolic generalisation of rewards or punishments' (Habermas 1987: 183). In the event that economic and performance forecasts are not achieved in either of the two sub-systems, there is an increasing likelihood that system imperatives will be sought through intrusion into the lifeworld to restore functional utility (Habermas 1987: 385). Once these media begin to colonise and steer the lifeworld, the communicative and interpretive efforts required for achieving mutual understanding can be sidelined by cost and risk assessments (Habermas 1987: 183). These dynamics can also lead to what Habermas sees as distorted speech acts based primarily upon strategic intent to control others (Brand 1990: 22-24).

This allows Habermas to formulate a critique of the overdevelopment of functionalist reason and the underdevelopment of reason along the lines of intersubjective communicative action. On this view, the potential for uncoercive forms of socialisation, social integration and cultural reproduction depend upon the degree to which functionalist rationality is mediated by the demands of communicative rationality: a shared commitment to interpretive effort, questioning and reason giving, which can enable mutually learnt devaluative shifts beyond initial subjective positions (Habermas 1987: 183, 367, 397-403; 1984: 68-70). A key aspect of this is the linguistic differentiation between objective, intersubjective and subjective aspects of relations to the world—truth, justice and taste—whereby physical phenomena, socially constituted morality and subjective preferences are not conflated with each other (Habermas 1984: 51, 71). As Habermas sees it, the more interaction moves in this direction, the more egocentrism is likely to become decentred and the less likely that understandings will be fixed in advance and impervious to critique (Habermas 1984: 69-70). The arduous task of forming decentred mutual understandings amid interpretive conflicts is a precondition for normative progress towards modern understandings, a process that Habermas calls the rationalisation of the lifeworld (Habermas 1987: 145, 352). The rationalisation of the lifeworld in terms of communicative demands mediates the colonisation of the lifeworld by system imperatives that might otherwise appear as beyond dispute. Consequently, Habermas recognises negative and affirmative aspects of modernity, for what can be affirmed has to pass the

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hermeneutics in the twentieth century—Weber's *verstehen*, Freudian psychoanalysis, philosophical hermeneutics or North American pragmatism and their various mutations—the term generally emphasises the primacy of participating in, interpreting and understanding meanings within a tradition (Outhwaite 2015: 487-488).

litmus test of mutual scrutiny in communication. Claims which do not stand up to dialogical scrutiny can be negated and replaced by mutual understandings which facilitate a freer modality of co-operation between interaction partners.

For Habermas, shifts toward the rationalisation of the lifeworld also have manifestations at broader levels of social integration. Habermas suggests that despite systemic problems, the partial yet underdeveloped potential of communicative rationality to mediate systemic processes has historical precedents within a four-stage 'juridification' of modern state-formation. These four stages mark a departure from the age of absolutism. They are the bourgeois state, the bourgeois constitutional state, the democratic constitutional state and the welfare state (Habermas 1987: 358-362). While Habermas admits that this has occurred more as a series of staggered trajectories than a cohesive linear shift, he nonetheless, like Hegel, discerns a movement in the direction of expanded rights of citizens and obligations to be met by the state and by citizens to each other (Habermas 1987: 358-362).

Despite normative improvements and potentials, communicative action is still an uphill battle. The degree to which such communicative action can occur depends upon the degree to which interaction contexts approximate to what Habermas calls the 'ideal speech situation', free of force, coercion and constraints (Habermas 1984: 25-26). Yet he also admits that such conditions are often 'counter-factual' (Habermas 1984: 42). While the intrusive aspects of political and economic systems form part of the factual predicament, Habermas also distinguishes another communicative hurdle posed by the authority of mythical/traditional worldviews. For Habermas, more traditionalised lifeworlds are less open to critique because the normative dimension rests upon 'the authority of the sacred' (Habermas 1987: 145). Mythical or traditional worldviews tend to conflate the tripartite structure of reason, whereby morality is not understood as socially constituted, but merged with the objective events of the natural world, in a manner that obscures a claimant's projection of subjectively internalised socio-cultural norms upon the physical state of the world (Habermas 1984: 51, 71).[11] In this sense, the 'linguistic world-view is reified as the world-order and cannot be seen as an interpretive system open to criticism' (Habermas 1984: 71).

Habermas concedes that the universal applicability of communicative rationality would have to be assessed against its capacity to clarify the obscure symbols, the strange expressions of unfamiliar cultures, differences in processes of learning, and also what moderns have unlearnt in the

[11] For example, the statement 'they experienced a hail-storm as divine punishment for their impure desires' captures the conflation of objective, intersubjective and subjective features of the world that Habermas sees as central to mythical/traditional views.

course of their learning (Habermas 1987: 400). In this light the communicative paradigm extends beyond individual communication partners to a notion of mutual understanding between the different cultural lifeworlds in which people move, between those more rationalised and those more traditional, between those of the present and those of the past. Yet stretching communicative action to an even broader level between lifeworld contexts poses even greater obstacles to ideal speech situations.

Such obstacles have been indicated by Arnason. He suggests that in Habermas's formulation of communicative action the possibility of 'mutually instructive' understanding between modern and mythical/traditional views is obstructed by the *a priori* constraints Habermas builds into the linguistic prerequisites for modern world interpretations (Arnason 1991: 181-182).[12] Arnason argues that any testing of communicative action in relation to mythical/traditional interpretations becomes more like a 'one-sided and pre-programmed comparison' on the basis of cognitive leaps already achieved within modern self-understandings (Arnason 1991: 182). Habermas's concession to the symbols and seemingly strange expressions of non-European cultures still seems to imply that such human orientations are 'a negative counter example or an embryonic anticipation of the modern structures of consciousness' yet to be corrected (Arnason 1991: 181-182). According to Arnason, Habermas's notion of decentration as crucial for mutual understanding does not go far enough if certain cultural yardsticks are the rubric of validity.

For Arnason, Habermas's outline of consensus-based correctives to the functionalist imperatives of political and economic systems also carries with it a narrowed conception of the possible relations between cultural lifeworlds, economic and political subsystems (Arnason 1991: 189, 193). Arnason argues that Habermas's notion of modernity bypasses 'international interconnections' but also underestimates the possibility of divergent developments and alternatives that do not lead to a 'harmonising transfiguration of modernity' *en route* to an unfinished project (Arnason 1991: 185-189). In the end, Arnason discerns in Habermas's interpretation of modernity, a premature foreclosure of how modernity can be described in order to arrive at a communicative prescription for its ills. Arnason's critique of Habermas echoes similar criticisms levelled by him at Modernisation theory with respect to reliance on Western-centric yardsticks to describe the direction of history and the sidelining of geopolitical conflicts that might otherwise make lasting impressions on certain societies and lead to alternative trajectories.

For Honneth, Habermas short-circuits the terms of interactions by a cognitivist approach which moves straight to a 'cooperative search for truth based solely on reasons' and neglects the

[12] As earlier discussed, communicative rationality hinges upon adequate articulation and differentiation between taste, justice and truth according to their respective subjective, intersubjective and objective world relations.

emotive empathy required for a cooperative disposition in the first instance (Honneth 2007b: 112). For Honneth a combination of both would be more adequate for any scenario to resemble an ideal speech situation. He suggests that '[w]e can evaluate the normative claims of individual persons only to the degree to which we with the appropriate empathy, can also detect the role these claims play in a person's unique particular life history' (Honneth 2007b: 112). Such empathy is also a prerequisite for universal equal treatment in that 'all should have the chance to articulate their claims in an uncoerced and uninterrupted manner' (Honneth 2007b: 114).

Honneth appears more sympathetic to Habermas than Arnason does, in that he agrees that the terms of communicative interaction are still important for the normative development of modernity. But he is less convinced that the appropriate lines of dialogue and argument required for such development can be outlined in advance. In this way Honneth is similar to Arnason. Yet he tends to focus primarily on the intersubjective level in which the particularity of life histories between persons and groups is an important feature, whereas Arnason focuses on the intercultural level where the particularity of life histories writ large—or perhaps lifeworlds in Habermas's terms—are an important feature. As we saw with his brief comments on Adorno in the previous section, Honneth is not entirely tone-deaf on the challenges posed by cultural differences either. It is just that he thinks that there is a deeply emotive and moral feature of human interaction that emerges with modernity as a struggle for recognition. Such struggles could be based upon broader cultural differences, or they could emerge at a more intermediate level between groups or the more immediate level between persons.

Sensitivity to human diversity and sources of potential conflict within modernity were also taken up elsewhere. Around the time that Habermas was formulating what he saw as the form of rationality worth defending and a universally beneficial communicative conduit to modern self-understandings, counter-trends emerge in post-modern, post-structuralist and post-colonial thought—referred to here as 'the post-mode'.[13]

1.4 The Post-mode

In the last three decades of the twentieth century post-structuralism, postmodernism, postcolonialism and the cultural turn emerge as a critical force within the social sciences and humanities (Rojek and Turner 2000: 631-632, 635-636; Eyerman 2004: 25; Chaney 1994: 1). As Jameson suggests, postmodernism marks, on the one-hand, a reaction against high/low cultural boundaries in aesthetic productions, but on the other hand—and more importantly in the context of

[13] I borrow this term from Johann Arnason's 'the post-mode and its pretensions' in *Civilisations in Dispute* (2003: 339).

the current discussion—an exhaustion and/or rejection of 'older categories of genre and discourse' within contemporary theory, owing in part to French post-structuralist approaches (Jameson 1998: 2-3; 22). Rojek and Turner suggest that postmodernism emerges in part as a response to the crisis of Western Marxism, marked by the failure of a worker's revolution in 1968 and by the realities of totalitarianism that had occurred under the Soviet model (Rojek and Turner 2000: 635). Postcolonial scholarship shares parallels with the aforementioned variants of the post-mode, but I will discuss this in more detail in a subsequent section.

In parallel, an emergent attentiveness to cultural context also gains traction. Clifford Geertz's *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973) advocates a 'thick description' of how 'particular attempts by particular peoples to place…things in some sort of a meaningful frame', suggesting that theoretical generalisation should play a minor role (Geetz 1973: 24-30). Not only did Geertz's approach have an impact on the cultural turn, but the social-theoretical cue that other scholars took from Geertz's retreat from general theoretical interpretation implies 'that the local explains the local' (Alexander and Smith 2003: 22). Taken together, these shifts usher in a sense of the 'declining representative power of European Social Theory and European Modernity' (Eyerman 2004: 25). More generally 'a crisis in representation' (Said 1989: 205). In light of this so-called crisis, I will present some aspects of post-structuralist and postmodernist thought which pose challenges to general accounts of modernity.

Post-structuralism emerges at the end of the 1960s and is often credited to the French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) and his critique of structuralist presuppositions (Sturrock 2003: 122; Elliot 2009: 110-111, 116).[14] As Derrida sees it, Western thought since Ancient Greek philosophy has been animated by a series of reductive attempts to articulate the 'structurality of structure'—whether in terms of language, consciousness, God or the subject—that hovers outside the temporal play of language to imply an 'invariable presence' or a 'transcendental signified' (Derrida 1978 [1970]: 278-280). Derrida detects a kind of typological ahistoricism which posits a central yardstick by which to evaluate the human condition (Derrida 1978: 280-281). Attempts to outline a meta-structure carry with them 'erasure and cancellation' which must posit who and what is 'counted-discounted' (Derrida 1973: 36). In his assertion of structural closure in Western philosophical and social literature, Derrida signals a deconstructive 'attempt to recover—to put back into words—excluded narratives and alternative histories which have been repressed' (Elliot

[14] Structuralism is a linguistic paradigm of social thought based on mutually constitutive oppositions within language-systems, central to both Ferdinand Saussure's structural linguistics and Claude Levi-Strauss's structural anthropology of binary oppositions in the human unconscious mind (Sturrock 2003: 140-141; Elliot 2009: 53-64, 98; Joas and Knöbl 2009 [2004]: 350-353).

2009: 116). In this way, Derrida has been a source of inspiration for those who understand themselves as allies or members of politically, sexually, ethnically and racially marginalised groups (Elliot 2009: 110-113).

Overlapping the period of Derrida's provocative considerations, the French philosopher and cultural historian Michel Foucault (1926-1984) attempted to historicise structuralism in a way has also been labelled post-structuralism (Dosse 1997: 237). Foucault's archaeological approach to history was primarily marked by a focus on groups of statements (discursive practices) and their constitutive relationship to historical events in terms of the distribution of particular patterns of statements, along with shifts and discontinuities within these patterns (Dosse 1997: 238, 241-242). Foucault's approach to historical analysis in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (2002 [1969]: 3-19) attempts to depart from both 'categories of cultural totalities' and the inscription of ultimate meanings and rational purpose in history. He does this on the suspicion that human preoccupations with a clear history, the ongoing search for origins, extensions of antecedents, evolutions and predictions of inevitabilities are related to a 'repugnance to conceiving difference' and the need for reassurance of the identical (Foucault 2002: 13). Accordingly, Foucault's thought during the 1960s and 70s invokes resistance to 'seeing in the immense domain of practice only the epiphany of triumphant reason, or deciphering in it, only the historico-transcendental destination of the West,' (Foucault 1989[1968]: 48). Granted, in the 1980s Foucault aligns himself with 'the attitude of modernity', which he sees as a commitment to ongoing questioning of the present through a reinterpretation of Kant's late eighteenth-century notion of Enlightenment (Foucault 1984a: 39). However, his earlier thought leaves a more disconcerting impression on the pretension to uphold normative commitments in critique.

Foucault's historical studies from the 1960s into 70s become increasingly occupied by relations between power and knowledge (Foucault 1980a [1977]: 109-110). He looks beyond the usual structures of domination that occupied critique—Western capitalism or Soviet Socialism—and probes documentation on modern institutions which claim to be independent, impartial and based on humanistic first principles (Foucault 1980a: 115-116; Rabinow 1984: 6) His work in this period centres on a series of historical studies on the Western European (particularly French) psychiatric, medical, human scientific, penal and sexual practices after the seventeenth century (Foucault 1980a: 111-133; Rabinow 1984: 3-13). Foucault's analysis focuses in upon what he calls 'discursive regimes ... [and] the effects of power peculiar to the play of statements' (Foucault 1980a: 113). Moreover, he detects webs of discourse circulated amidst practices, which are accepted and made to function as truth, establishing relations of force and power (Foucault 1984b [1977]: 193-200).

Despite his own allergy to cultural totalities, Foucault's body of work presents a picture of Western modernity (Dean 1986: 60). In his interpretation, modernity gives rise to forms of knowledge which discipline bodies through formal and moral instruction (Lemert 1997: 50). This allows effective modalities of control in a context where recourse to explicit violence has become at odds with the prevailing Western cultural self-understanding (Lemert 1997: 50). In Foucault's thought, normative commitments are the effects of power. As Habermas argues, Foucault side-steps the question of what constitutes legitimate and illegitimate power (Habermas 1991 [1985]: 283). Instead, power is cast as that which becomes effective in guiding actions.

In the process of describing the terms of power/knowledge, Foucault also comes across what he calls 'subjugated knowledges' (Foucault 1980b [1976]: 81). While he notes the unfortunate paradox that they are stumbled across in the course of his own Western education, he nevertheless indicates that his thought is allied with disqualified, particular, local and regional knowledges that struggle against the 'globalising discourses ... of a theoretical avant-garde' (Foucault 1980b: 82-84). As Rojek and Turner suggest, a strong reading of Foucault's notion of power/knowledge has gained some traction in the wake of the cultural turn within the humanities and social sciences, whereby cultural politics becomes preoccupied with definitions and positioning (Rojek and Turner 2000: 637).

Indeed, pointing out existing marginal/dominant positions in the balance of power alone has raised suspicions as to whether such a premise is a sound basis for critique. As Habermas asks, on what basis does Foucault engage in struggle to mobilise this counter-power? Does not the conquest of one theoretical avant-garde allow the ascent of another? (Habermas 1991: 281) Habermas's point seems to be that, unless there are additional reasons why we should reject dominant forms of power/knowledge, it is merely the balance of power that becomes the criteria for critique. If this is the case, then former allies could emerge as foes in the long-term once they are no longer marginalised.

With respect to the definitions within discourse supportive of power imbalances, Foucauldian critique still retains some of its sting. However, there is, on the one hand, still some sort of normative evaluation implied by suggesting that certain uses of language have unjust implications. On the other hand, it implies that discursive regimes may not be all-determining, particularly if it turns out that theorists with post-structuralist sensitivities can resist the fetters of power/knowledge themselves, just as the first-generation Critical Theorists avoided the clutches of instrumental reason.

The fragmentation of modernity is proclaimed at the turn of the 1980s in the French philosopher Jean François Lyotard's (1924-1998) *The Postmodern Condition* (1984 [1979]). Lyotard claims that the postmodern condition marks the demise of grandiose modern optimism, with the impossibility of resuscitating universalising social theories or revolutionary politics (Lyotard 1984: xxiv). Lyotard contends that modern knowledge had legitimated itself by appeal to 'meta-discourse(s) ... or grand narratives' about the pursuit of authentic meaning, rational and/or productive emancipation, or wealth creation (Lyotard 1984: xxiii). He claims that such narratives fall prey to the 'demand for legitimation' beyond relative limits which he suggests—in meta-terms of his own—have been central to 'the entire history of cultural imperialism from the dawn of Western civilisation' (Lyotard 1984: 27). In contrast, postmodern understanding 'refines our sensibility to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable' (Lyotard 1984: xxv). Advocating an abstinence from speaking beyond the boundaries of situated time/space validity, Lyotard argues that only local rules can define the moves playable within language games (Lyotard 1984: 66). Consequently, Lyotard characterises Habermas's communicative action paradigm as the claim that humanity seeks universal emancipation through the narrowing of the moves permissible in language games and that the legitimacy of speech rests upon the degree they contribute to this universal emancipation (Lyotard 1984: 66). Suffice to say, Lyotard sees Habermas's call for the rationalisation of the lifeworld as a threat to diversity (Lyotard 1984: 66).

The renunciation of progress, generalisable normative commitments and a uniform project of modernity is discernible post-structural and postmodern thought. However, the concern of throwing out the baby with the bathwater has been raised by those who identify with the Critical Theory tradition.[15] With specific reference to Foucault, Honneth echoes concerns raised by Habermas. Honneth argues that if 'normative standards of evaluation' are merely renounced as effects of power, how is it possible to provide reasons as to 'why opposition should be directed against specific techniques of power'? (Honneth 1991: xxiv) Indeed, Honneth is convinced that the discernible critical tenor in Foucault's historical analysis is actually underwritten by 'moral convictions' and some implicit idea of human freedom in order show how power produces unacceptable constraints (Honneth 1991: xxvi).

As for postmodernism, Seyla Benhabib argues that postmodern critique starts 'from the wrong assumption that all transformatory ethics and politics must presuppose an authoritarian vision of a future totality', and therefore in opposition 'turns into a reconciliation with the given .... [and] status quo thinking' (Benhabib 1990: 1448). Similarly, for Habermas, postmodernism can be understood

[15] By the Critical Theory tradition I mean those committed to some sort of comprehensive notion of the human condition, society and normativity from which to assess obstacles to human autonomy.

as neo-conservatism in which politics becomes absolved of 'demands for moral-practical legitimation', implying that the relation between politics and modern science can continue unchallenged as long as technological and economic growth are not hampered and bureaucracy remains effective (Habermas 1997 [1981]: 53-54). Honneth argues that postmodernism misinterprets an emergent post-industrial context when it overemphasises an aesthetic mode of playful identity formation whereby individual self-realisation is assumed to become independent of normative social bonds and recognition from others (Honneth 1992b: 29). For Nancy Fraser and Linda Nicholson, any postmodern ruling out of 'large historical narrative' undermines the force of feminist critique and social critique in general (Fraser and Nicholson 1988: 380, 390-391). Consequently, postmodernism—characterised here as a preference for alterity and radical particularism—is vulnerable to charges of its disingenuous politics through an allergy to normative commitments.

In contrast to critical-theoretical concerns about liquidated normative commitments in post-modern thought, Arnason takes aim at descriptive deficits in accounts of modernity allowing faulty critique. For Arnason, post-modernism says more about the misunderstood aspects of modernity than about its historical demise, primarily because 'the universalising patterns singled out for criticism took shape against the background of a pluralistic configuration' that has not adequately been given its due (Arnason 1989c: 333). Nevertheless, if modernity has an unacknowledged pluralistic background as Arnason suggests, what is the basis of this plurality? It is in the philosophy of Cornelius Castoriadis that we find an attempt at an answer.

1.5 Castoriadis's Emphasis on the Imaginary

An innovative view of human societies and history emerges in the thought of philosopher, psychoanalyst, economist, Soviet historian, political activist, critical social theorist and former Trotskyist, Cornelius Castoriadis (1922-1997). Castoriadis has been described as a highly original thinker who develops an 'anti-structuralist, anti-functionalist and anti-Marxist' position (Joas and Knöbl 2009: 403). He develops a philosophical anthropology in *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (1987 [1975]) in which he emphasises the role of the imagination in human affairs. For Castoriadis, an imaginary dimension is a prerequisite for meaningful transpersonal patterns of human activity, yet this dimension of human activity, adequately understood is also the source of human autonomy and intervention in the world.[16] It is worth devoting some space to Castoriadis, for

[16] Castoriadis (1987: 308-309) contends although speech may direct perception, meaningful signification can only appear as real as long as others have no monopoly on such significations and are conceived by the child as also subject to these institutions. Castoriadis sees the broader context into which people are born and socialised as the limiting factor on the otherwise self-centred play of the imagination. Moreover, 'only the institution of society, proceeding from the

not only does he point to a more open-ended human relationship to language, meaning and history than those found in Modernisation theories, Critical Theory or the post-mode, but he also becomes, as we shall see later on, a cornerstone of Arnason's approach.

Castoriadis distinguishes between the imagination at the individual level and the imaginary at the socio-cultural level. The imagination is the elusive nucleus of the self. It is the autonomous and radically other within the individual psyche, not entirely subordinate to, or reproductive of, the images given to perception (Castoriadis 1987: 274-276). Instead, the imagination has creative scope for representation of the world because it can bring into thought and reality relationships which are not strict extensions of previously existing physical demands and relationships (Castoriadis 1987: 282, 292). The most egotistical phase of the imagination is in childhood. However, Castoriadis claims that the unruly childhood imagination desperately tries to unify itself with the world once—in the process of socialisation—the child realises that significant others are not beholden to the child's own representations (Castoriadis 1987: 298, 308-309). This realisation allows the child to adjust to the social imaginary world of shared institutions and representations that significant others appear to utilise, and to act in accordance with that world (Castoriadis 1987: 298, 308-309).

Castoriadis views human language as dependent on the imaginary, for there is nothing intrinsic about the physical world which demands the merging of phonological segments, written figures and perceived objects into patterns of 'co-belonging' in the way that societies accept (Castoriadis 1987: 247-250). Even mathematics requires the imaginary positing of interdependent yet self-identical thought objects—numbers which can stand in for objects—in which each object's constitution is afforded by its place amongst others in a reversible series (Castoriadis 1987: 222-227). For Castoriadis, idioms of language and mathematics presuppose 'an imaginary capacity to see in a thing what it is not, to see it other than it is', and this in turn enables all logical and rational relations between things to exist for a society (Castoriadis 1987: 127, 245). Castoriadis is not saying that systematic idioms of human thought are mere arbitrary constructions. He does think that they are amenable to and capture something about the natural world in terms of 'stable properties ... necessary or probable relations' (Castoriadis 1987: 227-228, 354-355). These relationships do not completely determine the parameters of social world and do not emerge in total isolation from whatever else has been bestowed with social-historical significance for a society (Castoriadis 1987: 231, 299-300). In a sense, Castoriadis is saying we can alter language and get sums wrong but rather than direct physical demise as a result we are more likely to be greeted with social sanctions because of the broader field of meanings to which these instituted idioms are attached.

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social imaginary can limit the radical imagination of the psyche and bring into being for it a reality by bringing into being a society' (Castoriadis 1987: 309).

Castoriadis uses this philosophical anthropology to critique structural-linguistic, functionalist and historical-materialist determinism, and instead suggests that societies form through the complexes of meaning they create, instituting the significance of symbolic order, functional superiority and material necessity (Castoriadis 1987: 34, 116-117, 137, 146-148). As Castoriadis sees it, 'the total world given to a particular society is grasped in a way that is determined practically, affectively and mentally, that an articulated meaning is imposed on it, that distinctions are made concerning what does or does not possess value...and what should and should not be done' (Castoriadis 1987: 145-146). The creation of meaning is central, for despite the functional maintenance of a society through material production, biological reproduction, education, administration and conflict resolution, the diversity of social-historical responses to these requirements implies a humanly created pliability over and above that imposed by functional or biological necessity (Castoriadis 1987: 116-117). In other words, what is functionally superior, or what aspects of material life are necessary, is never entirely a foregone conclusion but rather emerges in the form of human institutions that have a social-historical diversity as well as an alterability through conscious creation.

For Castoriadis, the imaginary prerequisites for human meaning make possible a distinction between instituted society—given structures of practice which have reached materiality – and instituting society—that which gives structure and materiality (Castoriadis 1987: 108, 336). Moreover, there is unity and tension between 'history made and ... history in the making' (Castoriadis 1987: 108). Nonetheless, Castoriadis's philosophical anthropology is primarily a stepping-stone for an outline of the preconditions for human autonomy and the critique of institutions when institutions begin to operate as unassailable determinants of human activity. For Castoriadis, a society's unquestioned submission to its own institutions is a condition of heteronomy whereby social relations appear to issue from an 'extra-social source... [such as] supernatural beings, God, nature, reason, necessity, the laws of history or the being thus of Being' (Castoriadis 1987: 372). In contrast, Castoriadis argues that human autonomy emerges in those moments where humans open up their established institutions to relentless questioning and become conscious of their own creations via distinguishing between what is instituted and what they ought to be instituting (Castoriadis 1987: 100-101, 155).

There is an additional aspect of autonomy which Castoriadis claims needs to be realised for it to be worthy of the name, because individual autonomy and collective autonomy are not entirely separate. For Castoriadis, 'we cannot want autonomy without wanting it for everyone', and because he sees it as largely a socio-political problem, he argues that, properly understood, autonomy requires us to be responsible with respect to what we say and do in relation to others (Castoriadis

1987: 108). Elsewhere, in *Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy,* he describes autonomy as the questioning of political institutions and democratic participation in the instituting of new ones – but with a self-limiting predisposition that we acknowledge that our own worst impulses should also be subject to law with respect to others (Castoriadis 1991: 166-168; 172-174). In this way, Castoriadis sees autonomy as requiring ongoing reflection upon our shared situation in the first instance, for it is only in acknowledgement of this that the exercise of individual will—that Kant saw as the seat of autonomy—makes any sense.

These philosophical-anthropological presuppositions form the basis of Castoriadis's reflections on modernity and human autonomy. In his view, there are very few instances in history in which the conscious autonomous creation of human institutions has surfaced. He argues that for a brief period in the last millennium BCE the ancient Greek invention of 'politics and philosophy' is the first rupture of 'collective and individual autonomy' whereby a distinction between that which is determined by nature and that which ought to be subject to law is first articulated (Castoriadis 1991: 161-162). The second instance emerges in the Enlightenment, in which Western political philosophy radically questioned existing institutions through a vision of possible alternatives and acknowledged that social institutions derived from a human source (Castoriadis 1991: 162). The implications of this view lead Castoriadis to two sweeping conclusions.

First, he claims that 'traditional societies' between and these two ruptures instituted a dependency on something other than themselves for valid signification and meaning and, as a result, they largely lived in a heteronomous condition of 'true-to-form individuals … dominated by repetition' (Castoriadis 1991: 162-163). Religion according to Castoriadis is a prime example of this heteronomous institution of social life whereby 'questioning the ultimate grounds of belief and the laws of the tribe', and consequently interrogating the criteria for existent forms of executive power, is a non-starter (Castoriadis 1991: 163). However, it is not only the condemnation of all traditions bar the secular and democratic possibilities of the Greco-Western legacy that Castoriadis points to.

In 'The Retreat from Autonomy: Post-Modernism as Generalised Conformism' (1992), Castoriadis sees modernity as guided by two central imaginary significations which constitute opposing forces. These are 'the unlimited expansion of rational mastery' and the aspiration to 'individual and collective autonomy' (Castoriadis 1992: 19). Rational mastery is preoccupied with calculation, growth and the maximisation of outputs, while ensuring the minimisation of inputs whereby everything must prove its right to exist according to this principle (Castoriadis 1992: 18-

19). By contrast, social and individual autonomy hinges upon making a distinction between what has existed as fact and what ought to be aspired to as just (Castoriadis 1992: 19).

Castoriadis admits that the Enlightenment and its capitalist, liberal and revolutionary off-shoots opened up the questioning of instituted authority due to novel notions of human autonomy, but he sees the most critical impacts of these orientations transpiring between 1750 and 1950 (Castoriadis 1992: 18-19). He claims that after the movements of the 1960s—despite gains for 'women, minorities, students and youth'—the 'project of autonomy' has receded because no new form of society has taken shape and problems still persist at the geo-political level (Castoriadis 1992: 20). Instead, Castoriadis claims that there is a drift towards privatised and depoliticised individualism, in which both philosophical and artistic creativity are unable to point the way forward due to an intellectual preoccupation with the reconstruction or deconstruction of previous authors and art which has become an eclectic collage of the past (Castoriadis 1992: 21). He laments a kind of cultural stunting and argues that the philosophical implications of human capabilities and creations in the twentieth century have not been reckoned with, while technical progress continues to accelerate and neo-liberal capitalism faces no effective opposition (Castoriadis 1992: 20-21).

Castoriadis's philosophical anthropology offers a way of discussing the social-historical and creative aspects of human instituting which responsible for the variety of human interventions in the world, irreducible to the long march of human progress writ large. He highlights that there is still an imaginary layer of meaning which surrounds even the most systematic idioms of human thought, and this dimension allows both continuity with the past and transformative possibilities for the future. However, for all his differences with the functionalist premises of Modernisation theories; the instrumental channelling of human drives in early Critical Theory and the linguistic determinist implications of post-structuralist and post-modern thought, it can be argued that Castoriadis himself forecloses the question that the more open-ended possibilities of his philosophical anthropology raise. His characterisation of 'traditional societies' as arrangements to be overcome echoes some of the implications of Modernisation theories and Habermasian Critical Theory. He also implies that the Greco-Western legacy is the unquestionable torch bearer for autonomy by failing to lay out, in sufficient detail, how the questioning of institutions and the emergence of novel ones has occurred elsewhere. Surely, historical comparison and reassessment of familiar institutions in light of others plays a part in this questioning.

Indeed, it is this very issue which Arnason takes up. While Arnason has an interest in the terms of social continuity and transformation, he is more interested in the 'cultural component of the institution' (Arnason 1989a: 26, 38). Or rather, his approach is more sensitive to the contextual

specificity of this tension between what has been instituted and further instituting activity, for it would imply different institutions, in different places, at different times, which groups of people have either lived by or taken as a starting-point from which to initiate change. Similarly, in response to Castoriadis's criticism that Habermas does not decentre his own tradition enough, Arnason argues that Castoriadis identifies with the 'Greco-Occidental or European tradition' too emphatically for the comparison of imaginaries, and institutions as a result, to become questions in their own right (Arnason 1989a: 42-43).

In contrast to Arnason, Honneth is more interested in the normative implications of Castoriadis's thought than in the imaginary prerequisites for cultural differences. He claims that Castoriadis convincingly shows that 'technical rules incompletely prescribe the respective form of transposition into concrete actions' (Honneth 1991: 254). Rather, 'normative and political viewpoints' are involved in the application of human technologies and the direction of their development (Honneth 1991: 254). Despite the differences between Arnason and Honneth, they both complement each other in that any questions emerging from the comparison of different cultural institutions confronts the question of what unfamiliar normative and political notions mean for how we reflect upon and question our own. Nevertheless, as we shall see in the course of successive chapters, because Arnason and Honneth emphasise different aspects of social reality—interpretation by the former, recognition by the latter—they come to different conclusions about what modernity is and what animates it. Despite this, both have an affinity with the possibilities raised by Castoriadis that meaning is a crucial feature of human institutions of interaction which is not entirely beholden to material necessity, instrumental orientations, nor the jail-house of language.

1.6 Post-colonialism and Multiple Modernities

The third off-shoot of the post-mode emerges with post-colonial concerns. As discussed above for Kant, Hegel, Marx, Durkheim and Weber, the spread of capitalism was seen as—for better or worse—largely a self-evident trajectory along with the development of state-like arrangements. Such notions are preserved in Modernisation theories, but even find their way into Habermas's characterisation of the system as generating the most imposing economic and bureaucratic features of modernity. Yet as criticisms of Modernisation theory point out, societies are not merely self-referential generators of their own industrial, political and economic transformations from within. Rather, they are involved in broader interactions whether long-distance trade, migrations, wars, imperial and colonial activities. Both post-colonial and multiple-modernities approaches take up these issues with respect to modernity, with particular lines of emphasis. In the following section I will discuss them and some persistent difficulties.

While most of documented human history features forms of colonialism, the European colonialism that emerged alongside modernising trends differs in certain respects (Gillen and Ghosh 2007: 12-13).[17] First, there was no single controlling imperial centre, for while the Europeans shared Christianity and ancient Rome as a cultural legacy, they were also scattered across linguistically and politically diverse peoples often in competition or at war with each other in the consolidation of state-formations. Second, these emergent states managed to compete with each other for either territory, wealth, labour, and influence, and extended their reach far beyond their own immediate territories through maritime expansion. While formal colonisation by the maritime powers disintegrated between 1947-1965, post-colonial critique seeks to deconstruct the vestiges of the colonial legacy and disrupt any narrative of modernity premised on Western ascendancy (Gillen and Ghosh 2007: 89, 223). Post-colonial themes build upon questions raised by post-structuralism about historical erasure and the exclusion of non-European knowledges in the story of modernity. While Arnason has weighed in on some post-colonial critique, Honneth does not engage directly with postcolonial literature. However, as a critical current within the social sciences and humanities it raises issues around modernity and imperialism that are hard to ignore.

In this vein, Edward Said's (1935-2003) *Orientalism* (1978) is often cited as a seminal contribution to post-colonial thought (Kandiyoti 2002: 281; Gillen and Ghosh 2007: 89; Bhambra 2014: 116). [18] Said puts forward an interrogation of 'the production of knowledge in global perspective' and asks the question, to what extent has history been understood through the evaluative binaries constructed by 'the West in its actions upon others'? (Bhambra 2014: 116) He points to the devaluative constructions of a backward non-European other—primarily Eastern Mediterranean and Indian—by European scholars in relation to the industrialised West (Said 2003 [1978]: 4, 7). Following Foucault's lead on the incestuous marriage between power and knowledge in modernity, Said claims that 'orientalism' is 'a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles' (Said 2003: 2). The insidious feature of orientalist literature is the 'principle of inequality that exerts its influence' (Said 2003: 151).

[17] According to Gillen and Ghosh the main features of colonisation are forced labour for conquerors or exploitive trade relationships; the acceptance of foreign political institutions and restrictions upon indigenous ones; the erosion of traditions and languages for the colonised; further immigration from the conqueror's home territory; settlers and their descendants maintain a privileged status in comparison to the descendants of the colonised (Gillen and Ghosh 2007: 12).

[18] Granted, postcolonial approaches have important precedents in Franz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (2004[1961]). Fanon's accounts from the Algerian war of independence and experiences on the African continent, suggest that European settlers and specialists were less inclined to remain in Algeria once the colonial order had been dismantled. He highlights potentially turbulent longer-term consequences of reactive nationalism (Fanon 1961: 1-61).

In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Said explores the relation between literary narratives and cultural self-understandings amidst nineteenth- and twentieth-century varieties of Western imperialism and response to it.[19] While not an explicit theory of modernity per se, Said's treatment highlights that in the course of European colonial expansions, observations and codifications of non-European peoples resulted in theories that placed Europeans at the apex of human development with a self-appointed responsibility to 'modernise, develop, instruct and civilise' these others deemed incapable of organising moral and prosperous societies (Said 1993: 221-223, 17, 101, 166, 223). He further indicates that the presuppositions of European exceptionalism and its role as the spearhead of world progress animated Hegel's philosophy of history and were even invoked in the critique of capitalist imperialism by Marx and Engels, in their commentary on the African and Asian obstacles to reason (Said 1993: 168). In a brisk reference to Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, Said argues that constructions of groups which propelled progress and those which constrained it are also central to classical sociology and couched in Eurocentric terms (Said 1993: 154). Said generally acknowledges that early Critical Theory provides probing insights into domination within modern societies and the qualities of art as socio-cultural critique and protest, but he also argues that the Frankfurt tradition has been 'stunningly silent on racist theory, anti-imperialist resistance and oppositional practice in empire' (Said 1993: 278). He further implicates Habermas, noting that the latter explicitly admits to an abstinence from exploring the 'anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist struggles of the Third World' (Said 1993: 278). Said implies that the Frankfurt critical tradition does not go far enough and only focuses on the grievances that develop within those societies that are the historical beneficiaries of colonial power. He also argues that the implied global significance of European social theories and Western Marxism reinforces Western benchmarks about the terms of human autonomy and oppression, as if to represent those who cannot represent themselves (Said 1993: 60, 330, 277-278).

While Said raises critical questions about understandings of modernity which are constituted by reliance upon a deficient other, his own claims are not beyond reproach. Arnason is not convinced that that the term 'orientalism' offers much more than a structural definition 'to justify blanket claims' about unjust Western interpretations of its others (Arnason 2003a: 336). As he sees it Said uses the term at times to apply a clear interpretative lens to sets of objectionable Western premises about the orient, but at other times Said refers to a vague nebula of supposed affinities (Arnason 2003a: 336). Arnason notes that while Said attempts to put forward an anti-essentialist

[19] He discusses Western imperialism in terms of British, French, Belgian, Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, German colonialism and the latter rise of America as a global superpower. He notes responses to imperialism via the subsequent rise of de-colonialism and/or resistances to empire via Asian, Indian, African, Arab, Irish and Latin-American nationalisms (Said 1993: xi-xiii, xxiii-xxiv, 199, 224, 252).

position in which the Orient cannot be reduced to all the inferior categorisations discernible in Western scholarship, he still erects an essentialist image of the West as a unified entity dedicated to colonial activities and an orientalist outlook (Arnason 2003a: 336-337). In Arnason's view, Said loosely backdates European colonialism to the Roman empire, which overplays civilisational continuity across a series of schisms, fragmentations, intercivilisational encounters and diverse emergent societies and states (Arnason 2003a: 308-309; 337). It is one thing to say that Rome is a key interpretive reference point for Western modernity, which Arnason would agree with. It quite another to ramp up the rhetorical sting of one's thesis by implying a long-term continuity—perhaps 'presence' in Derrida's vernacular—in the terms of the relationship between West and East, which runs roughshod over intercultural contacts, transmissions and reappropriations.

In 'Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who speaks for "Indian" Pasts?', Dipesh Chakrabarty discusses the partial transmission of European institutions in the Indian context together with resistance through the retrieval of cultural meanings by Indian peoples who experienced colonial rule (Chakrabarty 1992: 11). He highlights that in the nineteenth century notions of 'individualism, citizenship and national identity' became influential as aspirations among Indian authors (Chakrabarty 1992: 8). From the nineteenth into the early twentieth century, imported forms of patriarchy on the model of the English nuclear family were rejected by Bengali women in favour of the notion of extended kinship. While still patriarchal in character, this invoked notions of 'freedom from the ego, the capacity to serve and obey voluntarily' and grace for family and nation bestowed by 'Lakshmi, the goddess of domestic well-being' (Chakrabarty 1992: 11-15). The companionate notion of marriage and the wholesale historical movement from sacred to the secular—hallmarks of Western modernity—were challenged by 'certain cultural operations' (Chakrabarty 1992: 11). In this way Chakrabarty touches on intercultural exchanges in which the trajectories of modernising are not those of replication, even if such instances are coercive and asymmetrical.

Chakrabarty further discusses a way of writing history that provincialises Europe. For Chakrabarty, the notion of Europe as the vanguard of modernity cannot be separated from European imperialism (Chakrabarty 1992: 21). On the other hand, he suggests that the image of Europe as the zenith of modernity is an idea peddled not only by Europeans themselves but also by 'third-world nationalisms which are modernising ideologies *par excellence*' (Chakrabarty1992: 21). Consequently, the provincialisation of Europe cannot mean advocating counter-projects of nation and empire, nor espousing cultural relativism but rather a 'wrestle with the ideas that legitimise the modern state and its attendant institutions' particularly when 'idealism accompanies…violence'

(Chakrabarty 1992: 21). Here Chakrabarty seems to be flagging some sort of comparative history as crucial for understanding the unjust features of modernity.

In *The End of Progress—Decolonising the Normative Foundations of Critical Theory* (2016), Amy Allen provides a probing survey and critique of the Critical Theory tradition and brings it into dialogue with post-structuralist, feminist, queer and post-/decolonial approaches in order to clear away the colonial debris from its normative presuppositions. Allen discerns in Critical Theory what she calls a backward-looking conception of normative progress that casts history as a story of development that leads up to our current situation, often cast as analogous to the achievements of European modernity as a historical learning process (Allen 2016: 226). On the other hand, she also sees in Critical Theory a forward-looking anticipation of unrealised autonomy or social freedom (Allen 2016: 226-227). For Allen, it is understandable the Frankfurt tradition has employed a combination of the two—assessing one against the other—to avoid either grounding normative critique in transcendental meta-historical oughts or slipping into historical relativism (Allen 2016: 227). However, she argues that unless this strategy is combined with a relentless commitment to critique of the normative criteria by which progress is assessed then, there is a potential for re-emergent transcendentalism (Allen 2016: 228). Looking forward, an appropriate starting point is to explore 'progress within history' couched in contextually appropriate terms and avoid appealing to 'historical progress' writ large (Allen 2016: 228-299). In turn, Allen seems to point in the direction of a comparative project, which might activate self-reflection on limitations of normative commitments in theoretical endeavours, but also do some representative justice to persistent points of contextual difference.

At this point it is fitting to note that Critical Theory, post-structuralist, postmodernist and post-colonial critics are not the only ones who have suggested a substantial reassessment of inherited social thought on modernity. Peter Wagner argues that the debates about the demise of modernity and the emergence of post-modernity throughout the 1980s and 1990s were inconclusive and attention shifted to plural forms of modernity (Wagner 2012: 33). Said Arjomand suggests that another branch of interlocutors—comparative historical sociologists—thinking through the lens of civilisational analysis and multiple modernities, are attempting to 'undo the erasure of historical experience of a very sizable portion of humankind from the foundation of social theory' (Arjomand 2010: 363). Current comparative approaches and related assumptions have not gone without criticisms and I shall touch on those in due course. But first it will be helpful to present a key source in the field.

Shmuel N. Eisenstadt (1923-2010) emerges as a leading figure within comparative sociology at the close of the twentieth century and as an instigator of the civilisational turn and the multiple modernities thesis (Arjomand 2010: 371-372; Smith 2017: 29). As we have seen, Eisenstadt's earlier take on Modernisation in the 1960s implied that different traditional backgrounds are invoked in collective 'struggle for the appropriation of modernity on the global periphery' (Arjomand 2010: 372). At the close of the twentieth century, his position on this becomes more pronounced. He writes, 'non-Western societies (or states) articulated strong anti-Western or even anti-modern themes', whether couched in 'nationalist, traditionalist … [or] fundamentalist' terms, but he still casts them as 'distinctively modern' patterns of ongoing ideological and institutional reconfiguration (Eisenstadt 2000a: 2). On this view, modernity is not identical with Westernisation, yet Western patterns are not only historical forerunners but also become 'a basic reference point for the others' (Eisenstadt 2000a: 2-3). Nevertheless, Eisenstadt does concede that the turn to multiplicity faces the question of what characterises the 'common core of modernity' (Eisenstadt 2000a: 3). His answer is that the commonality is a 'cultural program' whereby 'autonomous human agency' is understood as an important dimension of shaping possible futures and sites of contestation (Eisenstadt 2000a: 3-4).

Another dimension of Eisenstadt's theory is civilisational. To clarify the implications of the term 'civilisation' in his approach, it is important to isolate some of the baggage that often accompanies the concept. Civilisation can refer to a single, universal process that carries a strong normative assumption. In this sense it can imply a forward moving process of attitudinal and behavioural refinement and the results of such a process (Elias 1978[1939]: 6). However, it does not merely denote more refined manners and customs, civilisation also suggests the constraining or potential elimination of violence within human relations (Szakolcszai 2001: 370-371, 382). In its singular appropriation, civilisation has normative connotations that tone down cultural differences and imply something that is common to all humans, or at least that which ought to be common to humans, according to those who claim to be its representatives (Elias 1978: 7). The term emerged in France during the second half of the eighteenth century in the writing of Marquis de Mirabeau, 'to celebrate the triumph and the spread of reason, not only in the realm of politics and administration, but also in the moral, religious and intellectual sphere' (Knöbl 2018: 23). It was also defined in opposition to imperfect societal conditions characterised by 'barbarism' and therefore emerged from Enlightenment understandings which assumed the perfectibility of social order (Knöbl 2018: 23). Yet civilisation in the singular has also been used to justify imperial intrusion and rule in societies outside of Europe who were deemed barbarous, without law and in-eligible for the conventions of rights and treaties (Knöbl 2018: 25; Smith 2018: 8). In the second half of the

eighteenth century a series of French and Spanish colonial policies were drafted in the name of civilising and assimilating peoples in Africa and the Americas, with military force if necessary (Tricorie 2017: 33-36). To what degree those claiming to act in the name of civilisation have refrained from violence and poor manners amidst civilising missions is highly debatable.

By contrast, Eisenstadt does not use the term civilisation in the sense just described: to indicate a singular process of refinement in social life as the developmental passage from barbarism to civilisation. Instead, he uses the term primarily in an ethnological sense to refer to a socio-cultural complex with a centre and a periphery (Spohn 2011a: 286). In this sense civilisation is not a single process; rather, there are multiple civilisations. Civilisations are broader cultural dimensions which develop across different societal groups animated by similar symbolic and institutional patterns. Moreover, as he describes it, 'ontological visions … ideological premises and core symbols' that define, structure and regulate political, economic, familial and status relations and also the constitution of collective identities (Eisenstadt 2000b: 2). This allows Eisenstadt to say that, while the 'civilisation of modernity developed first in the West', it is likely the case that there are multiple modernities shaped by different civilisational backgrounds (Eisenstadt 2000a: 7). He sees the civilisation of modernity as a radicalisation of tendencies related to human views beyond the present which had already animated much older civilisations (Eisenstadt 2000a: 7).

Building on a notion initially elucidated by Karl Jaspers, Eisenstadt suggests that a watershed axial crystallisation of such patterns emerges on the Eurasian continent between 500 BCE and 100CE (Eisenstadt 2000b: 4).[20] These axial civilisations include ancient Israel, ancient Greece, imperial China and India. In these civilisations, respectively, Judaic monotheism, Greek philosophy, Chinese Confucianism and Indic Hinduism become central to ontological visions. They are established as reference points for subsequent breakthroughs, whether during the axial period in terms of Buddhism, Christianity, or in the later first millennia CE with the emergence of Islam (Eisenstadt 2000b: 4-11). Central to the ontological visions which animate these societies is a sense that the mundane order is incomplete, evil and tarnished, and it requires reconciliation with a higher ethical purpose and/or cosmological harmony (Eisenstadt 2000b: 4). The histories of civilisations are also histories shaped by elites and counter-elites who develop contending visions of how to bridge 'the chasm between the transcendental and the mundane' (Eisenstadt 2000b: 4-7). Such activities gave rise to combinations of struggles between classes, ideologies, orthodoxies and heterodoxies that shape respective civilisational backgrounds (Eisenstadt 2000b: 7). In the long term, competition between emergent states, imperial rivalries and colonial intrusions, diverse

[20] Eisenstadt (2000b: 3) also admits that archaic civilisations that predate the axial period—ancient Egyptian, Assyrian, Mesoamerican, Iranian-Zoroastrian civilisations—may in certain ways be considered proto-axial, but he is more interested in the axial period.

‘cultural programs of modernity’ emerge with different relationships to authority, legitimacy, protest, political action and modalities for questioning existing institutions (Eisenstadt 2000b: 14-17).

Despite this pluralising shift in theorising modernity, the post-colonial sociologist Gurminder Bhambra is still not convinced that the multiple modernities thesis has gone far enough in reassessing inherited theoretical baggage. She argues that the multiple modernities paradigm upholds European modernity as the original achievement and comparative yardstick to assess how Western ‘institutional frameworks’ are mediated by ‘cultural codes’ elsewhere (Bhambra 2011a: 655). Her central criticism is that keeping the ‘dominant framework of sociology’ intact as a transmission from the West to the rest, does not allow ‘difference to make a difference to the original categories of modernity’ (Bhambra 2011b: 255). The original categories are the market economy, the nation-state and bureaucracy achieved in Europe and exported elsewhere (Bhambra 2011a: 267). Further pursuing this line of argument with respect to state-formation narratives within historical sociological sociology, Bhambra claims that ‘external domination is not theorised as a constitutive aspect of the state’ whereby the internal differentiation models tend to imply national consolidations of institutions and territories and not imperial consolidations (Bhambra 2016: 340). She argues that the legitimation of aspiring states does not merely emerge from within but relies upon these societies being ‘recognised’ by already dominant and often times imperial states (Bhambra 2016: 344). Those ‘who fall out of consideration’ with no rights to sovereignty have generally been colonised peoples (Bhambra 2016: 344-345).

Bhambra highlights that another implication of getting to keep the original modernity intact, is the European monopoly over Enlightenment critique and authorship (Bhambra 2013: 302). Moreover, while the critique of pathologies of power is deemed a ‘necessary’ and ‘exemplary’ inheritance from the European Enlightenment, the pathologies of colonialism or domination are not seen as connected to an authentic expression of the Enlightenment (Bhambra 2013: 302). This was certainly the case for Horkheimer and Adorno, at the highpoint of the Second World War whereby the Enlightenment mutates into its self-cancellation. Habermas, too, undertakes an elaborate theoretical extrication of functionalist rationality from communicative rationality, the latter upheld as the only uncoercive manner to pursue Enlightenment through mediation from others. In certain respects, Bhambra is not at odds with the decentered implications of Habermas’s thesis, she is just not convinced by the notion that this reflexive capacity is primarily bequeathed by the Western Enlightenment. She argues that more can be done at a broader level of historical sociology to reconstruct the basic premises of modernity. For Bhambra, ‘a global sociology with universal claims’ requires ‘reconstructing present understandings in light of new knowledge of the past and

present' (Bhambra 2013: 302). One of the main things which she suggests is an emphasis on 'connected histories' which might serve as an interactive mediation between subaltern particularism and Eurocentric universalist categories by tracing the links between them and through consultation amending categories of analysis in context specific ways (Bhambra 2011a: 670).

In *Modernity—Understanding the Present* (2012), Peter Wagner also expresses reservations about the civilisational turn and the multiple modernities thesis. As he sees it, the civilisational approach suffers from the confusing implication that some 'original diversity' that emerged in 'cultural programmes' a few millennia ago can somehow explain the persistence of geopolitical diversity amidst modernity (Wagner 2012: 33). For Wagner this entails a normative problem. Western modernity understands itself as upholding some universally beneficial normative principles (Wagner 2012: 33). How is it possible to reflect critically on the adequacy of these principles if one can resign oneself to claiming such failure to gain broader traction is merely the persistence of 'original diversity' (Wagner 2012: 33).[21] Moreover falling back on the claim of historically enduring incommensurable values could inhibit critical reflection upon whether there is a discrepancy between behaviours and campaigns undertaken by Western powers in the global arena and the beneficial values they claims to stand for.

Along with the normative problem, Wagner suggests that there is a conceptual one. He claims that the implication of long-term continuity and large-scale commonality associated with the term civilisations is too blunt an instrument to deal with the contemporary societies of modernity (Wagner 2012: 71). The notion of 'societal self-understandings … a process of—more or less collective—interpretation of one's situation in light of crucial experiences made in earlier situations, is a more operationalisable concept'(Wagner 2012: 73). He suggests that a comparative sociology of modernities could analyse societal self-understandings in relation epistemic, political and economic problematics (Wagner 2012: 74-78).

Despite Wagner's claim that the multiple-modernities thesis has a normative dilemma, in 'Multiple Modernities or Varieties of Modernity', (2006) Volker Schmitt still discerns a normative presupposition at the level conceptual preferences. Schmitt argues that theorists sympathetic to the multiple modernities view base this theoretical turn on a critical distancing from Modernisation theories which emerged in the 1950s and 1960s (Schmitt 2006: 77). There are two main claims tied to this shift: first, these older theories are 'oversimplified and empirically incorrect'; second, they advance a 'normatively questionable view of this world' (Schmitt 2006: 77). As such, this shift in theorising modernity can be understood as a claim about the theoretical-empirical correctness of

[21] Wagner does not express this point exactly in this fashion but my own variation on this point captures the broader thrust of his argument or at least what he ought to be arguing in my view.

interpretations, but also in normative terms about whether such representations are just. Such considerations are analogous to the Kantian is/ought problem. It is within the orbit of these types of questions that Johann Arnason's and Axel Honneth's respective approaches can be understood.

1.7 Johann Arnason and Axel Honneth: Where They Fit

In the theories of modernity presented above there is a gradual shift towards acknowledging diversity within modernity or diversity of modernities. This development contrasts with the philosophical, classical social-theoretical, Modernisation and first-generation Critical Theory accounts, which assumed that, for better or worse, a largely identical pattern would characterise most forms of modern society. These characteristics were couched in terms of either enlightened practical reason, or the modern state as the apex of social integration, or a revolutionary development that surpasses capitalism and the state, or functional specialisation roles and a shift from mechanical to organic solidarity, or rationalisation and disenchantment, or functional and adaptive superiority, or domination by instrumental reason whereby the Enlightenment resurges as myth. Even within Habermas's reformulation of the unfinished project of Enlightenment, the general problem of state and economic intrusion on the one hand, and traditional worldviews on the other, are modalities of coercion to be overcome.

Admittedly, the post-mode alerts the social-theoretical debate to the possibility of exclusions and closed narratives central its own self-understandings. However, it also seems to traffic in confusion when its adherents imply that, on the one hand, the broad normative commitment to human autonomy that emerged with modernity is not worth salvaging, yet on the other hand that this rejection is warranted because modern narratives have remained unrealised and exclusionary—that is, they continue to obstruct autonomy in some sense. As Honneth points out, there is an implicit moral conviction preserved in such claims that the features of modernity have been unjust. By contrast, Arnason's complaint against the post-mode is more about description: that the post-mode relies upon a streamlined description of modernity in order to support the image of a Western-centric straight jacket, when it is likely—irrespective of Western hegemony and its own self-congratulatory self-understandings—that the contours of modernity are far more complex. Indeed, more recent shifts in post-colonial sociology signal a more genuine interest in exploring colonial contacts and connected histories as a more adequate description of modernity.

Similarly, civilisational and multiple modernities approaches—which Arnason is sympathetic to—explore the possibility of persistent human diversity that may be derived in part from differences that predate modern imperialism and colonialism. As Wagner points out, there are doubts as to how much the notion of long-term continuity with an original diversity can be

maintained. Furthermore, Wagner argues for those concerned with whether there are any discernible normative commitments that could be universally acceptable, there are doubts as to whether the multiple-modernities approach offers any way forward. Nonetheless, Schmitt claims that not only do those working upon the basis of civilisational and multiple modernities premises want more adequate descriptions but they also uphold a normative commitment. Against this background Johann Arnason and Axel Honneth provide unique perspectives on the conflicts that animate modernity, yet their accounts emphasise different premises.

Arnason's emphasis on interpretative conflicts leads him toward a reinterpretation of Max Weber's comparative sociology of religion and Castoriadis's notion of imaginary institution. Thinking through the inconclusive implications of these sources in respect to modernity, in combination with additional sociological and philosophical sources, Arnason develops a perspective geared toward exploring the possibility of plural civilisational passages through state-formation and modernity. He also highlights—for better or worse—the mutually constitutive interactions between these constellations through intercivilisational encounters. One of the central focuses of his approach is the idea that we need to speak not merely of modernities that are culturally different but of alternative modernities that emerge in response to the main liberal, democratic, capitalist currents of Western modernity—the Soviet Union, Japan and China respectively.

In contrast, Honneth's emphasis on a struggle for recognition leads him toward a reinterpretation of Hegel and other philosophical, sociological and psychological sources in search of a pre-theoretical social need that could that anchor the normative claims of Critical Theory. On the one hand, Honneth implies a philosophical anthropology which anchors the requirement for recognition within a universal notion of human nature, on the other hand, he attempts to reconstruct the institutional supports for this requirement in the dynamics of the particular historical developments of modernity. These developments occur through struggles for recognition whereby emergent or previously misrecognised identities begin to find some level of social recognition and esteem in communities and to make demands to have their claims formalised. Honneth's focus is primarily upon modernity as experienced within territorially organised social units—states—which, despite staggered developments, have preferences for securing individual liberty, political participation and social rights through legal recognition. Nonetheless, Honneth has also weighed in on international relations and discussed the possibility of recognition between states as a crucial feature of geopolitics.

Arnason has claimed that there might be some overlap between his civilisational approach and Honneth's theory of recognition (Adams and Arnason 2016: 155). However, this becomes a

complicated proposition once the differences between their respective approaches are considered. Honneth's theory of recognition has an explicit normative thrust which has something to say about the preconditions for good and just social relations between interaction partners, conducive to less distorted self-understandings (Honneth 1995: 121). Arnason, however, to reiterate what was mentioned in the introduction, is not convinced that 'normative commitments … can or *ought* to be built into theory', and instead he has aimed to 'clarify the presuppositions and limits of normative commitments' (Adams and Arnason 2016: 156, my emphasis added). This seems like an admirable enterprise but to what end and according to what *ought*? What happens when our normative commitments have their limits, or more bluntly, what are the long-term consequences when our normative commitments are wrong? It seems that Arnason's approach is still animated by a special concern with a moral thrust and potentially analogous to recognition.

While both theorists have something to say about the importance of diverse human identities and ways of life, they frame diversity in different ways. Whereas Honneth is more sensitive to diversity within modernity as a general condition, Arnason is more attuned to the notion of a diversity of modernities. Consequently, they occupy different positions on progress. For Arnason, modernity is characterised by contending notions of progress, and while we cannot really side with any of them too emphatically, we can at least reckon with institutional developments that have not proved conducive to human autonomy. For Honneth, liberalism, capitalism and democracy, have allowed the partial expression of normative commitments that he believes are worth building upon. The current thesis reconstructs the main elements of their respective approaches and brings their contending perspectives into contact to answer the following question: Arnason or Honneth, who provides the more convincing account of the concerns which animate modernity as is it is currently understood?

CHAPTER 2: AXEL HONNETH'S FRAMEWORKS OF RECOGNITION: DIFFICULTIES AND DIRECTIONS

Introduction

In the previous chapter I discussed a range of different conceptions of modernity, tracing these in philosophy, classical sociology, Modernisation theory, Critical Theory, post-structuralism, post-modernism, post-colonialism and the multiple-modernities approach. There emerges a conflict of interpretations as to what accounts of modernity are normatively just and empirically correct. As we saw, both the multiple-modernities and post-colonial approaches, in their respective ways, attempt to incorporate diverse historical experiences into the overall picture, yet these two approaches are in tension with each other. On the one hand, multiple-modernities interpretations have attempted to accommodate global diversity via exploring the continuity of much older cultural/civilisational reference points which feed into different regional/national expressions of modernity. On the other, post-colonial interpretations argue that the multiple-modernities approach smuggles in the vestiges of European exceptionalism by shifting the focus from the processes by which institutional patterns of modernity were—and still are, depending on where you look—expanded through Western imperial/colonial activities. According to this view, the 'multiple' aspect is merely a rear-guard concession to cultural diversity, which still gets to bask in the universal applicability of particular institutions—the 'modern' aspect—transferred through Western European expansion and/or coerced reactive Modernisation in response.

Problems also arise from the approach of Critical Theory. The first generation was trapped by its pessimism, but Habermas's more optimistic version has difficulties too. His ambitious formulation of the universal linguistic prerequisites for learning processes and the communicative resolution of interpretive conflicts within modernity could appear as ethnocentric paternalism. Moreover, shifting from intersubjectivity to the implications in the broader global context, the prospect of mutually instructive understanding through dialogue between different cultures appears more like a set of linguistic parameters that would cater to a Western-centric monologue, or at least those who had made the cognitive leap to modern self-understandings earlier. By implication, if Critical Theory was to retain relevance for the debates and conflicts which had entered into consideration in the wake of the 'cultural turn', then appealing to the prospect of mutual understanding through communicative rationality alone was no longer suitable. Critical Theory had to shift to consider something primordial, a dimension of human receptivity that can accommodate otherness or advocate in solidarity with difference on the ground that others had been misrepresented or unjustly excluded from the narratives of modernity.

Axel Honneth's approach to Critical Theory attempts to accommodate previously neglected aspects of identity formation, socialisation and social integration via the theme of recognition. In contrast to Habermas's formulation of modernity, which implies the development of more demanding forms of justification in social interactions, Honneth casts modernity as characterised by more demanding forms of recognition and struggles for recognition. True, Honneth is sympathetic to Habermas's focus on the terms of interaction between people, but he sees the emphasis on communication as a secondary step. Moreover, he asks in what way the 'expectation of recognition belongs to the structure of communicative action' (Honneth 1994: 263). In turn, he aims to outline 'an anthropological conception that can explain the normative presuppositions of social interaction' (Honneth 1994: 263).

In attempting to outline the normative presuppositions of social interaction, Honneth constructs a framework of recognition on two fronts. He outlines a 'formal conception of ethical life' which he suggests is general enough to be applicable 'to the plurality of all particular forms of life', yet he also claims that its development is 'tied to a unique initial situation presented by its period of origin' (Honneth 1995[1992]: 175). In other words, Honneth's theory rests on a philosophical anthropology which anchors the requirement for recognition within a universal notion of human nature, but he also attempts to reconstruct partially realised institutional supports for this requirement in the dynamics of particular historical developments (Zurn 2000: 120-122). By applying this theoretical strategy, Honneth aims to ground the normative basis for Critical Theory immanently within existing social patterns. In doing so, he can partially avoid abstract conceptual foundationalism on the one hand but also historical relativism on the other. He can do this by finding expressions of normative expectations and improvements already at work in a history of social-institutional developments that can be further expanded upon (Allen 2016: 80).

As will be discussed, there are difficulties posed by the implication that universal recognition requirements for the human condition find their exemplary institutional expression in developmental direction of states affiliated with Western modernity. This is further complicated by a marginal thread of Honneth's thought that indicates a framework of recognition at the broader level of interaction—between states. Honneth's more sustained formulation of recognition struggles within states has a post-traditional historical thrust away from inherited status privileges allowing for the expansion of individual autonomy and self-realisation. But at the international level his account deals with interactions between states for whom securing individual autonomy and self-realisation may not be primary normative commitments. Additionally, the legitimation of political actions in the global arena requires the political representatives of states to appeal to broader

narratives of shared identity, culture and history to justify their policies to their respective populations.

In the following sections I will reconstruct Honneth's domestic and international frameworks of recognition, which I will define as the internalist and externalist variants respectively. In section 2.1, I will reconstruct the primary strands of Honneth's internalist framework of recognition within states. Section 2.2 brings in Honneth's interlocutors to indicate tensions within a streamlined and linear reading of recognition struggles. I will also point out that Honneth relies upon a rather hermeneutical notion of culture but does not really elaborate on this assumption. In section 2.3, I will discuss Honneth's notion of recognition in a global context in terms of state obligations towards human rights, but also in terms of the notion of recognition between states as a constitutive dimension of geopolitics. In both instances I will highlight that historical, cultural and/or political differences play a part in recognition relations and further raise issues for any oversimplified narrative of struggles for recognition leading to moral progress. Ultimately, I will aim to come to a broader understanding of recognition, its potential directions and limitations, in an attempt to identify which aspects are more plausible in the light of the various difficulties explored.

2.1 The Internalist Framework of the Struggle for Recognition

A precursor to Honneth's sustained elucidation of the struggle for recognition can be found in 'Moral Development and Social Struggle: Hegel's Early Social-Philosophical Doctrines', (Honneth 1992a). In this article, Honneth challenges *Realpolitik* views on social integration and the legitimation of power via an alternative claim—found in GWF Hegel's early nineteenth-century Jena writings—about the basis of both integrative and legitimation dynamics issuing from struggles for recognition. As Honneth sees it, *Realpolitik* notions find their Western origins in the political philosophy of Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527) and Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), both of whom, he claims, base the human condition on relations of mutual mistrust and a struggle for self-preservation (Honneth 1992a: 199-208). In Machiavellian thought, political action cannot be assessed according to moral criteria, but only in accordance with how affective it is in preserving self-interest (Rossi and Sleat 2014: 691-697). In Hobbesian thought, there are internal and external implications. Internally, state power exists to prevent an unconstrained war of all against all within its population (Held 1992: 23). Externally, once the constraint to violence is secured, states are also eligible to become sovereign international players pursuing their own interests among other sovereignties in accordance with agreed-upon international codes which mediate the otherwise constant threat of war (Held 1992: 23). Honneth's most developed counter-claim rests upon a internalist framework of recognition which aims at the minimisation of violence within states and gradually develops through mutual moral expectations, not self-preservation (Honneth 1992a: 198).

Honneth notes that Hegel starts from the intersubjective premise that mutually supportive notions of expanded community and individualisation issue 'from the ethical connections within the framework in which subjects already coexist' (Honneth 1992a: 205). He claims that Hegel's notion of human development and social struggle are not couched in terms of a struggle for self-preservation but rather as a struggle for recognition which animates more complex distinctions in both the 'legal and social recognition of identity' (Honneth 1992a: 198). Legal recognition represents a formalised elaboration of self-limitation, already at work in the normative expectations of intersubjective relations, and marks an improvement to the mutual benefit to persons (Honneth 1992a: 207). Social recognition of people's capabilities and traits partly reconciles them with the values of others, but also differentiates them from others in a way which allows their own particular identity to achieve affirmation in 'some broader dimension of themselves' (Honneth 1992a: 207). To attain newer levels of this kind of self-understanding in relations of recognition with others, there must be ongoing stages of conflict and reconciliation based upon normative expectations (Honneth 1992a: 208). While Honneth does not provide extensive detail on how these struggles for recognition play out, he finds a general framework in Hegel which he sees as a plausible starting point for exploring them—the affective bonds of the family, in the formal sense as a legal person with individual needs and in community relations of solidarity (Honneth 1992a: 212). Honneth borrows this love, law and solidarity schematic from Hegel to formulate the way that recognition relations in those spheres impinge upon the development of personal identity formation but also to discuss the institutional preconditions that are either supportive of or obstructive to demands for recognition.

Honneth's theory of recognition develops in *The Struggle for Recognition* (1995 [1992]) (referred to as *SR* hereafter through this chapter for brevity). Honneth claims that the 'moral development' of a society at the institutional level and of the 'undistorted relation-to-self' at the individual level rests upon the degree to which mutual recognition can be achieved in the spheres of familial, legal and community relations (*SR*: 121, 173-174). To complement these recognition spheres and the possibility for their development, Honneth draws on Hegel, on the twentieth-century social psychological investigations of George Herbert Mead (1863-1931), and on the psychoanalytic object-relations theory of Donald W. Winnicott (1896-1971) and Jessica Benjamin (1946-). Using these sources, Honneth outlines indispensable aspects of identity-formation and socialisation applicable to each recognition sphere to the degree that recognition is forthcoming. On this view, sufficient recognition within family and interpersonal relations provides the possibility of decentred self-understandings and self-confidence; legal recognition affords formalised public self-

respect; and social recognition affords social esteem for one's particular capacities and contributions to a community (Honneth *SR*: 77-81, 100-107, 133, 127-128, 171).

Honneth defines the requirement for recognition primarily in terms of the negative consequences for identity formation, socialisation and social integration if interpersonal, legal and/or social recognition are not afforded. The most damaging forms of failed recognition or misrecognition are those which occupy the sphere of interpersonal recognition, such as physical mistreatment and the forcible deprivation of a person's capacity for possession and control of their own body (*SR*: 132). 'Torture and rape' are examples of this form of disrespect, provoking feelings of defencelessness and deprivation of reality (*SR*: 132). Physical abuse can erode or displace the qualities that might otherwise be gained in the course of socialisation—such as the capacity for self-confidence and for one's ability to integrate emotions and bodily control—which has further implications for dealings with others if such capacities are eroded (*SR*: 132). As Honneth sees it, unlike the contextually variable contours of legal and community recognition, bodily mistreatment has the most malignant effects on persons, regardless of 'historical period or the cultural frame of reference' (*SR*: 133).

In the sphere of legal recognition, structural exclusion from the possession of certain rights affects a person's 'moral self-respect', for one is not considered a full participatory member of a community with the same guarantees of normative obligations to be upheld by others that one is also expected to uphold (*SR*: 133). The denial of rights of this kind amounts to not being afforded 'the same degree of moral responsibility', in turn inhibiting the capacity to understand oneself as a 'legally equal interaction partner' and formally denying one the status of a morally responsible person (*SR*: 133-4).

In the sphere of social recognition, 'the denigration of individual or collective forms of life' denotes the terrain of insult or degradation (*SR*: 134). This relates to the social esteem attainable within an 'inherited cultural horizon' (*SR*: 134). If 'forms of life' are downgraded and beliefs cast as 'inferior and deficient', then it decreases people's chances of attributing 'social value to their own capacities' and forms of self-realisation (*SR*: 134). Accompanying such dynamics are the potential for eroded self-esteem. Nevertheless, Honneth does not cast all failures to achieve recognition as damage beyond repair. Rather he also suggests that such instances can potentially motivate social resistance and conflict, which can animate social changes toward the expansion of recognition relations (*SR*: 132). This general premise underwrites Honneth's stylised narrative of modernity.

To fit with the Critical Theory requirement of both immanence and potential for further elaboration, such normative expectations of recognition must have already achieved some partial

expression. Moreover, this is partial institutional expression in modernity as experienced primarily within territorially organised social units—states—which, despite staggered developments, invoke democratic premises for securing individual liberty, political participation and social rights through legal recognition (Honneth 2007c [1997]: 209-215).

Consequently, Honneth reconstructs a narrative of modernity whereby social struggles for recognition since the eighteenth century—as a knock-on effect of social struggles ushered in by the French and American revolutions—have expanded the institutional scope of mutual recognition within relations of love, law and solidarity across the development of modern states (Anderson 1995: xiv; *SR*: 110-116). He does this partly by the use of Max Weber's notion of status honour from *Economy and Society,* which presupposes that in pre-modern conventional forms of ethical life, social esteem is vertically organised according to status groups and positive social value afforded in those contexts to the extent people uphold the expected conduct associated with their station (*SR*: 123). He also reconstructs a struggle for recognition narrative as a departure from such relations. In particular, the bourgeoisie contests the 'predetermined worth'—honour based on group membership—of the nobility, enabling individuated biographies to enter into the 'contested field of social esteem' (*SR*: 124-125). In turn, the 'threshold of modernity' was crossed when 'ethical obligations were recognised to be a result of inner-worldly decisions,' stripping away religious and metaphysical justifications for social ethics (*SR*: 124-125).

The significance of inner-worldly decisions, in Honneth's *SR* characterisation, appear to be analogous to the results of interrogations of history and human purpose which emerged within the Western European Enlightenment. Honneth suggests that 'post-conventional ideas … [articulated within] philosophy and political theory' had an immutable effect upon previously held 'value-convictions' about the terms of social integration, primarily because the self-evident claims of ethical traditions were challenged by the demand for justification (*SR*: 110, 124). He claims that these tectonic shifts in human understandings gave way to post-conventional or post-traditional[22] presuppositions which made their way into law, allowing the separation of legal recognition from social recognition to the extent that, in principle, 'exceptions and privileges are no longer admissible' under law (*SR*: 109, 124). Rather it represents a move towards legal universalisation of human dignity, away from notions of honour—inherited according to status and in-group membership—that had otherwise upheld an 'unequal distribution of rights and burdens' between those with noble status and those without it (*SR*: 109, 125). For Honneth, this abstract presupposition of human dignity became central to 'modern catalogues of human rights' which

[22] Honneth uses the term 'post-traditional' interchangeably with 'post-conventional' (*SR*: 89-90, 113).

uphold the notion that 'all human beings… [should be] … guaranteed legal protection for their standing in society', even though he admits that the degree to which this has actually been achieved is an ongoing source of conflict (*SR*: 125).

The developmental path of legal recognition according to Honneth is taken from T. H. Marshall's (1893-1981) analysis of English constitutional history. Marshall indicates that, in the English context, civil rights emerged in the eighteenth century, political rights in the nineteenth and social rights in the twentieth (*SR*: 116).[23] Honneth implies that such developments set precedents for the expansion of rights that could not be denied in state arrangements elsewhere. The expansion of individual rights that he discerns is threefold: civil rights preserve negative liberty against the intrusions of state interference; political rights afford positive rights to participation in public deliberation; and social rights uphold a positive right to a fair share in basic goods and welfare (*SR*: 115). Nonetheless, legal recognition remains at a collective anonymous level, too abstract to afford people a sense of their own particular value in relation to others. This is why Honneth sees social recognition as an indispensable complement to the legal variety (*SR*: 125).

The devaluation of traditional forms of honour, in Honneth's account, also opened up new spaces for social recognition and struggles for recognition. Social honour was diluted and became amenable to a notion of social standing tied to the 'individualisation of achievement' (*SR*: 125-126). In turn, this opened up a form of 'value-pluralism' by which the development of personal abilities and differentiated modes of self-realisation emerge as important avenues for people to acquire social esteem for their own particular social contributions and a sense of personal biography (*SR*: 123-125). Nonetheless, Honneth admits that while the 'general-value horizon…is supposed to be open to various forms of self-realisation', which traits and abilities are actually eligible for social esteem ultimately depends upon the 'dominant interpretations of societal goals' secured by those 'social groups… [who] succeed in publicly interpreting their own accomplishments and forms of life in a way that shows them to be especially valuable' (*SR*: 126-127). He argues that it is primarily the terms of social recognition regarding what notions of achievement and self-realisation are worthy of esteem and how they might contribute to general goals that become sites of recurrent

[23] Following Marshall's reconstruction Honneth highlights that political rights emerged as a biproduct of civil ones that had been afforded to a proportion of the males amidst the growing population in the eighteenth century, whereby political participation hinged upon a demonstrable amount of income and property. These 'status-bound rights' were expanded to universal human rights as it gradually turned out there were increasingly less convincing justifications for exclusion of groups and in the early decades of the twentieth century, a belief emerged that all must be afforded equal rights to participate in the democratic deliberation of the political community. In turn social rights emerged and this struggle was partly prefigured in struggles for 'universal and mandatory education' in the nineteenth century. Part of this initiative was based on providing the adults of the future the 'cultural education' necessary for 'equal exercise of citizens' rights'. This led to a further consideration that such rights were only a formal concession if the 'standard of living and economic security' did not allow the vast majority of the population to take advantage of their rights. And this was the premise the welfare state direction taken by various Western countries (Honneth 1995: 116-117).

'cultural conflict' between different groups (*SR*: 127). The more a particular group manages to capture public attention to neglect of their attributes and capacities—attention via what Honneth calls 'symbolic force'—the more likely they have the chance of increasing the social value and in turn recognition of those who are members (*SR*: 127).[24] At first glance it might appear that Honneth merely points to a struggle for social recognition based upon more elaborate forms of group identity and in-group memberships once inherited privileges are no longer indisputable markers of social worth. However, he does not merely restrict the potential for social recognition to closed in-group memberships.

Honneth discusses a notion of symmetrical esteem. This does not mean that people esteem each other to the same quantifiable degree, which Honneth rightly notes is nearly impossible to assess. Rather, it means a sense of mutual esteem which enables 'relationships of sympathy and solidarity across social boundaries' (*SR*: 128). This dimension of social recognition refers to the possibility of esteem for achievements and capacities which were previously without broader social significance. While it is unclear whether Honneth is referring to previously ignored achievements and capacities or to the emergence of radically new ones, solidarity implies esteem across group lines.

This is more apparent in Honneth's follow-up statements. For him, solidarity also relates to concern, not mere tolerance, for what is individual and particular about people in relation to the respective value-horizons they inhabit. He adds that 'only to the degree that I care about the development of the other's characteristics (which may seem foreign to me) can our shared goals be realised' (*SR*: 129). Solidarity is the basis for a form of social esteem that allows a person to be free from collective denigration (*SR*: 130). On the basis of these statements, Honneth's notion of solidarity with others implies a more nuanced form of esteem than is afforded when one recognises that another person is not entirely reducible to the group this other appears to have to most affinity with. Yet, inversely, it would also imply that a group's value-horizons are irreducible to the appropriations and actions of particular people. Ultimately, the 'hypothetical end-point' of the struggle for recognition is that 'all … would be recognised as both autonomous and individuated, equal and particular persons' through the radical extension of solidarity or rather the most sophisticated form of social recognition (*SR*: 171, 175-177).

[24] While Honneth concedes that during its inception, post-traditional social recognition of individuated modes of achievement and social esteem were still couched in both gender and class specific terms, he seems to imply that the basis for challenging those constraints rested upon struggles for recognition which inter-penetrate the spheres of familial, legal and social recognition and transform the scope of recognition relations within them (Honneth 1995: 125).

It is fairly clear that Honneth's internalist framework of recognition casts the lack of recognition in interpersonal, legal and community relations as damaging to a person's relation-to-self and others, and in turn as a potential motive for struggle. His characterisation of solidarity across group lines implies a supportive role for those whose self-confidence has been inhibited or destroyed, those whose self-respect as a full morally responsible participant has not been legally afforded, or those who face a dominant social value horizon in which their capacities and aspirations are viewed as inferior or deficient. Struggles for recognition are supposed to occur in a bottom-up manner, whereby legal frameworks within the jurisdiction of a state accommodate and formally support recognition claims which have already gained support within family and community. It is in the more immediate spheres of family and community life in which struggles for recognition initially playout. Once some modalities of identity formation and self-realisation have given more scope than traditionally allowed for, there are demands for justice that these opportunities for legal respect and social esteem be extended further to others. In this way, Honneth's schematic has a historical direction towards the progressive expansion of recognition relations.

2.2 Difficulties and Directions of Recognition within Honneth's Internalist Framework

However, Honneth's attempt to provide a formal definition of the struggle for recognition, and of its normative dimension, glosses over difficulties that have been exposed by his contemporaries and interlocutors. One basis for criticism is provided by Charles Taylor, who distinguishes between 'a politics of equal dignity' and 'a politics of difference', opening up the question of where Honneth's notion of recognition fits in relation to these contrasting imperatives (Taylor 1997: 37, 38).

In 'The Politics of Recognition,' Taylor claims that the need and demand for recognition animates varieties of nationalist, minority, feminist and multiculturalist claims (Taylor 1997: 25). While nationalism is less central to Taylor's characterisation, he shows some appreciation for the complexity of the issue. He acknowledges that recognition can be invoked in the advocacy of national independence from colonial domination, but he also notes that nationalism can promote collective orientations which are understood as 'discriminatory' between 'insiders and outsiders' (Taylor 1997: 31, 55). More central to Taylor's argument are recognition claims within states. He emphasizes that the lack of recognition experienced by women, people of colour and indigenous peoples faced with colonialism can lead to the internalisation of a sense of inferiority and an 'uncivilised' self-image which can inhibit taking advantage of opportunities, even when some structural obstacles are removed (Taylor 1997: 25-26). Pointing to different experiences of history,

Taylor discerns, to use Honneth's formulation, types of struggle for recognition and modalities of solidarity which complicate the correspondence between the equality and the particularity of persons. Moreover, Taylor highlights difficulties that emerge the attempt to reconcile universal principles and particular experiences, which is the endgame in Honneth's framework.

Like Honneth, Taylor claims that modernity is marked by a shift from honour to dignity, where a move towards the 'equalisation of rights and entitlements' attempts to remove the notion of first- and second-class citizens (Taylor 1997: 37). He admits that this move towards 'equalisation' has been a contentious process and in some contexts has only extended to the rolling back of state preferential treatment, extending the right to vote, while in other contexts making redistributive socio-economic compromises so those disadvantaged by poverty could enjoy the rights of citizenship (Taylor 1997: 37-38). Yet he goes on to add that there is a universalist presupposition to this in that 'every position, no matter how reactionary' defends some interpretation of 'equal citizenship' (Taylor 1997: 38).

Nevertheless, both the abstract provisions of law and interpretations of equality are complicated by two pathways along which Taylor suggests that recognition claims are voiced. The first issues from a Kantian notion of human dignity which implies equal respect for each other's capacity to deliberate, therefore upholding a commitment to fair dealings amongst citizens and equality under the state (Taylor 1997: 57). This notion of recognition advocates the 'politics of equal dignity' (or 'universal dignity') and attempts to secure recognition via 'an identical basket of rights and immunities,' which can also imply abstract notions of 'procedural fairness' but also invoke notions of 'difference-blindness' (Taylor 1997: 38-40, 56).

The second is the 'politics of difference' which aims at the recognition of an individual or group identity according to what is distinct and unique about them (Taylor 1997: 38). Moreover, the politics of difference 'redefines non-discrimination' in terms of allowing certain instances of differential treatment (Taylor 1997: 39). This orientation is not necessarily a product of narcissistic identity politics per se, but rather emerges from an awareness of 'historical discrimination' otherwise obscured by abstract notions of difference-blindness (Taylor 1997: 40). Rather, the politics of difference interprets difference-blind liberalism as an imposition of a cultural particularism camouflaged as a universal principle (Taylor 1997: 44). Taylor argues that there are elements within Western liberal societies which are particularly prone to such abstract cultural impositions, benefiting from a colonial past, yet marginalising groups from other cultures within their own populations (Taylor 1997: 63). In contrast, the differential treatment called for by the politics of difference can range from redistributive measures to lift disadvantaged groups out of a

cycle of poverty, to the granting special access to employment and educational opportunities, and to special legal provisions to allow for the 'cultural survival' of 'distinct societies' (Taylor 1997: 39-40, 61). Yet according to advocates for the politics of equal respect, this can be construed as 'undue favouritism' out of step with uniform treatment of all (Taylor 1997: 39). Ultimately, Taylor points to a tension between upholding 'non-discrimination' and questions about the justness of a 'homogenous mould' for identity (Taylor 1997: 43).

It could be argued that the differentiation between the abstract notions of respect in terms of legal recognition and particular notions of social esteem associated with diverse communities in terms of social recognition is Honneth's way of making conceptual space for both the politics of equal respect and of difference in the struggle for recognition. But increasingly demanding recognition claims in the realm of social recognition tug upon the parameters of legality. Moreover, as Heidegren suggests, the developmental thrust of Honneth's theory implies that esteem from the sub-culture to which one belongs is not enough to scaffold one's self-esteem; rather, the goal is to secure esteem from all members of society (Heidegren 2002: 437). He argues that Honneth runs the risk of just concentrating on 'those recognition struggles which in developmental perspective point forward towards widening relations of recognition' (Heidegren 2002: 437). Yet in Honneth's characterisation there is a fragmentary admission that the struggle for recognition is double-edged and can issue from either the 'withholding or withdrawing of recognition' (Honneth 1995: 132).

Overall, Honneth's framework seems to emphasise the overcoming of withheld recognition, which seems analogous to the plight of the politics of difference in Taylor's characterisation, similarly struggling against a universal and homogeneous image of human identity with identical rights in abstraction. Yet Taylor's notion of the politics of equal respect also seems to be analogous to confronting the withdrawal of recognition and to the sense that others are getting preferential treatment through state interventions which make concessions to and previsions for groups with histories of mistreatment and disadvantage.

The withdrawal of recognition—or what Gusejnova defines as 'derecognition'—implies the downgrading or even the delegitimising of previously dominant notions of social good and modalities of social esteem (Gusejnova 2019: 273, 277). Derecognition would seem particularly relevant when confronted by the critique that previously acquired access to such social esteem and legal guarantees were not entirely secured on the basis of autonomous individual merit, but partly the result of historically instituted recognition discrepancies between various groups of people—empires, states, cultures, races, classes, genders, sexualities, abilities, etc. As Gusejnova indicates, derecognition may include 'practices of shaming or discrediting former holders of power, or the

withering away of privilege, which occurs in the shadow of more widely publicised acts of recognition, such as proclamations of or demands for rights'(Gusejnova 2019: 278). Yet as Clifton Mark highlights, Honneth does not cast 'progressive struggles for recognition' as a struggle between groups with fixed preferences per se, but rather as a historical learning process 'whereby ignored groups educate the public regarding how general norms accepted by all, apply to their particular cases' (Clifton Mark 2014: 25-26). Yet in doing this, Clifton Mark argues, Honneth does not really elaborate upon what might animate resistance to such learning, because there is no 'account of what other groups might stand to lose from the recognition of previously ignored kinds of achievement' (Clifton Mark 2014: 27). To do so, as Kalyvas argues, Honneth would have to devote more attention to the 'formative function of the social-historical environment' and 'the constitutive role of structural factors like race, gender, ethnicity, class, ideology, collective memories and historical traditions' (Kalyvas 1999: 103).

Another difficulty is discernible in scepticism towards whether struggles for recognition tend toward 'just outcomes' (Kalyvas 1999: 102). Kalyvas argues that to avoid a social theory that justifies and recognises every identity claim that emerges in social life and is struggled for, 'Honneth would need to introduce an external principle capable of distinguishing different—just from unjust—mechanisms of identity formation' irrespective of origin and positioning in social relations (Kalyvas 1999: 102). Otherwise, in principle, Honneth's theory supports any struggles for recognition in the name of 'threatened identities, traditions and particularities' and could be invoked to scaffold all sorts of racialised, ethnocentric, nationalist and fundamentalist identity claims in practice (Kalyvas 1999: 103; also see Pilapil 2013: 54 for a similar argument).

However, Honneth has responded to this charge. He admits that 'that not every act of social resistance … [is] justified because sentiments of injured recognition are expressed through it' (Honneth 1999: 251). As part of his response, he suggests that he had already a addressed this elsewhere. In this slightly earlier formulation, he stipulates a 'normative restriction' which ought to be placed upon affording others recognition, in that 'we have to recognise all human beings as persons who enjoy equal rights to autonomy [and] for moral reasons we may not choose social relationships whose realisation would require the violation of those rights.' (Honneth 1997: 33). In terms of Honneth's tripartite framework of recognition, he seems to imply that, in principle, we should neither encourage, nor provide legal exemptions for, nor afford social esteem to, those who base their recognition claims upon withholding it from others. Indeed as Kompridis puts it, there may be instances where misrecognition is not entirely unjust, particularly if the experience of it, opens up a 'transformative (self-)critical encounter with another ... [and a] change in self-understanding' towards a new level of self-responsibility (Kompridis 2007: 283).

Yet, while Honneth's 'normative restriction' may be a relatively straightforward principle with regard to not affording recognition to identity claims issued on behalf of violent-extremism, paedophilia, police brutality or corrupt officialdom, it becomes very murky in other circumstances. On the one hand, so-called 'pro-lifers' could be justified in their attempts to discourage, prohibit and shame those who terminate the unborn, on the premise that the women's child-free identity was realised via withholding recognition from the foetus. On the other hand, so-called 'pro-choicers' might ask whether an unsocialised organism in utero counts as a person deprived of recognition in comparison to a reproductively capable woman already involved in social life. On this view, the pro-lifers' identity claims rely upon withholding recognition of the autonomy of an already socialised living. While this hypothetical example is somewhat tangential to the current discussion, it serves to highlight that situations can emerge in which Honneth's 'normative restriction' does not, on its own, really provide a clear answer to distinguishing between just and unjust claims of recognition.

The difficulties surrounding demands for recognition and their relation to justice have also been examined by Paul Ricoeur in his book, *The Course of Recognition* (2005). Ricoeur is interested in limitations to the struggle for recognition, posing poses the critical question, '[d]oes not the claim for affective, juridical, and social recognition, through its militant, conflictual style, end up as an infinite demand, a kind of 'bad infinity'?' (Ricoeur 2005: 218). He describes this 'bad infinity' as an 'insatiable quest' stemming from either an 'incurable sense of victimisation or indefatigable postulation of unattainable ideals' (Ricoeur 2005: 218). This is not to say that Ricoeur prefers the difference-blind liberalism that Taylor describes as 'the politics of equal dignity' nor does he suggest that those misrecognised are by and large, still equal under the precepts of law and merely pull themselves up by their bootstraps and learn to be content with their lot. While Ricoeur does touch upon instances where claims of victimhood are relinquished, he also indicates possibilities which could initiate movement beyond previous understandings and positions which have implications for moving beyond withheld recognition.

Ricoeur posits the framework of recognition not as an emancipatory thrust that underwrites social struggles within modernity per se, but as a series of different moments of the human relation to the world and of people to each other. He suggests that the course of recognition emerges in the passage of moments, from identifying something in general, to recognition of some other and not just any other, but rather someone in particular which in turn, allows recognition of oneself with particular capacities for mediating one's own action and bringing oneself into interaction with this particular other (Ricoeur 2005: 249-252). In more concise terms, Ricoeur's course of recognition outlines recognition as identification, recognition of one's own responsible agency and recognition

of others in relationships of mutual recognition (Ricoeur 2005: 21, 150-153). Through this approach he aims to highlight aspects of recognition that are irreducible to justice as the principle of equivalence. He argues that such a principle imposes an abstract reciprocal 'system of behaviour' on social relations, whether a 'vicious circle of vengeance' couched in terms of 'blow for blow' or a 'virtuous' circle couched in terms of 'gift for gift' (Ricoeur 2005: 228, 233). For Ricoeur the difficulties emerge in moving from one pattern of interaction to the other, in the transformation of retribution relations to those of generosity (Ricoeur 2005: 228).

To complicate the issue further, he stresses the paradoxical character of the circle of virtue, in that it is not truly generous if the first gift is given with the expectation of one in return. A gesture can impose an obligation to reciprocate (Ricoeur 2005: 229). Instead, Ricoeur indicates that the generosity of the first gift—taken on its own merit—can be understood as analogous to the initiation of surrender, the renunciation of violence in response to violence, the request for pardon and the granting of forgiveness, all of which he suggests are moments of mutual recognition (Ricoeur 2005: 228, 243-245). It is not necessary that each moment should follow the other in logical sequence, but rather that any of these moments can be understood as a risk-laden first gift, given without the guarantee of return in kind from another (Ricoeur 2005: 230-231). As Connolly indicates, Ricoeur emphasises 'self-recognition' and 'the question of responsibility' as dimensions of recognition that must be given their due to account for the 'varied responses of people who are misrecognised' (Connolly 2007: 140). Connolly contrasts Ricoeur's account of recognition to Honneth's, and she argues that the latter overemphasises the impacts of social (mis-)recognition on identity formation (Connelly 2007: 140).

The initiation of the first gift in Ricoeur's terms, does not have to be understood as grace and compromise extended by those groups and individuals who otherwise experience themselves to be disproportionately misrecognised. Rather, it could be understood as a dynamic that enables those who previously secured social recognition to relinquish resistance in listening to those who demand recognition, even in the midst of potentially facing a withdrawal of recognition by those misrecognised and/or by those advocating in solidarity. Ricoeur does not explicitly frame the issue in terms of the tension between withheld and withdrawn recognition per se. However, he does acknowledge the issue of 'asymmetry' posed by the 'vertical dimension implied in the opposition between great and small, which seems to stand in contrast to the horizontal dimension of recognition on the plane of self-esteem' (Ricoeur 2005: 210-211).

Ricoeur leaves aside 'institutional' or 'political authority' and describes this vertical dimension as 'the cultural aspect of authority' whereby 'taking as true' contains 'having greater

worth' (Ricoeur 2005: 211). Granted, his statements on cultural authority, in *The Course of Recognition* are fragmentary at best. His concessions to notions of 'some hegemonic culture, that of whites, or that of males, which reached its apogee during the Enlightenment', mainly emerge through his brief reconstruction of Taylor's 'politics of difference' and the related polemic levelled at difference-blind liberalism (Ricoeur 2005: 215). Even so, he admits that 'the discovery of this forgetfulness about dissymmetry is beneficial to recognition in its mutual form' (Ricoeur 2005: 262). Consequently, Ricoeur's *Course of Recognition* may offer an implicit complement to Honneth's struggle for recognition in terms of agency. Moreover, the risk-laden first gift could be analogous to reflecting upon the possibility that one has had greater access to what is deemed worthy of esteem in comparison to others.

Despite Ricoeur's contribution to recognition in terms of the conceptual space given to self-responsibility, agency still runs up against cultural limits. Moreover, it is plausible that agency encounters what Connelly sees as central to Honneth's approach—'social recognition as historically and theoretically antecedent to self-recognition' (Connelly 2007: 140). Particularly if Ricoeur's fragmentary passages on cultural authority are considered, it is difficult to deny that hierarchies of worth are not merely conjured up by the capacities of agents themselves but already animate the cultural and historical circumstances they are born into. Ricoeur's outlines of recognition can be understood more as a nuanced lens through which to consider possibilities for tempered solidarity, rather than a wholesale alternative.

In *Recognition or Redistribution* (2003), a co-authored dialogue with Honneth, Nancy Fraser argues that Honneth's focus on identity is fraught with problems which obscure other pressing concerns that once occupied Critical Theory. Fraser suggests that the central theme of Critical Theory since Marx has been a call for the just distribution of material resources (Fraser 2003: 7-8). She argues that this is being displaced—particularly since the demise of the Soviet Union—by demands for the just recognition of contributions by 'ethnic, 'racial' and sexual minorities, as well as of 'gender difference' (Fraser 2003: 7-8). Egalitarian distribution is being obscured by both fundamentalist and progressive forms of 'identity politics' (Fraser 2003: 8).

Fraser does not see claims to recognition as unimportant in comparison to the harsh realities of material disparities; rather, she distinguishes between the two in order to argue that Honneth's approach privileges identity claims. Moreover, she claims that the Hegelian identity model that both Honneth and Charles Taylor utilise overplays withheld recognition as a developmental psychological obstacle to self-esteem and self-realisation. It is procedurally unfair institutional conditions of participation and opportunity that should be understood as the problem, irrespective of

whether they affect self-esteem or not (Fraser 2003: 28-29, 32, 37). Like Kalyvas's criticism above, Fraser suggests that Honneth's theory has a predisposition to a kind of narcissistic 'identity politics' through implying that any social values which afford a sense of achievement and self-esteem are potentially legitimate claims to recognition (Fraser 2003: 37).

In response, Honneth tones down the implication that automatic legitimacy is afforded to any recognition claim, but also avoids the decoupling of institutions from human interaction. He argues that while the long-term results of secured recognition claims cannot be assessed entirely in advance, institutional procedures can only be understood as unfair via people's experiences of degradation and disrespect which they believe could cease upon adequate recognition (2003: 125-133).

Yet an important by-product of Honneth's response is how he deals with the notion of identity politics. He argues that Fraser posits an artificial partition between the 'symbolic' and the 'material' aspects of the social world, in order to imply that 'identity politics' amounts to a relatively recent spate of marginal groups demanding recognition of cultural difference, in contrast to older social conflicts which can be couched in more concrete materialist terms (Honneth 2003: 113, 123-124). Honneth also discerns a similar implication in Taylor's historical chronology of recognition, in that the early-modern legal equalisation of rights and entitlements becomes embattled towards the end of the twentieth century by the demands of minority cultural groups demanding reparatory differential treatment (Honneth 2003: 122-123). For Honneth, Taylor's characterisation also removes the 'cultural 'identity-political'' dimensions from legal transformations in the earlier context (Honneth 2003: 122). He further points to Craig Calhoun's indications that identity politics, properly understood, has figured within the value horizons of much broader modern struggles, whether women's liberation movements active for at least two centuries, nineteenth-century European nationalisms, anti-colonial resistance movements and continued African-American struggles after the abolition of slavery (Calhoun 1995: 215; Honneth 2003: 123). He also points out—again via Calhoun—that identity politics does not only animate the more recent, so-called progressive movements, loosely on the left, but also exclusionary claims by the religious right, white resistance against people of colour and various forms of nationalism (Honneth 2003: 121). Honneth implies that, by reducing identity politics to a recent by-product of the New Social Movements, it obscures 'historical precursors' and 'cultural processes of institutionalisation' (Honneth 2003: 122, 113).

In a related article, Honneth indicates how far he is willing to link recognition to a philosophical-anthropological notion of culture in order to counter the extraction of legal and

economic concerns from social-historical contexts of recognition. In response to the same argument advanced by Fraser above, he claims that contentions over redistribution are not merely concerned with the equal implementation of institutional principles (Honneth 2001: 54). Rather, he argues, they are:

> a conflict over the institutionalised hierarchy of values that govern which social groups, on the basis of their status and their esteem, have legitimate claim to a particular amount of material goods. In short, it is a struggle over the cultural definition of what it is that renders an activity socially necessary and valuable. (Honneth 2001: 54)

The notion of culture that Honneth implies above has an affinity with 'symbolic' as opposed to self-evident 'materiality'. In *Redistribution or Recognition,* the symbolic dimension underwrites the 'historically achieved meanings and interpretations' which animate the 'semantic space provided by a society' (Honneth's 2003: 250). Honneth employs a notion of culture as a loose bridging category—open to conflict and contingency but also with some connection to historical precedents—primarily because he refuses to reduce the value and direction of human activity to 'something like a value-neutral, purely 'technical' functional order' (Honneth 2003: 155). As such, historical and cultural precedents have an important role in Honneth's theory, for they become reference points which inform both secured recognition and conflicts about its inequitable distribution.

The nebulous symbolic implications of culture in Honneth's usage are also amenable to identity constitution and notions of value at different levels, whether at the level of an intersubjective community or collective anonymous levels such as national or transnational ones. In *Freedom's Right*, Honneth seems to shift between these levels of recognition in his normative reconstructions, albeit primarily expressed in terms of the emergence and consolidation of Western European constitutional states (Honneth 2014 [2011]: 300-335). There are examples of transnational organisations of solidarity, such as the UN, which attempt to mitigate abuses of state sovereignty (Honneth 2014: 279-280). Yet there are also some examples of the interplay between intersubjective and collective anonymous withheld recognition.

Moreover, Honneth notes that across the twentieth century, within the formation of democratic constitutional states, there were both communities resistant to the extension of rights to people because of different 'background cultural beliefs' and resurgences of exclusive nationalism amidst post-Second World War decolonial migration flows from former colonies (Honneth 2014: 318-324). He also suggests that the notion of 'nation' is a 'cultural interpretive schema' which has,

in certain instances, been the basis for solidarity between people, even before acknowledging an acting political authority (Honneth 2014: 332-333).

Nevertheless, despite this shifting across levels, Honneth's reconstruction does not elaborate on what links these contending background cultural beliefs to cultural interpretive schemas that underwrite broader notions of collective identity. Rather, he concentrates on the diffusion of similar patterns of recognition gains across Western European societies. While *Freedom's Right* offers an elaborate case study of recognition relations within certain perimeters, in the end its thrust is an inward-looking take on recognition. It discusses recognition primarily through the lens of a particular form of modernity, whether it be understood as Western or owing to developments between state and society of which Western Europe were forerunners. On this view, clusters of states gradually begin to move, more and more, within the orbit of similar normative expectations, albeit animated by interpretive conflicts about what identities and activities are necessary and valuable. For Honneth, liberal-capitalist societies offer the most beneficial conditions for recognition gains. At least, this seems to be the general implication when his qualifications stated elsewhere are considered.

2.3 Recognition in Global Context

In *Recognition or Redistribution*, Honneth claims that the development of 'liberal-capitalist societies…involves a morally superior form of social integration' whereby 'opportunities increase for all members … to achieve a higher degree of individuality' and an individualisation that is scaffolded by social inclusion (Honneth 2003: 184). Only on this assumption is it possible to assess moral progress in terms of 'responsiveness to needs, legal equality … [and] merit' amid struggles for recognition (Honneth 2003: 184-186). Honneth approaches this assessment as 'an internally situated' social theorist and presumes the 'moral superiority of modernity' (Honneth 2003: 184). Notwithstanding the potential conflation of liberal-capitalist societies with modernity—an implication that would not easily be reconciled with the institutional arrangements in places like China, Russia or Iran for instance—Honneth's claims invite the question as to what extent normative reconstruction of particular historical developments can be used as a yardstick for recognition struggles in the global arena.

Wagner calls Honneth's approach a 'philosophy of modernity', in which the relations of mutual recognition and their expansion are the preconditions for individual autonomy (Wagner 2012: 44). He also claims that Honneth's recognition paradigm is 'suitable for discussing the findings of comparative-historical sociology of modernity' (Wagner 2012: 44). However, if Honneth's internalist approach is taken as a finished paradigm, then historical-sociological

comparison might amount to merely comparing and assessing societal contexts to the extent that they allow for the greatest variety of identity formation, legal safe-guards and communities of solidarity and esteem. This would have to be considered in tandem with histories of interactions between societies so as not to paint economic and political situations as the intrinsic products of societies incapable of moral learning processes which have otherwise gained traction in the Western European and American nation-states.

Such implications have been touched on by Allen with respect to the expansion of social and legal recognition, in terms of advocacy and extension of marriage rights to gay and lesbian people in European and American contexts (Allen 2016: 101). She argues that the structure of Honneth's framework is susceptible to the implication that those societies that have not undertaken such normative transformations are developmentally backward and culturally inferior (Allen 2016: 101-103). The historical narrative of developmentally acquired moral superiority stands in the background and normative disagreement slips into accusations of backwardness – ultimately a kind of cultural imperialism (Allen 2016: 102).

Allen suggests that Honneth has two options to avoid such criticisms. The first option is to claim that the assessment of historical progress is only limited to developments within those states that share similar features—primarily those that are democratic, capitalist and have extended rights and protections for women and gays (Allen 2016: 115-116). However, she argues that Honneth would have to concede that his theory 'is ill-equipped' for a 'Critical Theory of world society' writ large (Allen 2016: 115). This would also limit the utility of Honneth's theory for discussing comparative historical-sociology, contrary to Wagner's claim, for it would separate out liberal-democratic-capitalist states from others and then have no more to say about the latter.

The second option is for Honneth to draw a line in the sand and say, yes, those societies whose pattern of state-formation corresponds to that of European modernity are indeed normatively superior to pre- or non-modern or traditional forms of life (Allen 2016: 116). An important self-limiting principle would be that because the central normative commitment within those modern states is to secure autonomy amongst its members, in part through the self-limitation of state over-reach, then such states could not force those societies and/or states, which do not uphold individual autonomy as a central normative commitment to otherwise do so (Allen 2016: 116). For better or worse, such societies would have to undergo their own struggles for recognition and realise their respective accommodations of recognition on their own terms (Allen 2016: 116). Yet Allen argues this would conveniently ignore other aspects of broader historical context, in which institutional discrepancies in terms of familial, legal or communal practices between different territorially

situated peoples operated as justifications for colonial and imperial intrusion in the past (Allen 2016: 116-117). Even in the recent past, attempts to export democracy and liberate populations from authoritarian regimes have occurred in the Middle-East, so artificially insulating Honneth's theory from such events by strict adherence to relative recognition frameworks is inappropriate. Again, if Wagner's claim of comparative utility is considered in relation to this second option, the result might be comparison of respective recognition relations between societies, but without considering previous interactions between these societies and its knock-on effects upon their successive relations.

Allen is suspicious of the universal applicability of Honneth's notion of normative progress in recognition relations in a way that is analogous to criticisms of inherited narratives of civilisation, rationalisation and Modernisation levelled by multiple-modernities theorists and post-colonial theorists, as discussed in Chapter 1. However, she also partially preserves an aspect of Honneth's claim that the recognition of others is somehow important and requires extension. In this way, Honneth's premise that the damage inflicted by misrecognition is somehow unjust acts as a bulwark against critiques levelled at him for false universalism. If the proviso of immanence is upheld, Honneth's theory should provide a general account of the tenor and direction of normative expectations which have already gained traction in conflicts over values within modernity. Critics who point out the limits of Honneth's own recognition theory in terms of misrecognised cultural groups in his overall framework can also be seen as participants in the struggle for recognition, aiming to expand its scope in the name of the marginalised, whether out of solidarity or personal experiences of social devaluation. Additionally, those doing so must in some sense also presuppose that a theory that has more inclusive implications, is somehow better than a previous theory that does not. Some notion of progress in relation to what came before must be upheld, otherwise critiques and engagements with previous theory are merely a quantitative increase in theoretical discourse and not a qualitative improvement.

In the light of the above considerations, it is possible to afford Honneth a generous concession that, in certain respects, the notion of progress cannot be entirely dismissed, otherwise critique has no purpose. However, thinking along with the various difficulties raised in the previous section, the struggle for more just relations of recognition confronts the question of possible down-grades for those who had previously understood their ways of life as exceptionally valuable and necessary. On the one hand, this dynamic could actually be experienced as regress by those who identify with a difference-blind version of liberalism, as implied by thinking with Honneth in tandem with Taylor. On the other hand, the confrontation of more traditional forms of life with the demands of

individual autonomy and the novel modalities of social inclusion could be experienced as an erosion of hierarchies of value and understandings of what is necessary for a good life.

Yet, as Allen discerns, difficulties also emerge for those who identify with the progressive extension of recognition to ever more post-conventional identities and activities for their realisation. Accusations of stagnation and backwardness could become the description of those in the global community who have not sufficiently realised the post-conventional trajectory. Notwithstanding the possibility that narratives of misplaced decadence and decline can be employed by aspiring authoritarian political representatives—whether in terms of trivialising recognition demands domestically or galvanising resistance by conservative regimes abroad—the question arises as to how far a universal notion of progress in recognition relations can be upheld at a broader level. Indeed, Honneth himself outlines aspects in the broader global context which complicate the issue.

Before considering what the struggle for recognition in broader global context might entail, Honneth actually goes some way towards considering the formal-legal avenues for universal normative progress, and the limitations to it, in 'Is Universalism a Moral Trap? The Presuppositions and Limits of a Politics of Human Rights' (Honneth 2007c [1997]). There he presents a brisk chronology of universal rights which generally points in the direction of post-traditional normative development. He notes a passage from Christian humanism, which claimed that inalienable rights that should be afforded, independently of human law, to all those made in God's image, to more secular trends in natural law which outlined limitations to state intrusion into the lives of individuals, to current interpretations, whereby human rights are understood as rights mutually granted 'to guarantee a life that meets the necessary conditions of dignity and respect' (Honneth 2007c: 208-209). Honneth argues that, in principle, the source of legitimation for human rights does not have to rest with God or nature, but merely with the possibility that humans are capable of granting them (Honneth 2007c: 209). Here, he implies that rights can be understood as legitimate in so far as they set limits upon human-to-human sanctions and require no appeal to additional meta-historical constants.

Even so, such possibilities are complicated by further aspects. While he suggests that rights have often been argued for with respect to liberty, political participation and social rights, he acknowledges that the specificity of such rights will always depend on the justifications given (Honneth 2007c: 209). It is plausible that such justifications could be numerous and conflicting – for example, economic liberty versus redistributive social rights as a compromise for the most vulnerable, or freedom of speech and religious conviction versus freedom from discriminatory exclusion from particular goods and services (such as the sale of wedding cakes). Beyond this, or

rather perhaps because of this, Honneth claims that the duties on all to uphold rights are only generally achievable when 'transferred to the jointly constituted institution of the state' or rather a 'democratically constituted' state (Honneth 2007c: 209, 213). It then becomes the responsibility of the individual governments of such states to relieve citizens of the burden of securing such rights, because individuals have limited capacities for co-ordinating the terms of interaction (Honneth 2007c: 209). In this light, governments—particularly those of the democratic variety—are cast as a benevolent force in securing and preserving citizen's rights. At least, this is what Honneth is suggesting they ought to be. However, he points out that governments, too, are accountable, or at least ought to be, to a broader mutually binding standard.

Honneth notes the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, placed international law above those laws within nations (Honneth 2007c: 210). This allowed notions of inalienable human rights to be transferred to legal ones whereby 'compliance, control and sanction' have international recognition (Honneth 2007c: 210). States are seen as having responsibilities to uphold such rights according to international law, even though he admits there are still difficulties that surround claims to universality with respect to consultation and consensus with developing countries, non-Western legal approaches and women's advocacy groups (Honneth 2007c: 211). He also acknowledges that Western colonial conquests and bids for empire have exacerbated military conflicts and created obstacles to wider political participation, greatly at odds with the notions of civility and peace that had previously been outlined by Kant (Honneth 2007c: 213).[25] However, he suggests that the outlook is more promising in the wake of twentieth-century decolonisation and what he understands as potentially democratising—albeit violent—transitions in the former states of the Soviet Union and loosely affiliated anti-capitalist regimes in Africa, for he claims there have been no major military conflicts between democratically constituted states (Honneth 2007c: 204-206, 213-215).

Despite Honneth's glowing regard for democratic trends and its assumed correspondence with human rights, he has reservations as to the degree to which states can act in their name. On the one hand, he argues that 'the solutions to such problems will not come from Western nations' delusions of omnipotence, but rather from the moralising of international relations that is most likely irreversible' (Honneth 2007c: 212). Here he is suggesting that the notion of universal normative commitments has been gathering force in the global arena across cultural boundaries through intellectual exchange (Honneth 2007c: 214). Yet on the other hand, he is not committed to an

[25] . In 'Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch' Kant suggests 'as civilisation increases, there is a gradual approach of men to greater unanimity of principles and to a mutual understanding of the conditions of peace, even in view of (their)…differences' (Kant 2010 [1795]: 32). However, even Kant acknowledges that international relations had not entirely emerged out of a growth in civilised unanimity. Rather he notes that upon first contact with the peoples Americas, Caribbean, Indonesia, and Africa, Europeans treated the inhabitants in unjust and inhumane ways, subjecting some to slavery and/or taking for granted that such lands belonged to nobody (Kant 2010: 23-24).

entirely hands-off, states-must-go-it-alone position either. He claims that 'only extensive but non-violent intervention in favour of enforcing basic rights can expand the geographical radius of political civility' (Honneth 2007c: 214). While the exercise of state power is inappropriate, he also sees diplomacy and economic sanctions alone as insufficient and instead argues that more cooperation with 'local civil organisations' is necessary, because they have more chance of securing the trust of local populations and probably have a better grasp of local conditions than governmental organisations do (Honneth 2007c: 215). However, in already established democratic constitutional states, Honneth still sees the appropriate response to media reports of human rights abuses elsewhere as consisting of pressure by citizens on their own government to act rather than personal involvement (Honneth 2007c: 215). Honneth's invests a significant amount of optimism in governmental predispositions to act in the best interests of the populations they are supposed to serve and represent. Yet he neglects to consider the scope governments may have to extend this support to civil organisations elsewhere in the global arena without the possibility of escalating interstate conflicts. Such conflicts could emerge from claims of foreign interference and threats to sovereignty.

It is here, that it is important to query the 'irreversible' moralisation of international relations. Kant's statements on peace were embarrassed by nineteenth- and early twentieth-century colonial bids at empire. Similarly, Honneth's statements on the potential expanding radius of political civility are likely to be undermined in the light of military campaigns in the Middle-East post 9/11, the rise of ISIS, the refugee crises in the wake of Syrian conflicts, ongoing authoritarianism in Russia and China, Chinese expansion in the South-China sea, censorship of democratic rights in Hong Kong, and the inward-looking, wall-raising orientations which have credence in Trump's America and Brexit developments (Mello 2018: 140-141; Ostrand 2015: 255; Fong 2017: 524; Norton 2016: 434-439; Greven 2016: 2-6). It is quite possible that the moralisation of international relations denotes another volatile level of the struggle for recognition, embattled by the divergent understandings of progress.

Elsewhere, in 'Recognition between States: On the Moral Substrate of International Relations' (2012), Honneth has weighed in on recognition struggles in broader global context. He highlights that the use of the category of recognition in international relations puts a moral and collective dimension into what is otherwise often cast in 'purely purposive-rational' terms (Honneth 2012: 137). Indeed, he claims that the dominant paradigm of international relations in the West has in recent decades been 'solely guided by the aims of maximising welfare and maintaining national security' (Honneth 2012: 137). In other words, a utilitarian variant of *Realpolitk*, unhelpful as he sees it, for 'explaining political tensions, conflicts and wars' (Honneth 2012: 138). Rather, he

argues that exploring notions of 'national self-assertion or a striving for international recognition' may provide more insight into the tenor of international relations (Honneth 2012: 138-139).

Such a move is not altogether new as far as international relations theory goes. Bartelson notes that in international theory the concept of recognition has been employed to explain a variety of phenomena: first, the interactive constitution of states and the emergence of the international system as a by-product, along with the stratification of states within it and the terms of conflict; second, legal admission into the international state system and the terms of sovereignty amongst equals; third, the possibility of mitigating international conflicts by recognition of collective identities and respect for cultural differences (Bartelson 2013: 109). Bartelson claims that often theories of the co-constitutive variety neglect the 'corporate identities' that are established before intensified interactions ensue, but they still 'assume the existence of pre-constituted actors as a baseline for their explanatory endeavour' (Bartelson 2013: 113). In this way, Bartelson is pointing to the cultural and historical backgrounds of states as presupposed in the recognition approach to international relations.

However, not all international recognition theorists are convinced that broad notions of collective identity are helpful at the international level. A primary difficulty is that states, even democratic ones, are not merely aggregates of the individual deliberations of the citizenry, because 'permanent referendums' are impractical (Iser 2015: 30). Yet for a state to be stable, it must have a degree of consistency in how it is managed and how it behaves both internally towards its citizens and externally towards other states, and this is generally achieved by laws, policies and constitutions. Due to these factors, Iser argues that states cannot be understood as an integrated identity, in the way that individuals can, nor do states have the same degree of shared purpose as a social group (Iser 2015: 35-36). This raises difficulties when transposing the notion of a struggle for recognition to the state level. Whereas struggles for recognition at the group level are at least tangible grievances generally indicative of some institutional disrespect and devaluation within a state, political narratives of international disrespect towards a state invoke the suspicion that an 'ideological tool' is being used (Iser 2015: 36).

Indeed, this is close to how Honneth views recognition at the state level, although he is more amenable to the idea that some diffuse form of collective identity is operative even if it references cultural and historical backgrounds. Moving to the international arena, Honneth concedes that the conceptual shift from intersubjective identity formation among groups to the level of the state becomes much more difficult to couch in terms of collective identity because the various 'ethnic and cultural subgroups' limit notions of national homogeneity (Honneth 2012: 140). The state is an

authority charged with the responsibility to preserve the 'borders [within which] economic well-being … and political security' can be upheld, but not the sum total of all recognition claims which add up to a conclusive national identity amidst other conclusive national identities (Honneth 2012: 140).

Honneth also notes, with reference to International Law theorist Hans Kelsen (1881-1973), that recognition at the international level is usually conceptualised in more formal legal terms. Specifically, the question is whether a state can be recognised as such via its reciprocal acknowledgement (by it and other states) as a responsible 'member of the international legal community' (Honneth 2012: 141). However, while this may be an acknowledgement of fact, in the sense of fulfilling the formal prerequisites of statehood, Honneth adds that this does not necessarily account for the normative assessment of 'whether more intense and friendly relations' should be sought (Honneth 2012: 141). He suggests that this second dimension of political recognition opens a space to discuss theoretically the dimensions of 'disrespect and indignity' which may emerge between states (Honneth 2012: 141).

A key aspect of recognition at the state level, in Honneth's view, is a broader notion of culture and history. As he sees it, irrespective of internal 'cultural, ethnic or religious' divisions, the citizens of a state have an interest in their country being afforded the 'respect and honour of other countries' (Honneth 2012: 141). Specifically, foreign state representatives 'are to recognise that upon which a community founds its self-image—the challenges it has overcome in the past, its power to resist authoritarian tendencies, its cultural achievements' (Honneth 2012: 141). In short, 'receiving recognition for their common culture and history' (Honneth 2012: 146). Honneth argues that this should not be misunderstood as ethnocentrism or nationalism wholesale, for it involves respect for the opinions afforded by other states in the international community (Honneth 2012: 142). In this way there is both a broader dimension of 'collective identity' and 'collective expectation' (Honneth 2012: 142-143). This is tied to political achievements and cultural milestones.

In Honneth's outline of recognition at the state level, this broader dimension of collective identity and expectation must be interpreted and navigated by representatives of formal political power (Honneth 2012: 144). He indicates that state action must also achieve internal legitimacy through some level of citizen consent irrespective of whether the political regime in power is authoritarian or democratic (Honneth 2012: 141). Honneth argues that state political action and foreign policy is encompassed within a 'symbolic horizon of meaning' which exceeds the merely functional content of messages and policies themselves (Honneth 2012: 143). Such action 'involves the use of certain easily understood metaphors [and] historical rituals' at political events and

summits (Honneth 2012: 143). However, it is not wholesale manipulation per se, for on the other hand 'states always define their interests within a horizon of normative expectations they presume their citizens to have in the form of diffuse desires for the recognition of their own collective identity or that of another collective' (Honneth 2012: 144). Honneth suggests that such policies are underwritten by 'the need for an appropriate self-image in the eyes of the world, the defence against the shame of collective humiliation and the desire to make reparation for unjust deeds' (Honneth 2012: 144). On the obverse side, justifications of hostility and aggression within foreign policy generally appeal to narratives of violation or insult to collective self-respect by the activities of other states (Honneth 2012: 148).

Ultimately, Honneth indicates a broader constellation of potential meanings and narratives at work in the relationship between populations and their respective political representatives within specific territories and other similar entities. As part of his description, a positive self-image afforded by other state entities on this basis is invoked as equivalent to respect. Iser is not convinced that Honneth's implication of identity and how populations feel about other states' level of esteem for their own is actually helpful for identifying real instances of disrespect 'against the rights of the state … or its foreign policies' (Iser 2015: 31-32). He argues that Honneth's characterisation might be more suitable for 'verbal offences' and political-ideological representations but not necessarily helpful in assessing whether a state has in fact been disrespected or treated unfairly in a more formally discernible way by other states (Iser 2015: 31). Iser wants to separate the supposedly hard variables of legal recognition and normative conventions of equal status from soft variables such as how politicians and populations feel about certain portrayals of their state in the global arena (Iser 2015: 36-37. This might provide some analytical specificity for particular areas of recognition, but it certainly misses the passage from one aspect of recognition to the other and risks a kind of epiphenomenalism. Honneth's characterisation at least indicates some possibility of meanings and values impinging upon the more formal features of recognition and is messy enough to be plausible. What is less clear is how these broader-level considerations relate to a notion of a struggle for recognition and indeed to modernity itself.

Conclusion

This chapter presented Honneth's view that struggles for recognition underwrite ongoing conflicts over the terms of respect and esteem between individuals and groups within states. He also touches upon recognition between states in the broader global context. These two levels of framework are described as internalist and externalist respectively, and during the chapter an attempt has been made to consider these levels of recognition in relation to each other.

Honneth attempts to accommodate these sensitivities and concerns around human diversity in terms of a struggle for recognition. Modernity points to progress in which liberal and democratic shifts occur due to concerns raised by different groups which seek to set limitations to state intrusion, widen participation in political processes, expand the scope of legal representation and provide access to material support for those most vulnerable. Nonetheless, as shown the dynamics of withheld and withdrawn recognition are indicative of a much more embattled picture of recognition struggles and the possibility of progress than a streamlined reading of Honneth would imply. As Honneth zooms out to discuss relations between states, any global diffusion of liberal-democratic-capitalist arrangements is confronted by potential recognition claims between states with different historical, cultural and political backgrounds. At both levels of Honneth's formulation of recognition—within liberal-democratic-capitalist states and between states, some of which have potentially different arrangements—culture operates as a bridging concept to account for the diversity and conflict central to recognition claims. However, Honneth does not elaborate upon the concept of culture. He also favours a particular idealised expression of liberal and democratic commitments in Western modernity as the yardstick of social justice. In a sense, Honneth can be understood as making concessions to diversity, while suggesting that there is only one form of modernity in which diverse recognition claims achieve greater institutional accommodation through struggles.

In the light of Honneth's concessions to different contexts and contingent possibilities, a reading of the struggle for recognition as a convergent progress narrative of modernity which tends towards liberal and democratic corrections to capitalism or traditionalist hierarchies, is problematised by different historical experiences, cultural affinities and political visions. It is with this in mind that I turn to the social theoretical and historical-sociological writings of Johann Arnason. Arnason provides theoretical extrapolations of symbolic and historical dynamics which are only given a passing mention in Honneth's reflections. More specifically, Arnason outlines a perspective on what culture is, how it might relate to state-formation and modernity, but also how it might be the case that there are regional affinities between clusters of states that can be understood as civilisational reference points. In this way, Arnason provides a multi-directional view of modernity more sympathetic to the multiple-modernities thesis with particular sensitivities—at least in his most sustained comparative works—to alternative modernities which have emerged to counter the preponderance of Western liberal-democratic-capitalist expansion. In the next chapter I will discuss the social-theoretical ideas which Arnason relies upon to construct this view.

CHAPTER 3: JOHANN ARNASON'S SOCIAL THEORY: FROM CULTURE AND MODERNITY TO CIVILISATIONS

Introduction

In Chapter 1, I discussed conceptions of modernity which had primarily taken shape in various theoretical accounts across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the last two decades of the twentieth century a certain sensitivity emerges, within the conceptual revisions of Critical Theory, the post-mode and comparative historical sociology, towards excluded features of modernity within earlier accounts.

As shown in Chapter 2, Honneth's theory of the struggle for recognition attempts to accommodate diverse potentials for human identity formation under the common umbrella of one modernity. Progress we are told, occurs to the extent that states develop in the direction of liberal-capitalist-democracy and the scope for human recognition increases in family, legal and social spheres of life. On closer inspection there were difficulties identified surrounding recognition within states in terms of cultural conflicts over the terms of recognition and the extent to which all recognition claims can be considered justified. At the broader global level there are also difficulties. On the one hand, Honneth presupposes that a notion of culture is operative across states in terms of loosely similar liberal-democratic-capitalist sympathies. On the other hand, he also acknowledges that these institutional features of modernity are not uniformly adopted across states. When it comes to recognition within states, there may be other aspects of culture, history and political power at work which complicate the picture.

Johann Arnason offers a perspective on modernity that is geared towards its cultural and civilisational dimensions. Arnason's social theory, as it took shape in the 1980s, began by outlining the cultural predicament of the human condition. He goes onto suggest, that there is a link between culture and power within modernity. This position develops in parallel to considerations on the notion of civilisations in the plural. An important feature of Arnason's theoretical repertoire is the notion of intercivilisational encounters, or long-term contacts between societies of different cultural backgrounds. Arnason claims that such interactions also have implications for trajectories of state-formation and modernity. His most sustained comparative reflections on modernity depict the ascendance of alternative modernities in the Russian/Soviet and East Asian contexts. These alternative patterns were not merely distinct from liberal-democratic-capitalist forms of modernity, they also emerged as counter-responses to the Western states.

In this regard, Arnason attempts to tease out the cultural combinations of meaning and power

which animate varieties of modernity, but also to outline possible sequences of historical events and interactions which may influence such developments. In contrast to Honneth, Arnason is less interested in outlining a notion of modernity that is normatively preferable. This makes any critical intentions that he may have much more elusive than those of Honneth. Later, in Chapter 4, I outline the primary difference between Western modernity and the episodes of alternative modernities in Arnason's accounts which imply something like a preferred modernity in his outlook. In Chapter 5, I argue that there are some striking parallels between Arnason's and Honneth's perspectives and that Arnason does indeed exhibit normative presuppositions despite his own claims to the contrary. In the current Chapter, I will restrict myself to answering three interrelated questions. What are the features of Arnason's notion of culture? How does this notion of culture relate to varieties of modernity? Where does a plural notion of civilisations fit in this perspective?

I will answer these questions by first looking at Arnason's idea of culture as it develops through his engagements with Max Weber, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Cornelius Castoriadis. In section 3.1, I will show that Arnason's notion of culture rests upon human interpretations and articulations of meaning and value which render human contexts intelligible. I will suggest that these cultural interpretations and articulations are ultimately formed through imaginary significations which are irreducible to people's purely instrumental relations with world and each other. Rather, they presuppose a world from a limited vantage point within history and global space. Limited human access to the world ensures that such interpretations remain open to further contestation and elaboration.

In section 3.2, I will discuss how Arnason's rejection of structural determinism is implicated in his disagreement with Jürgen Habermas's notion of modernity as an unfinished project. It will be shown that through a sensitivity to staggered trajectories of state-formation and a recasting of imaginary significations as cultural interpretations of power, Arnason arrives at a characterisation of modernity as a field of tensions. This field of tensions is discernible within and between six elements: capitalism, democracy, imperialism, sovereignty, revolution and nationalism. I will suggest that Arnason develops a perspective on modernity which depicts multiple complementary and competing interpretations about a place in the world amongst others and the terms of power within it.

In section 3.3, I will discuss Arnason's engagements with civilisational thinkers such as Norbert Elias, Emile Durkheim, Marcel Mauss, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Benjamin Nelson. I will argue that when his early civilisational reflections are considered, in tandem with his views on modernity, as a field of tensions, it appears that civilisational legacies and intercivilisational

encounters have implications for interpretations of power, not only for Western modernity but potentially for alternative modernities as well. This will set the scene for a further reconstruction of such themes, in Chapter 4, in Arnason's works on the Soviet model and Japan.

3.1 The Emphasis on Cultural Interpretations in Arnason's Social Theory

Arnason's approach to social theory hinges upon the assumption that for humans to develop social relationships and societies, there must be some characteristics that are common to all peoples without remainder. To be sure, this is a theoretical convention followed by other grand theorists of modernity. For Marx the common human characteristic is material production, for Modernisation theorists it is human specialisation and adaptation, for Habermas it is the world validating capacities of dialogue, and for Honneth it is identity formation which requires recognition.

Arnason aims at something which could be understood as common, yet primordial and pliable enough to account for different human expressions of materiality, functionality, language and identity. In his view, the central common human characteristic is a combination of, first, our limited human access to and experience of the world, and second, our capacity to interpret meaningful relationships, which far exceeds what is merely given to the senses. Yet as we shall see, Arnason also avoids an atomistic perspective on human interpretation that would relegate meanings and motivations to the realm of subjective preferences. By contrast, he suggests that interpretations can only emerge as socially meaningful across actors via a 'trans-subjective context of reference' (Arnason 1989a: 32). It follows that the common human characteristic is not only the capacity for interpretation but also a broader overlapping cultural context through which these interpretations are intelligible and take shape. Arnason develops this understanding of culture in parallel with his reflections on modernity and these ideas become a part of his civilisational approach to modernity.

In the following section I will discuss how Arnason arrives at these ideas via reinterpretations of Max Weber, Merleau-Ponty and Castoriadis. I will primarily concentrate on the formative period (1982-1997) of his considerations on human interpretation and culture, which began before his writings on Soviet and Japanese modernity but also overlaps them. The theorising of culture and power in relation to modernity are the primary focus of these earlier writings, whereas civilisational themes and thoughts about how to conceptualise pre-modern civilisations become a primary focus of *Civilisations in Dispute* (2003) and of further work in its wake. Modernity never really went off Arnason's radar and his most recent work, *The Labyrinth of Modernity* (2020), returns to the issue. Aspects of these later works are discussed below only when they build consistently on what has already been said in the earlier writings. In any case, neither Arnason's later more sustained civilisational writings, nor *Labyrinth*—which devotes a Chapter to 'Life Orders and

Articulations'—would have the shape and tenor they do without his earlier considerations. It is to those which I now turn.

As discussed in Chapter 1, Weber defines modernity in terms of a tendency for human actions to be increasingly shaped by the impersonal norms and processes of bureaucratic, economic, legal, and scientific rationalisation. Whether read in terms of intellectual 'disenchantment of the world' or 'the iron-cage' of capitalism with potential 'universal significance and value', there is certainly a reading of Weber which can point towards a convergent historical trajectory extending from the West to the rest (Weber 1958 [1919]: 155; 1992 [1930]: xxviii, 123).

Arnason's reinterpretation of Weber does not discount processes of rationalisation as part of modernity, but he finds insights in Weber's writings which suggest that the convergence of such processes is unlikely because they are shaped by cultural differences which animate diverse institutional combinations and possibilities for conflict. Ultimately, Arnason argues with and against Weber to make a case for the assumptions in Weber's work that are more pliable and relevant for issues around cultural diversity than some of Weber's other claims. Arnason identifies his own approach as post-Weberian (Arnason 1997b: 5).

Arnason's earliest re-reading of Weber published in English emerges in 'Rationalisation and Modernity' (1982). The general thrust of considerations outlined in this text have endured throughout Arnason's writings from the early 1980s until the present. Here, Arnason suggests that a culturalist reading of Weber is justified due to the social-theoretical trends of the cultural turn of the 1970s. Moreover, he claims that there is a discernible shift from explanations of societies primarily in terms of 'structural and functional constraints'—a cornerstone of both Marxist and Modernisation theories—towards considering aspects of 'creative interpretation as a constituent of social reality'[26] (Arnason 1982: 1).

Despite this, Arnason also acknowledges that an over-emphasis on creative interpretations can fail to give instituted continuities their due (Arnason 1982: 2). By framing the issue in this way, Arnason wants to allow space for institutional continuity, but also the possibility of emergent human patterns that cannot be understood as the replication of institutions that previously existed, nor entirely reduced to purely instrumental human relationships to nature.

To do this, Arnason turns to Weber's reflections on culture. In Weber's own words '[c]ulture is a finite segment in the meaningless infinity of world process, a segment on which human beings

[26] For a seminal argument for an interpretive notion of culture, see Geertz (1973: 3-30), for broader summaries of the cultural turn see Alexander and Smith (2003: 11-26) and Friedland and Mohr (2004: 1-68).

confer meaning and significance' (Weber 1949: 81). He further suggests that 'we are cultural beings, endowed with the capacity and the will to take a deliberate attitude towards the world and lend it significance' (Weber 1949: 81). For Arnason, this implies two distinct cultural processes, the interpretive constitution of meaning and the active deliberation of the world (Arnason 1982: 6-8). In a later article, 'Social Theory and the Concept of Civilisation' (1988), Arnason argues that of the two processes, Weber emphasises 'practical intervention' and downgrades the 'creative interpretation' feature (Arnason 1988: 101). A similar claim also emerges later still in *Civilisations in Dispute* (2003a). Arnason claims that Weber's emphasis on 'value-oriented dispositions towards the world and more or less integrated ground rules for action' obscures an ongoing interpretive 'constitution and imposition of meaning' in relation to the world (Arnason 2003: 91).[27] The general thrust is that, for Arnason, such human interventions would require some entry point of attachment and attention to an otherwise meaningless flux of sensory stimuli in the first instance. Because of this, due consideration must be given to the 'lending of significance'.

The criticism can be raised that no one person or social group has the omnipotent luxury of creative interpretation in a way that could stand outside of already established idioms of thought, language, and action—instituted patterns. Arnason would also have to account for continuity with instituted patterns. As we shall see below, he does do this but in a way that tends to posit human creations as something that emerges amid social patterns beyond the intentions of individuals. Suffice to say at this point, the creativity he wants to acknowledge is not the kind which implies radically new and total creation without precedent—something to be touched upon below in contrast to Castoriadis. Rather, Arnason implies that instituted preconditions do not entirely constrain the 'creative confrontation' between human and world, and this allows for variations and transformations within instituting activity in relation to what is already established (Arnason 1982: 7).

Arnason makes further distinctions as to where the human creation of meaning originates in 'Culture and Imaginary Significations' (1989a). Here he notes there are two possibilities in Weber's thought, 'the subject as the source of meaning' and as 'a trans-subjective context of reference' (Arnason 1989a: 32). Indeed, in Weber's later methodological formulations of meaningful social action, subjective intentions are the basis for understanding the purpose of social conduct (Weber 1962[1925]: 29-33). Instead, Arnason claims that some of Weber's other writings also anticipated hermeneutical arguments against reducing meaning to intention (Arnason 1989a: 32). He later reiterates this point when he argues that the casting of meaning as conscious intention in Weber's

[27] This twofold distinction is also made in Arnason's *Civilisations in Dispute* and *The Labyrinth of Modernity* in terms of ideas and interests, while interests drive human action, ideas give them meaning and take them in specific directions (Arnason 2003: 92; 2020: 146).

later formulation of action is at odds with Weber's own analysis of constellations of meaning which give rise to dynamics beyond the conscious intentions of those involved (Arnason, 2003: 90). Throughout his readings of Weber, Arnason wants to draw out what he sometimes calls 'constellations of meaning' and sometimes refers to as 'trans-subjective contexts of reference'.

For Arnason, Weber's 'Religious Rejections of the World and their Directions' (1948 [1915]) describes the socio-cultural world as riven with constellations and contexts. He revisits Weber's notion of 'world-orders,' which points to alliances and conflicts between religious, economic, political, aesthetic, erotic and intellectual spheres of life (Arnason 1982: 10, 4; 1993a: 93; 1993b: 9; 2003: 230; 2010: 69).[28] In Weber's original text, these spheres of life stretch back into the history of Europe and Asia. The religious sphere—whether Vedic, Confucian, Hindu, Buddhist, Judaic, Christian, or Islamic—is given a particular primacy in relation to the other spheres because, in each context, religious themes offer the most comprehensive outlines of human relations to the world and each other (Weber 1958: 325-326, 331, 337-340). However, Weber suggests that a general long-term trend over centuries sees the economic, political, aesthetic, erotic and intellectual spheres start to provide 'inner-worldly' substitutes which also offer a general lens for both world views and the terms of relations to others (Weber 1958: 332-335, 347-348, 353).

Arnason is less convinced that this points in the direction of secularisation, instead seeing this more as a transposition of religious comprehensiveness to the other cultural spheres (Arnason 1982: 3-5, 8).[29] For Arnason the religious, economic, political, aesthetic, erotic, and intellectual spheres have a 'tendency to create a world in ... [their] own right' (Arnason 1982: 4). Weber's insights indicate that 'different orders give rise to distinctive processes of rationalisation' as 'partly complementary and partly competing patternings of the human condition' (Arnason 1982: 10).

Using this reference to world-orders, Arnason focuses on three levels of culture. The first level is a cultural orientation within a particular sphere of immediate activity. For societies to exist, there must be something about human movement, gesture, interactions with others and use of the environment that can be understood as related to a purpose that is not an entirely random expression of individual spontaneity. Even spontaneity itself could only be understood with respect to which patterns of activity are regular and consistent—that is, institutions. Arnason agrees with Weber that instances of human activity have a discernible orientation along religious, economic, political,

[28] Arnason uses the term 'world-orders', to refer to what the Gerth and Mills translation of Weber describes as both 'orders of the world' and also 'images of the world' (Weber 1958[1915]: 333, 352).

[29] The transposition of religious orientations into economic ones is the key themes of one of Weber's best-known texts. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* in which active display of divine blessing through monetised work in a calling, mutates into capitalism in which all are drawn into an unstoppable and constraining form economic participation (Weber 1930[1905]:123-124).

aesthetic/erotic or intellectual lines.[30]

The second level is 'national cultures', which Arnason only mentions briefly in his early reflection on culture (Arnason 1982: 4). Arnason's reference to 'national cultures' is to states with unique cultural patterns organised around forms of power. Granted, this reference to culture and its relation to power is subtle. Arnason primarily discusses it in Weberian metaphors such as national cultures being animated by 'different gods' and political leadership which conveys its authenticity through a 'passionate devotion to a "cause", to a god or demon' (Arnason 1982: 5). While the devotions of political leadership are not necessarily religious in a literal sense, Arnason suggests that their charismatic quality means that they convey a 'trans-personal vision' which 'enable[s] a personalisation of this message by … followers' (Arnason 1982: 5). For Arnason, there can be no 'de-culturalised politics', (Arnason 1982: 5). Moreover, whatever conflicts are occurring between the cultural spheres at a local level are a necessary consideration for political leaders—particularly in modernity when politicians must display that they 'are living *for* politics and not merely *off* politics' (Arnason 1982: 5). In this way the relationship between culture and political visions occupies a unique and privileged position with respect to the shaping of national cultures, yet national cultures are not entirely reducible to the form of political power which seeks to guide them.

The third level is that of 'civilisational complexes', which imply something larger than separate states (Arnason 1982: 7-8).[31] Indeed, Arnason suggests that Weber's comparisons between Western Europe, India and China imply larger traditions of cultural affinity (Arnason 1982: 7-8). Later, Arnason distinguishes between 'cultural spheres within a shared context' and 'those among national cultures within a shared tradition' (Arnason 1992: 258). This also suggests a distinction between the second and third levels of culture—those of nation-states and those of civilisations. By referring to patterns of culture at local, national and civilisational levels, Arnason suggests a multi-level potential for interpretive conflicts around significance and value.

Arnason also makes an abbrevation. The five world-orders which he lifts from Weber, get collapsed into three world-orders in his later texts. In *Origins and Destinies of the Soviet Model* these are stated as the economic, political and cultural, and later in *Civilisations in Dispute* they are expressed in even more general terms as wealth, power and meaning (Arnason 1993b: 100; 2003: 195). Suffice to say, throughout Arnason's writings from the 1980s to the present, deciphering

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[30] Of course, there can be conflicts between these orientations, and/or combinations and mutations of them from primarily religious to economic for example, and even Weber's own formulations allow for this.

[31] The civilisational implications of Weber's writings are discussed at length in *Civilisations in Dispute*, where Arnason highlights that Weber refers to regional social units as 'cultural areas' or 'cultural worlds' (2003a: 87).

cultural meaning, its points of emphasis and unintended results are primary for understanding notions of wealth and power in different contexts. These three distinct economic, political and cultural spheres of meaning are not to be confused with the local, national and civilisational levels. All three spheres can operate at any level. For example, the economic sphere across states can interact and conflict with the political sphere at a national level. Arnason implies as much when he discusses the conflict between attempts to enforce uniform economic management amongst the Soviet model and the emergent counter claims for national sovereignty by states of the Eastern European bloc. We will broach that episode in chapter 4.

The possibility of multi-level interpretive conflicts has implications for Weber's broader reading of history. Arnason claims that in Weber's comparative writings on Western, Indian and Chinese world-orders, each region is cast as underwritten by a 'dominant ethos,' an attitude towards the world that operates as an intact long-term logic (Arnason 2003a: 93, 1997b: 24-25). This ultimately leads Weber to the conclusion that the only culture to actively confront the world and transform it emerges in the Western constellation. Western dynamism contrasts with China, which accepts the world as it is and adapts to it, and with India, which rejects capitalist forms of this-worldly salvation (Arnason 1982: 8; 1997: 24-25; 2003a: 93).[32] However, Arnason argues that if Weber's metatheoretical statements about the creative and contestable quality of cultural meanings and ideas had been connected to Weber's comparative writings in a more balanced way, this would have off-set the intactness of cultural ideas and interests (Arnason 2003a: 93). For Arnason, Weber's indication of cultural world orders as 'co-existing, competing and sometimes colliding in a broader field' presents a potentially much richer picture than intact long-term logics (Arnason 2003a: 93; 2010: 69-70). Arnason claims that had Weber paid more attention to the implications of the world-orders conceptualisation, his comparative writings would have been more sensitive to both contingent shifts in ideas within regional histories and instances of ideational transmission between them (Arnason 2003a: 93, 97).

It could be argued that Weber's Eurocentric analysis of European and Asian histories tarnishes the appropriateness of dividing cultural world-orders into religious, political, economic, intellectual and aesthetic/erotic categories and limits the global relevance which Arnason could salvage from such theoretical propositions. Yet such a criticism cannot dismiss the theoretical claims made by Weber entirely. The charge of Eurocentrism presupposes that one can stand back to locate a misrepresentation of human diversity, because there must be cultural meanings and values that have some sort of situated relevance for different groups of people. In a sense, to argue against

[32] As we saw in Chapter 1, Weber's characterisation of Western modernity is ultimately double-edged, its benefits emerged alongside new and more durable impersonal forms of coercion and constraint.

Weber's Eurocentrism would imply arguing with a notion like Weber's definition of culture as the human capacity to create significance and value, nested in unique world-orders whether of European persuasion or otherwise. It is difficult to mount a challenge to the universal applicability of theoretical propositions without presupposing something universally applicable to all social settings that has been misunderstood, perhaps even violated, if generalisations are insensitive to context. This is not lost on Arnason, and the connection between a universal human predicament and its contextual expression gain further attention in his fragmentary engagement with the writings of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and, in a more substantive way, through his reinterpretation of Castoriadis.

Arnason's engagement with the phenomenological thought of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) is fragmentary during his earlier English writings in the 1980s and 1990s. It is not until Arnason's 'Merleau-Ponty and the Meaning of Civilisations' (2014) that an explicit account is provided of how Merleau-Ponty's thought is significant for civilisational analysis, although there is some reference to Merleau-Ponty's enigmatic statements in *Civilisations in Dispute* (2003a). Nonetheless, in the current discussion I will briefly present some general ideas which Arnason discerns in Merleau-Ponty that have affinities with aspects of Weber's and Castoriadis's thought, or at least with the way in which Arnason wants to appropriate them.[33]

In 'World Interpretation and Mutual Understanding' (1992), Arnason argues that Merleau-Ponty's thought ushers in a shift within phenomenological thought towards a 'post-transcendental phenomenology,' (Arnason 1992: 255). In this sense, the human confrontation with the world presents a recurrent riddle that troubles phenomenological reflections and intentions to provide a philosophical account of ultimate evidence for the world (Arnason 1992: 260). The problem relates back to the founder of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), who aimed at a phenomenological account of the lifeworld that bracketed out inherited intellectual baggage in order to prepare the way for a transcendental philosophy that would ascend above scientific naïveté (Husserl 1954: 59; Moran 2012: 178-180).[34] By contrast, Merleau-Ponty notes the impossibility of this bracketing (or 'reduction', as it is often referred to) because phenomenologists would still be motivated by the philosophical problems disclosed as significant within their lifeworld in order to perform these reductive reflections (Merleau-Ponty 1978[1945]: xiv). For Arnason, Merleau-Ponty's thought represents a current of phenomenological thought less preoccupied with 'meta-

[33] For a more sustained excursion through Arnason's relationship to phenomenological thinking in general and Merleau-Ponty in particular see Adams (2009).

[34] As noted in Chapter 1, Husserl developed the notion of the lifeworld to describe the taken-for-granted background of lived experience which envelopes scientific knowledge production and intentionality (Husserl 1970[1954]: 48-51).

historical constants' and more sensitive to 'historically developed and varying phenomena … connected with the … world horizon of the lifeworld' (Arnason 1992: 260).

It is these phenomenological concepts of world and horizon and Merleau-Ponty's interpretation of them that Arnason finds useful to connect the cultural world-orders described by Weber to a common human reference point. For Merleau-Ponty, the 'natural world is the horizon of all horizons, the style of all possible styles' (Merleau-Ponty 1978: 330). Indeed, Merleau-Ponty distinguishes between the natural world and the cultural world, or the natural world and the historical world (Merleau-Ponty 1978: 313-332, 346-347; 1968 [1964]: 5). It is primarily the cultural and historical worlds which Arnason sees as operative at the level of these plural horizons. He also detects a similar stance in Merleau-Ponty's own writings. For Merleau-Ponty, 'each civilisation … sums up some unique manner of behaviour toward others, toward nature, time and death, a certain way of patterning the world' (Merleau-Ponty 1978: xviii). While a key theme of Merleau-Ponty's thought was the embodied, experiential quality of human perception, there is also a statement in his final writings which suggests that 'there is an informing of perception by culture' (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 212). For Arnason, these ideas, taken together, suggest a 'plural constitution of rationality within cultural horizons' as the 'cultural articulation of the world' (Arnason 1994: 168). Consequently, he conceives of 'the world as an open … partially and discontinuously organised, global horizon that can be totalised from different points of view yet never reduced to any totality' (Arnason 1992: 255)[35]. In cruder terms, there is one shared global predicament but many cultural perspectives on it. Whether the perspective is that of a group, state or region, all have a finite geographical and historical vantage point on an omnipresent global space. Through this abstract description, Arnason provides a loose account of what is a universal reference point for all human societies and where we might start in distinguishing what is particular about them.

Yet there is an additional way in which Arnason discusses the universal and particular with respect to Merleau-Ponty's thought. For Merleau-Ponty, societies are not entirely captured by structural paradigms such as structural linguistics or structural anthropology, which attempt to posit the universal and invariant structures of language or kinship systems (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 117-122; Arnason 1993a: 89). Instead, he argues that universal invariants should not be presupposed from the outset and any commonalities that may exist between societies are better sought via comparison (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 118). Merleau-Ponty believes that a 'sort of lateral universal' might emerge via mapping the views of the so-called civilised and the so-called primitive but also 'the mistaken views each has of the other' (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 120). Arnason sees Merleau-

[35] He later casts Merleau-Ponty's notion of 'the horizon of horizons as the basis for unity in diversity' open to 'multiple versions of the world' (Arnason 2003: 228-229).

Ponty's statements on lateral universals as pointing to an understanding which emerges from an 'ongoing confrontation with other cultures' that is reconcilable with 'comparative analysis of civilisations,' (Arnason 1993a: 89). While it is possible that the development of such an understanding is not merely about correcting error but also presupposes a normative commitment to a fair characterisation of cultural others and a mitigation of ethnocentric hubris, Arnason does not explicitly discuss this possibility.

On the face of it, Arnason's general outline of human diversity—cultural articulations of the world which operate in relation to a global horizon—is not too far removed from Habermas's statements in *The Theory of Communicative Action vol. 1* (1984 [1981]). Habermas suggests that 'cultural values … [are] located in the horizon of the lifeworld of a specific culture … [and] values can be made plausible only within the context of a particular form of life' (Habermas 1984: 42). A key difference is that Habermas thinks that the transcendental excesses of phenomenology and its preoccupations with 'world-disclosure' can be corrected by an account of 'inner-worldly learning processes,' (Habermas 1992 [1988]: 7-8). Such learning potentials are built into the structure of intersubjective communication and can animate both the consensus-based rationalisation of a lifeworld and less coercive reproductions of culture (Habermas 1987 [1981]: 129, 367, 397-403). By contrast, Arnason's appropriation of Merleau-Ponty seems to imply another form of learning: a mediation of a familiar cultural lifeworld through coming to terms with different forms of world-disclosure which animate the interpretive conflicts within different cultural lifeworlds.

Merleau-Ponty is not the only thinker Arnason borrows from who reinterpreted phenomenological considerations. He draws on Cornelius Castoriadis in an even more sustained way. Arnason suggests that Castoriadis's notion of the social-historical can be understood as a 'reconceptualisation' of the phenomenological concept of the lifeworld (Arnason 1993a: 82). Nonetheless, the notion of the social-historical is quite nebulous, so it is worth presenting it in Castoriadis's own words.

> The social-historical is neither the unending addition of intersubjective networks (although it is this too), nor, of course, is it their simple product. The social-historical is the anonymous collective whole, the impersonal human element that fills every given social formation, but which also engulfs it, setting each society in the midst of others, inscribing them all within a continuity in which those who are no longer, those who are elsewhere and those who are yet to be born are in a certain sense present. It is, on the one hand, given structures 'materialised' institutions and works, whether these be material or not; and on the other hand, that which structures, institutes and materialises. In short, it is the union *and* the tension of instituting

> society and of instituted society, of history made and history in the making. (Castoriadis 1987 [1975]: 108)

The general structure of the social-historical implies a meaningful relationship to others past, present, future and elsewhere. It outlines the already involved character of the human condition in patterns of institutional continuity and change that have a contextual quality 'in a certain sense'. The social-historical suggests an existence in a society that sets itself amongst others and by implication speaks to a societal self-understanding in relation to a broader world.

In 'Culture and Imaginary Significations' (1989), Arnason claims that Castoriadis's formulation is amenable to the possibility that 'the basic component and co-determinant of the social-historical world in its entirety … is culture as an articulation of the world' (Arnason 1989a: 38). What Arnason finds appealing about Castoriadis's thought is that it does not lend itself to a cognitivist conception of culture which casts culture as the carrier of learning processes leading to more or less accurate reflections of reality (Arnason 1989a: 36-38). Moreover, like Arnason's reading of Weber's concept of culture, Castoriadis's notion of the social-historical is animated by institutions of human meaning. The unique feature of Castoriadis's elucidation is that he also points to the imaginary prerequisites for such social-historical repositories, allowing for the creative and open-ended possibilities of social meanings (Arnason 1989a: 39-40).

In *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (1987 [1975]), Castoriadis primarily discusses two levels of the imaginary. At one level, he describes the imagination of the individual psyche, which brings meanings and associations to human consciousness that are not merely replications of sensory stimuli or physical demands. At the other level, he describes a broader imaginary dimension as a prerequisite for meaningful transpersonal patterns of human activity, language and thought—institutions—which achieve social-historical expression across all human societies (Castoriadis 1987: 282, 292, 354-355, 366). Arnason notes that Castoriadis cannot be charged with psychological reductionism, for the psyches of persons and the social-historical creation of institutions are not entirely reducible to each other in Castoriadis's formulation (Arnason 1989a: 26). Nevertheless, Arnason argues that there is more explicit focus on psychoanalytical themes in Castoriadis's thought and the 'culturological' implications of 'the institution and the imaginary' remain underdeveloped (Arnason 1989a: 25, 27).

For Castoriadis, all of human history exhibits social-historical creativity across 'individuals, groups, classes and entire societies' (Castoriadis 1987: 44). This is primarily because, while general patterns can be found which afford a degree of predictability for human behaviour, there are also emergent aspects of meaning which humans posit and this allows for novel responses to similar

situations and even the possibility of creating new situations (Castoriadis 1987: 44). What we call history is this unity and tension between what people have previously instituted and further instituting activity (Castoriadis 1987: 108). Yet it is not merely the possibility for breakthroughs and the social transformation of institutions which implies a creative dimension. Castoriadis claims that a meaningful relationship is posited by humans in the first instance, so that anything more systematic and practical can take shape.

Social-historical institutions are supported by imaginary significations. Castoriadis suggests that imaginary significations are not subjective thoughts and representations but rather a shared medium through which people can be recognised as social participants (Castoriadis 1987: 366). Imaginary significations are 'the invisible cement holding together this endless collection of real, rational, and symbolic odds and ends that constitute every society, and as the principle that selects and shapes the bits and pieces that will be accepted there' (Castoriadis 1987: 143). For Arnason, it appears that Castoriadis—like Weber but with more explicitly pliable connotations—indicates a trans-subjective context of reference that precedes subjective intentions and attitudes (Arnason 1989a: 32). In this way Arnason suggests that imaginary significations are the precondition for comprehensive meaning complexes which animate 'world views, traditions and central symbols' (Arnason 1989a: 28).

As noted in Chapter 1, Castoriadis does not cast human institutions as entirely arbitrary, and he acknowledges that they do allow effective linguistic codes, tools and techniques (Castroiadis 1987: 360-361). It is just that these institutions achieve their meaningful orientation in the world via imaginary signification (Castoriadis 1987: 361). Furthermore, there is a creative aspect to human meaning that exceeds linguistic rules and functional necessity, for humans can reconfigure the boundaries of language in its use, create needs and wants which impede their own survival, and institute forms can be functional in one context yet highly dysfunctional in another, even within the same society (Castoriadis 1987: 117, 125-126, 129, 135-136, 243-244). The pliability that Arnason discerns in Castoriadis's outline of imaginary institution is owed to an emphasis on meaning prior to instrumental and functional aspects of societies (Arnason 1989a: 38). For Arnason, meaning is 'the obligatory starting point for any theory of culture,' for it provides a broader anthropological basis for comparison as opposed to a cognitivist approach which casts culture 'as a vehicle and embodiment of learning processes' and history as a 'co-operative search for truth' (Arnason 1989a: 36-39). Nonetheless, there are other implications of Castoriadis's thought which diverge from Arnason's.

A primary contrast between Castoriadis's and Arnason's respective views concerns the scope

of social-historical creation. In the thought of Castoriadis there is a strong emphasis on the creative dimension as creation *ex nihilo*—creation out of nothing (Castoriadis 1987: 361). Moreover, Castoriadis argues that while central imaginary significations are rendered more concrete via further institutional elaboration, they are 'grasped after the fact' of their initial signification and have no referent (Castoriadis 1987: 361-364). By central imaginary significations he means God, gods, the economy, law, the State, the family; in more general terms all ultimate values by which to frame the 'co-belonging of objects, acts and individuals' (Castoriadis 1987: 361-364). We can only assume that Castoriadis claims that these core significations have no referent because they would cease to exist as an influence on human activity, at least in the manner that they do exist, if they ceased to operate as primary frames of reference—presuppositions of what is and ought to be the case—for a raft of human activities. This would contrast with processes of the natural world which continue to have immediate physical consequences irrespective of shifts in human instituting – for example, the inhalant which humans have signified and instituted as oxygen is a meta-historical necessity that would continue to be so even if it was conceived in some other way.

Castoriadis's *ex nihilo* bias issues from his commitment to the possibility of human autonomy. As discussed in Chapter 1, for Castoriadis human autonomy emerges in those moments when humans subject established institutions to severe critique and become conscious of their own creations via distinguishing between what is instituted and what they ought to be instituting. Castoriadis relies upon the claim that humans are always creating relations over and above what is demanded by nature. They just do not realise it and therefore become constrained by their own inventions—they become heteronomous (Castoriadis 1987: 107-109).

For Arnason, the notion of creation *ex nihilo* is misleading because the notion side-lines the specificity of the background contexts from which creations emerge (Arnason 1989a: 40). Even the most novel institutional transformations are still confrontations with particular traditional backgrounds (Arnason 1989a: 41). It cannot be the case that imaginary significations have no referent because, even in Castoriadis's account, societies refer to the world which they encounter and they 'articulate it from different angles' (Arnason 1989a: 40). In this way, Arnason 'limits the absolute sovereignty of anthropic world making' and 'allows for a weak form of determinism' (Adams 2009: 256). While he accepts Castoriadis's general claim about the imaginary institution of social-historical forms of life, he proposes a stronger imprint of the time and place character of institutions, which he sees as amenable to the notion of 'culture as an articulation of the world' (Arnason 1989a: 27-28).

Arnason also follows a further line of argumentation which relates to conclusions that

Castoriadis makes about human heteronomy and autonomy. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Castoriadis arrives at the conclusion that the only social-historical instances of genuine human autonomy and conscious human instituting—no matter how imperfectly realised across various social strata—occur briefly in ancient Greek democracy and philosophy and then again during the Western European Renaissance and Enlightenment (Castoriadis 1981: 21-22; 1992[1988]: 166-167). [36]

Like the streamlined narratives of world evaluation which crept into Weber's thought, and the narrow linguistic prerequisites for modern understandings which emerge in Habermas's, Arnason discerns a parallel issue within Castoriadis's. Arnason argues that it is not unlikely that the institution-questioning and transforming social-historical patterns that Castoriadis 'attributes to the Greco-Occidental tradition' might also be discernible in other traditions albeit couched in different cultural meanings and combinations (Arnason 1989a: 44). He briefly points to the emergence of Buddhism as a counterexample in that it offers an orientation towards autonomy through 'renunciation and withdrawal' from established institutions and can open onto an even more radical critique of aspirations to construct worldly utopias (Arnason 1989a: 44). He suggests that Castoriadis provides concepts of the social-historical and the imaginary that pose the question of alternative cultural-institutional combinations, yet fails thoroughly to explore the possibility. This is likely a consequence of Castoriadis's own 'emphatic identification' with the 'Greco-Occidental tradition' (Arnason 1989a: 42). Instead, Arnason claims that any such commitments to this tradition would have to be justified on comparative grounds (Arnason 1989a: 44). To what extent Arnason himself offers such a justification of what might be important about legacies of Western traditions will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. Suffice to say, he intends to down-grade the impetus for transformative political action which underwrites Castoriadis's view, and instead to use these ideas as a pliable basis for inquiry into the possibility of different cultural-institutional contexts.

In summarising the relevance, of Weber, Merleau-Ponty and Castoriadis for Arnason's approach, we arrive at the following main points. Weber provides a concept of culture in which the human capacities to endow the world with meaning and value are central prerequisites for social relations. These implications speak to Weber's notion of cultural world-orders, which operate in immediate spheres of life locally but also at state and regional levels. These orders are patterns of meaning in which people are already involved, exceeding their subjective intentions but providing their actions with context. Weber's writings on world-orders also suggest that even within a particular societal context there are partly allied, partly competing and partly colliding spheres of meaning and value. For Arnason this points to potential cultural conflicts of interpretation at three

[36] The parallel that Castoriadis sees between these Ancient Greek and early modern Europe are that three main questions were 'posed overtly' and 'laws were changed deliberately'. Those questions are 'Are our laws just? Are our gods true? Is our representation of the world, right?' (Castoriadis 2010 [1982]: 58).

levels which makes the possibility of any closed and enduring pattern of culture an untenable and ahistorical construct, tone deaf to the contingencies of human interactions.

Merleau-Ponty deals with the phenomenological concepts of the world and horizons, which speak of both the basis for the universal and for particularity. On the one hand, all societies presuppose a world, so the world is the common point of reference. On the other hand, all societies occupy a particular historical and geographical vantage point which opens onto and patterns the world. For Merleau-Ponty, any notion of universal invariants across societies must be balanced against a consideration of what emerges in-between them as points of agreement, conflict, and mischaracterisation. For Arnason, Merleau-Ponty's reinterpretation of phenomenological concepts offers a way further to draw Weber's notion of world-orders together in an overarching schematic. It also indicates limitations to cultural omniscience and therefore a world that remains underdetermined and open to further interpretive conflicts.

Castoriadis provides Arnason with another way of discussing the horizons of lifeworlds via the imaginary significations which animate the instituted patterns of social-historical worlds. In outlining the social-historical and imaginary prerequisites for human institutions, Castoriadis indicates that each society has a meaningful relationship to those past, present, elsewhere, and yet to come, in way which is relevant for their own institutional patterns. He also highlights that there is something about human doing, saying, and representing that is creative and not a direct extension of material necessity, purified logic, or established institutions. This allows a tension between instituted and instituting patterns, or rather the ability to see in the past what those in the past did not see in their situation. This creative aspect allows for novel responses in history which were not previously foreseeable; moreover, new ways of conveying what the social world means through interaction and speech. For Arnason, Castoriadian concepts are flexible enough to be stretched beyond Castoriadis's own preoccupation with transformative politics. For Arnason, imaginary institution and the social-historical should be relativised as a preparatory step in exploring different modalities of human autonomy. This provides a way of considering contextual patterns of tensions between instituted and instituting activity and exploring the constellations of imaginary significations that animate such patterns.

From these sources, Arnason develops a perspective in which culture animates world-interpretive human creation and is pliable enough to allow for the possibility of institutional variation. By pointing to the broader global predicament as the ultimate point of human reference, Arnason touches on a shared feature of the human condition which affects all without remainder. He also stresses that this shared predicament is only interpreted from limited and situated vantage

points: horizons. By providing a general premise for an ultimate existential unity in relation to which lived diversity is distinguished, Arnason implies that interpretations always emerge in response to the more immediate historical and geographical situation in which people find themselves. As a result, patterns of interpretation that crystallise into cohesive institutions are more likely to emerge among peoples of closer proximity and regular contact, yet they are flexible enough to remain open to interpretive conflict and social change. Such conflicts are multi-level processes, locally within particular cultural activities (religious, political, economic, intellectual or aesthetic/erotic ones), between societies or states, with particular combinations of these patterns, but also between groups of societies or states which move within the orbit of different cultural interpretations and articulations of the world respectively.

3.2 Culture and Power in Modernity

While culture is the central prerequisite for meaningful human social relations in Arnason's view, a complementary dynamic by which to understand limitations to both human meanings and instituting activity is power. As discussed in Chapter 1, power is a theme which becomes a major concern for social theorists attempting to understand the novel institutional forces and constraints which shape people's lives in modernity. These modern forms of power come into focus once European populations are less beholden to feudal lords, absolute sovereigns, the inherited privileges of nobility and religious prescription, amid an increased potential for participation in socio-politico-economic life.

The theories I discussed in Chapter 1 can be loosely divided into two main views of existing power relations within modernity, the critical and the affirmative. The critical approach found in the works of Marx, Weber, the Frankfurt school, Foucault, Said, Bhambra and Allen emphasises the malignant effects of power in modernity. These views can be generalised in three main ways. First, modern power is associated with novel forms of asymmetry between industrial property owners and the working class, between the experts and the laity, between the state and individuals, between the beneficiaries of empire and the colonised. The list of possible asymmetries can be extended depending on which identity traits and disparities we intend to highlight. Second, along with these asymmetries come impersonal organising forces that infuse the structural relations with an involuntary and self-evident character, whether caused by capitalism, bureaucracy, state-sanctioned violence, forms of media and/or the production of knowledge. Third, the primary vectors of coercive force are the structure of economic relations and reinforcing ideology through which labour is interchangeable and disposable, forms of instrumental or functionalist rationality geared towards system maintenance, and patterns of language which function as truth and normalise the terms of social relations. Structural determinism exerts a malignant influence on human behaviour,

to the extent that capitalism is not overthrown, that functionalist rationality is not mediated by communicative rationality, or that certain forms of language and knowledge production are not resisted. The broader critical presupposition is that under such conditions, human autonomy and progress beyond coercive social arrangements and prescriptions remains unrealised.

The affirmative view is much more positive about the terms of power in modernity. This is discernible in the early thought of Durkheim through to Modernisation theory broadly construed. The broad claim is that with the increased differentiation and specialisation of human activity there is a tendency towards more elaborate forms of bureaucratic, legal, market and political legitimation. These institutional complexes are cast as more adaptive to emergent human problems than traditional societies, which are cast less differentiated, less specialised, and therefore less adaptive. As also discussed in Chapter 1, the question of power is neutralised in favour of integration into a social system that offers greater functional utility and enlarged networks of interdependence amidst populations—the nation-state. Structural determinism exerts a beneficial influence, to the degree that the norms and values within differentiated and specialised activities conform to the overall stability and functioning of a broader social system. The broader affirmative presupposition is that such conditions tend towards democracy. Moreover, human autonomy and progress beyond the less adaptive features of premodern social arrangements and prescriptions is in the process of realisation.

According to Arnason, both perspectives are too simple. Both the critical and affirmative views rely upon a 'dominant image of society' – that is, they present an over-integrated picture of societies as systems in which individual and group orientations are brought into conformity with some broader structure of domination or functional utility (Arnason 1986a: 138-139).[37] He claims that the dominant image of society was popular in social thought from the nineteenth to around the mid-twentieth century and presupposed 'over-systemised and over-functionalised ideas of culture' as either an 'ideological machine' or 'a value-system' that shapes the terms of power (Arnason 1986a: 138-139; 1993a: 10). As a result, Arnason's writings are animated by an enduring suspicion that both critical and affirmative interpretations of power in modernity are too one-dimensional and developmentally unidirectional (Arnason 1986a, 1991 [1986], 1993b, 2001, 2003, 2020). The most emphatic readings of these views imply some sort of structural determination of power within societies through a primary variable, whether through economic relations, technical and scientific rationalisation, value systems, language use and interconnectivity along communicative lines. They can also tend towards convergence implications across societies in terms of capitalism,

[37] Arnason follows the lead of French sociologist Alain Touraine in critique of the dominant image and it remains a subtle conviction in his writing, even in his most recent work on the *Labyrinth of Modernity* (2020: 220-222).

Modernisation, globalisation, or world society (Arnason 1997b: 297-298; 1990: 220; 2003: 40).

For Arnason, such problems are even discernible within a view as nuanced and sophisticated as that of Habermas. As shown in Chapter 1, Habermas's theory of modernity represents a combination of both critical and affirmative tendencies. He is critical of economic and political systems and their coercive forms of accompanying rationality in modernity. Yet he is affirmative in so far as he is convinced that there is a demand for communicative consensus that has been opened by modernity with democratising potentials which can be built upon to correct its course. His most provocative statement on the matter refers to modernity as an 'unfinished project' (Habermas 1997 [1980]: 46).

The general thrust of Arnason's perspective on the relations between culture, power and modernity emerges out of disagreement with Habermas's description in 'Modernity as Project and a Field of Tensions' (Arnason 1991 [1986]). As already touched on in Chapter 1, Arnason is not convinced that Habermas's outline of linguistic prerequisites for modern self-understandings are conducive to mutual understandings between so-called modern and traditional views. However, there is another aspect of Habermas's thought which Arnason also finds too restrictive when considering the possible forms that modernity could take. As also shown in Chapter 1, Habermas sees modernity as emerging loosely in parallel to a four-stage juridification of the modern state in the wake of absolutism. Recall that these four stages are the bourgeois state, the bourgeois constitutional state, the democratic constitutional state, and the welfare state (Habermas 1987: 358-362). This trajectory is characterised by increasing obligations to citizens to be met by states. For Arnason, Habermas breezes over far too many contingent variables and constructs an 'over-rationalised model of the modern state' (Arnason 1991: 193). The development of modern states cannot be reduced to 'a process of democratisation', nor can these states be cast as increasingly apparent mechanisms of mediation between capitalist and democratic demands—even if in some cases they are that also (Arnason 1991: 191-193). Instead, he suggests that what needs to be considered is the following.

> In the societies caught up in the global process of Modernisation … later … and become directly or indirectly dependent on its pacemakers, the intervention of the state in social life … can take on new forms which, on the one hand imitate the models invented in the centres of the world system and, on the other hand, outdo such models by drawing on statist or imperial traditions. (Arnason 1991: 193)

This is an early hint that Arnason was sensitised to the possibility of alternative modernities in which configurations of state power play a role. He singles out a few aspects in addition to

democratising potentials which he sees as crucial to a more nuanced grasp of the broader dynamics of power within modernity. These are interaction between empires, capitalism, notions of sovereignty, revolutions from below or above and nationalism (Arnason 1991: 192-193). Indeed, Arnason suggests that the development of modernity amid interactions with 'non-democratic' and 'non-capitalist structures' is also an important consideration within the broader picture (Arnason 1991: 193). It is more appropriate to speak of modernity as 'a field of tensions' than an unfinished project (Arnason 1991: 185).

Arnason argues that Habermas's framing of modernity as a shared project underplays variations 'between economic, political and cultural determinants of the modern world' (Arnason 1991 [1986]: 193). He claims that, when all is said and done, Habermas describes the common vector of modern power as a functionalist rationality which is geared towards system maintenance through people's conflation of cognitive-instrumental ends with normative and/or subjective ones (Arnason 1991: 188). Accordingly, this malignant form of modern power is primarily an obstacle to both uncoerced speech and balanced distinctions between truth, justice and taste. On the one hand, this lop-sided development of reason can lead to an unbalanced emphasis upon either bureaucratic planning in the political sub-system to control the unpredictability of the market, or an overzealous surrendering of societal problems to market self-correction in the economic sub-system (Arnason 1991: 188-189). On the other hand, it can animate insufficiently differentiated moralistic or aesthetic views in opposition to the systemic imbalances and morph into fundamentalist and authoritarian counter-trends (Arnason 1991: 188-189; 204). Habermas's theory invokes a Weberian-Marxist thrust in that the form of rationality most conducive to the economic imperatives of capitalism co-opts systemic processes and stimulates crises.

There are three points discernible in Arnason's argument which indicate aspects which he sees as important yet absent from Habermas's account of power. The first relates to the formation of large social units organised around centralised power such as states. Arnason describes one key aspect of power as the concentration of power resources (Arnason 1991: 201). While Arnason does not really provide explicit detail on what power resources are in his outline of the field of tensions, the various theories of power he discusses in preface to his more concise statements suggest that power resources are techniques, materials, territories, and populations which can be mobilised according to goals (Arnason 1991: 196-201). Habermas relies upon a functionalist rationality—generally the material reproduction of society and the distribution of resources—and accounts for such concentrations mainly in a system maintenance means/ends type of scheme. This implies an underlying similarity between 'parallel trajectories' of economic and political power and neglects how different social-historical backgrounds of state-formation and emergent collective identities

impact the ends themselves (Arnason 1991: 189, 193, 201). In this sense, Arnason argues that such dynamics would need to be adequately 'relativised [according] to cultural preconditions' (Arnason 1991: 205). He wants to focus on 'the role of power in society' as it is cast within different traditions, but also on the 'reappropriation and redistribution' of power that emerges in relation to such backgrounds (Arnason 1989a: 40).

The second aspect of power to which Arnason draws attention relates to broader forms of conflict. He points to the 'structure-forming role of antagonistic forms of sociality' as an additional feature of power (Arnason 1991: 201). According to Arnason, Habermas neglects to consider conflictual interactions such as 'interstate competition,' which are not necessarily beholden to market or bureaucratic constraints but are not easily reconciled with interpretive conflicts geared towards mutual understanding either (Arnason 1991: 201, 206). Doubts about a common project of modernity emerge when potential geopolitical tensions are considered. As shown above, Arnason indicates that societies drawn into Modernisation at later dates might not be content to assimilate to established forms and may instead seek to eclipse modernising forerunners. Both the first and the second points intersect with considerations, touched on above, around interactions between the six elements of capitalism, democracy, imperialism, sovereignty, revolution, nationalism and their possible variable combinations in different parts of the world.

The third aspect of power is a tension central to Western modernity itself that Arnason sees as obscured in Habermas's account and which may possibly have analogues with non-Western contexts. As shown in Chapter 1, Habermas's theory is aligned with a resuscitation of Enlightenment hopes after the first-generation Frankfurt theorists proposed the Enlightenment's own self-negation. Instead, Arnason highlights Romanticism as a modern response to the tendencies of the Enlightenment (Arnason 1991: 209). He characterises Enlightenment rationality as geared towards order, control, clarification, the expansion of power and a 'specific world project,' (Arnason 1991: 209-210). In contrast, he describes Romanticism as the 'defence of meaningfulness against … the meaning destroying mechanisms of an Enlightenment geared towards the expansion and rationalisation of power' (Arnason 1991: 210). Romantic orientations can invoke a 'longing for the "original richness" of premodern forms of life,' and animate various counter-tendencies, traditionalist or nationalist ones among them (Arnason 1991: 209-210). Arnason admits that the Enlightenment and Romanticism are not necessarily polarised orientations in every instance, but he claims that the constitutive tension between the two polarised ends of the spectrum are part of modern understandings and potentially discernible in 'highly different constellations' (Arnason 1991: 210).

I would argue that it is not entirely clear how far Arnason is willing go in saying that Enlightenment and Romantic responses are operative in non-Western contexts.[38] What will be clear in Chapter 4 is that something like the Romantic reanimations and preservations of socio-cultural meanings do emerge in those societies that are confronted with Western expansion. The tensions which Arnason points to suggest a more fragmented picture of modernity than Habermas's in the sense that it is less likely to crystallise as a finished global project under the unity of reason and more likely to be riven with ongoing tensions due to staggered trajectories of socio-cultural change.

Arnason's scepticism towards theories which detect uniformities and present more streamlined perspectives on power in modernity is based on his conviction that such perspectives miss primary yet underdetermined variables: culture, interpretations and ultimately imaginary significations (Arnason 1993b: 10). In this way Arnason identifies his own approach with a 'post-functionalist social theory' (Arnason 1993b: 11). His position is not based on the claim that the 'mobilisation and allocation of resources' or the 'exercise and distribution of power' do not fulfil integrative and instrumental functions in modern societies (Arnason 1993b: 11). Rather, he is merely suggesting that such activities are not reducible to an a-cultural means/ends scheme and instead rely upon the 'articulation and institutionalisation of meaning' to emerge as the different ends of distinct societies (Arnason 1993b: 11).

Arnason's use of imaginary significations implies that there is a constitutive dimension of interpretations which precedes both economic networks and bureaucratic rationality, but also exceeds the structural constraints of languages and values. More specifically, economic ventures and units of exchange must first be imagined as significant and valuable, and any administrative end must first be imagined as a possible and preferrable goal among a broader field of possibilities. By contrast, language is never finished because what can be done in relation to what is said is never historically closed. Evaluations can shift amid (inter)actions or can fail to align with means and/or ends. The notion of imaginary signification affords Arnason an image of social-historical patterns that is undetermined and open-ended because it makes some allowance for the creative dimension of interpretive conflicts and the unpredictable results of interaction or what he refers to as 'emergent characteristics' (Arnason 1996: 9). At the same time, imaginary significations still allow for some institutional stability in that similar meanings and broader narratives of human purpose can gain

[38] Arnason seems to be caught between a more typological characterisation of Enlightenment and Romanticism and a historicised one. In his analysis of Japan, he opts for other heuristic devices to explain the reanimation of Japanese traditions as opposed to Romanticism due to his insistence that Enlightenment transformations must come first for Romantic re-enchantment to ensue. An identical sequence of milestones is curious claim from someone who has built his reputation as the defender of contingency and plurality. Yet when he shifts to discuss intercivilisational encounters and identity crises that follow, he seems to imply that something like Romanticism is operative in both the Russian and Japanese contexts.

traction across persons without the requirement of interpersonal acquaintance or communication between everyone with everybody else in that society. In this way imaginary significations are interpretations that facilitate a loose social integration at what Castoriadis referred to as the 'anonymous collective' level of social formations (Castoriadis 1987: 108). Still, there is a cluster of imaginary significations—related to the six elements mentioned above—which Arnason sees as co-extensive with different visions of the role of power and its distribution within modernity as a field of tensions.

Arnason's view also pivots off Castoriadis's characterisation of modernity as a 'dual institution,' consisting of two central and opposed imaginary significations: 'the … unlimited expansion of … rational mastery over nature and over humans' and 'the project of social and individual autonomy' (Castoriadis 1991 [1986]: 221-223). In 'The Imaginary Constitution of Modernity', Arnason suggests that Castoriadis's dual institution implies a 'field of tensions, structured around two dominant poles with their respective clusters of derivative principles and perspectives' (Arnason 1989c: 323). He indicates that, in Castoriadis's view, the unlimited expansion of rational mastery has an affinity with novel capitalist aspirations in modernity, whereas the project of autonomy is more amenable to democratic counterpoints (Arnason 1989c: 327, 330). For Arnason, the imaginary significations of rational mastery and autonomy are ultimately 'cultural interpretations of power', which can fuse with additional orientations beyond capitalist and democratic ones (Arnason 1989c: 323-324, 330).[39] I will first touch on the two primary orientations and their analogues, capitalism and democracy, then highlight the additional significations of imperialism, sovereignty, revolution and nationalism already flagged above.

Rational mastery, in its purest expression, entails the reduction of the world to an object to master, and this orientation can fuse with notions of capitalist growth, modern science, and aspirations to rational control of societies by state regimes (Arnason 1989c: 334). Castoriadis casts rational mastery as the primary and ever more singular orientation within modernity under capitalism (Castoriadis 1984/1985: 31;1997 [1990]: 38). As a result, Castoriadis's own perspective on modernity moves conspicuously close to the type of unidirectional narrative which is associated with the dominant image of society that Arnason rejects. While Arnason agrees with Castoriadis that a thorough pursuit of rational mastery is less conducive to a questioning its own 'interpretive and practical relation to the world', he is more prepared to consider that there are diverse interpretations of rational mastery (Arnason 1989c: 327-328). He suggests that the pursuit of rational mastery can be emphasised in terms of the growth of wealth or the growth of power, and

[39] I use the terms imaginary significations, the imaginary of and cultural interpretations of power interchangeably as does Arnason.

that either orientation can be cast as the modality by which to achieve higher levels of rational organisation and control to overcome the disruptions of modernity (Arnason 1989c: 330). Arnason indicates that there can be a surrendering of this control premise to the market itself, at least in terms of its self-correcting capacities to pacify potential socio-cultural conflicts through economic interdependence (Arnason 1989c: 330). Alternatively, the pursuit of rational mastery can take on the form of the bureaucratic planning of the modern state to mediate and control the anarchy of the market— 'a statist alternative to capitalism' (Arnason 1989c: 329). So far, this does not really appear much different from Habermas's view of the economic and political arms of the system. However, different relationships to rational mastery emerge once its counterpart, autonomy, is considered.

Autonomy demands critical reflection upon the reproduction of human relations with respect to 'differences and changes in the role of power within the social-historical field' (Arnason 1989c: 331). This represents an emphasis on the open-ended and democratic dimension of institutions through which 'modern social movements question and transform cultural patterns' (Arnason 1989c: 330). This democratic dimension animates criticism of the implicit power within institutions that socially constructs and limits the scope of what kind of individuals can exist (Arnason 1989c: 330). Elsewhere, he suggests that a widened scope for 'pluralism' is a key democratic trait (Arnason 1990a: 43). Democracy also demands that wider participation and public scrutiny be given the chance to help shape the explicit power vested in formal political decision making about the future (Arnason 1989c: 330). The notion of popular sovereignty is also a democratic notion of autonomy (Arnason 1990a: 38, 43). But Arnason acknowledges that the project of autonomy cannot be captured in terms of a particular set of institutions, but rather animates human activity to the degree to which institutions are challengeable and changeable (Arnason 1989c: 330).

Arnason indicates that fusions between economic rational mastery and different versions of human autonomy are possible. He suggests that justifications for new strategies to master nature for production can rest on a notion of meeting human necessities that previous techniques can no longer satisfy and that therefore require significant revision to allow collective self-determination (Arnason 1989c: 330). This implies a partial fusion of both rational mastery and collective autonomy. Alternatively, the differentiation and specialisation of vocations which occur within capitalism can also be cast as expanding the expressive development of human capacities and possibilities for individual self-determination (Arnason 1989c: 330). This also suggests a partial fusion of rational mastery and individual autonomy, which imply notions of self-realisation.

Arnason advances various scenarios and shifting lines of emphasis in the direction of power

between state, economy, society and individuals that might emerge in different contexts. Beyond this, he suggests that interpretations of rational mastery and autonomy find other analogs when placed in a broader global context (Arnason 1989c: 335). Moreover, as cultural interpretations of power they can also achieve partial fusions with other meanings such as imperialism, sovereignty, revolution and nationalism, all discernible in his writings of the late 1980-90s.

The imperial imaginary and its legacy also have significant implications for trajectories of Modernisation, in Arnason's view (Arnason 1993b: 20). The imperial orientation aspires to establish empire through conquest and the absorption of other states and territories under a new political centre. Imperial interpretations vary in both expansionist and interventionist tendencies, yet Arnason suggests that premodern imperial formations nourished notions of rational mastery through the development of bureaucracies to control those populations under their dominion (Arnason 1993b: 19-20). He also claims that the durability of imperial power was generally dependent on auxiliary cultural interpretations such as 'philosophical traditions' and/or 'universal religions' (Arnason 1993b: 20). While rival imperial projects of the Western powers imploded in two world wars, notions of empire still had an 'afterlife' elsewhere (Arnason 1993b: 21). In the Soviet case, 'a restructuring of the imperial legacy' emerged as a totalitarian party-state preoccupied with control of economic, political, and cultural activities and the elimination of alternatives (Arnason 1993b: 92-93).

The imaginary signification of sovereignty is described as distinct from 'the imaginary of … imperial power', in that the ruler becomes distinguished from the state and the state is conceived as part of a broader system of sovereign states (Arnason 1989c: 335). Sovereignty has a close yet tensioned relationship to collective notions of human autonomy. On the one hand, it can be invoked in the name of the 'self-determination of the state', while on the other hand, the self-determination of a state amongst others is more limited than a notion of an explicitly autonomous self-determining society which radically questions its instituted forms (Arnason 1989c: 335). The signification of sovereignty has a relationship to rational mastery in that it legitimates a central mechanism for control within a given territory, but there is also the requirement to regulate interactions with other states, so rational mastery is limited (Arnason 1989c: 335). While the modern state influences capitalist development, Arnason also acknowledges that 'state-formation and interstate competition' complicate this picture (Arnason 1989c: 335). Conversely, he notes that the state can also be understood as an obstacle to productivity and that the pursuit of wealth and can lead to the 'idealisation of the market…as a paradigm of autonomy' (Arnason 1989c: 335).

In 'Nationalism, Globalisation and Modernity', Arnason discusses the national imaginary and

draws a distinction between notions of nation and nationalism (Arnason 1990b: 226). Interpretations of nation are dependent on earlier forms of collective identity and notions of ethnicity (Arnason 1990b: 217). Moreover, they rely upon a 'cultural model of kinship' and a 'myth of common descent' whereby interpretations are presented primarily in terms of 'a shared history, a distinctive shared culture and an association with a specific territory' (Arnason 1990b: 217). In turn, institutions of territorial, political, legal and economic integration can only become comprehensive and enduring if the 'myths, memories and symbols' of ethnicity can be re-interpreted through the lens of 'nationhood' (Arnason 1990b: 218).

Nationalism has a more explicit political tenor and is discussed as a dynamic that emerges within states and in tension with notions of a comprehensive global integration. In Arnason's view, 'nationalism defines and justifies power in terms of culture' (Arnason 1990b: 216-217). Nationalism invokes a re-discoverable and authentic mode of 'political organisation', which also involves an 'explicit devaluation of the state' (Arnason 1990b: 228). In this way nationalism cloaks itself in the garb of autonomy in that it questions the formal institutions of the state but primarily with the aim of restoring what has been lost. Nationalism can also pose as a paradigm of autonomy with the transposition of the modern idea of individual self-determination onto collective configurations where 'the equal right of nations to self-determination' is equated to 'the mutual recognition of autonomous individuals' (Arnason 1990b: 228). It can also fuse with imperial interpretations of an unlimited extension of power, particularly when 'patriotism transfigured by universalistic ideals' pushes beyond the boundaries of the state in a bid at imperial expansion (Arnason 1990b: 226). Nonetheless, nationalism is not always couched in terms of international assertion, for it can also lead to a 'withdrawal from the global context' (Arnason 1990b: 226). Either way, Arnason suggests that nationalism is an important factor in state-formation and inter-state competition (Arnason 1990b: 209).

Revolution is another cultural interpretation of power, and it is discussed in 'From 'Othernesses of Modernity: From Revolution to Reflexivity' (1997a). Revolution is geared towards the renunciation and abolition of institutions, particularly when they are conceived of as rigid power structures and obstructions to autonomy (Arnason 1997a: 37). The revolutionary tradition not only aims at an alternative future but also attempts to articulate which social forces will bring it about (Arnason 1997a: 37). Accordingly, revolution invokes a sense of collective autonomy and emancipation. Still, Arnason indicates that there remains scope for dissent from the revolutionary view on its own ground. He stresses that a primary suspicion towards the revolutionary orientation is whether the post-revolutionary situation enhances human autonomy and achieves the institutional arrangements that revolutionary zealots were certain it would (Arnason 1997a: 37-38). As shown in

Chapter 1, the postmodern perspective is very much coloured by this sensibility. In a sense it is difficult not to view Arnason's own view as somewhat shaped by similar reservations about grand critique.

Admittedly, Arnason's reflections on cultural interpretations of power—capitalism, democracy, imperialism, sovereignty, nation, revolution—do not necessarily add up to a comprehensive theory of modernity or alternative modernities. Rather, he outlines a cluster of notions which relate to instituted forms of power and to their main lines of emphasis and direction within local, state, and regional contexts. His conception of culture also allows for the possibility of interpretive conflicts within and between these contexts, with the potential for emergent changes in the lines of emphasis and direction. His main areas of analysis are the Western, Soviet and East-Asian forms of modernity. Even so, it is not entirely clear what it is about the various cultural interpretations of power that animates tensions between them. Is it cultural difference and the predicament of living according to one interpretive horizon among many others? Is it staggered trajectories in which a cluster of Western European states were the first to undertake effective global expansion and kickstart interstate competition and imperialism? Arnason seems to imply that it is a combination of both through which modernity represents a sense of profound crisis for previously established cultural identities and ways of life.

The clues to this perspective emerge in Arnason's response to Eisenstadt's proposition that modernity might be a new civilisation—touched on in Chapter 1—that emerges to supersede previously existing civilisations (Arnason 1993b: 14; 1997b: 373). Arnason sees Eisenstadt's description as not merely implying Western absorption but rather as something more like the expansion of 'universal religions', although in terms of more human centred political visions which end up transcending their Western origins (Arnason 1993b: 14; Eisenstadt 1978: 177-189). He notes that, for Eisenstadt, protests and demands from peripheries in relation to power centres become integral to the legitimation of power within modernity and to a general pattern that is transmitted from the West to the rest (Eisenstadt 1978: 179-178; Arnason 1997b: 371-374). However, Arnason is not convinced that the umbrella term of civilisation does 'justice to the permanent but conflictual connection between Westernising and modernising processes' (Arnason 1993b: 14). Even if modernity gives rise to more extreme modalities of rational mastery and/or novel avenues for questioning established institutions, it cannot be reduced to a constellation of civilisational affinity (Arnason 1997b: 374). Modernity is just as likely to develop into 'acute conflicts and incompatible projects' based on different notions of 'dissent and change' (Arnason 1997b: 372-374). The most salient feature of modernity appears to be the rendering 'of all civilisational divisions and closures problematic', undermining the continuity of existing civilisations (Arnason 1997b: 374-375).

For Arnason, the possibility of 'unity on a more universal basis is at the same time a precondition for a previously impossible recognition and understanding of plurality' (Arnason 1997b: 374) It animates 'a self-problematising thrust which … accompanies the opening to other worlds and the exploration of past, present and future alternatives' (Arnason 1997b: 374). The crisis that is opened by intensified global contacts is not so much a lack of meaning, but such a differentiation and fragmentation of the possibilities that there is a 'lack of *unifying* meaning' (Arnason 1997b: 374, my emphasis). Arnason claims that this leads to various 'images, ideologies and utopias which strive to reconcile modernity,' with notions of unity and stability amid antagonism (Arnason 1997b: 374). As discussed above, both Romanticism and nationalism seem to capture orientations towards the restoration of a previous unity that has been eroded, whereas the Enlightenment subsidiary of revolution is geared towards overcoming the antagonisms of the present in anticipation of a better future. Both these aspects are discernible in the Japanese and Soviet modernities discussed in the following chapter. Nonetheless, the crisis of meaning that Arnason depicts also implies that established cultural identities remain operative in some way while coming to terms with modernity amidst contact with other worlds. He also suggests that plural civilisations existed as discernible patterns before modernity emerged. It remains to be seen how Arnason relates the idea of civilisation to modernity without overemphasising continuity and slipping into some relativist form of the dominant image of society.

3.3 Arnason on Civilisations: the Broader Horizons of Human Diversity

Up to now there has been little mention of civilisations in Arnason's thought. All that can be ascertained so far is that, for Arnason, civilisations are more encompassing than societies and states. From the brief statements cited which mention civilisation in section 3.1 it seems likely that, in Arnason's view, civilisations are broader cultural meanings and traditions which gain expression within clusters of societies or states. In this section, I will discuss Arnason's concept of civilisations and the related conceptual elaborations which provide avenues for considering intercivilisational encounters and civilisational legacies in relation to modernity.

Arnason's most concise definition of civilisation in found in 'The Cultural Turn and the Civilisational Approach' (2010). Here his approach to civilisational analysis is focused on 'different cultural articulations of the world, as well as on the large-scale and long-term social-historical formations crystallising around such articulations'—otherwise considered as civilisations (Arnason 2010: 67). But while the notion of civilisations is more refined in Arnason's thinking after the turn of the twenty-first century, there is a range of considerations which emerge during his earlier writings which indicate that civilisations have some bearing on modernity in terms of broader cultural affinities across groups of societies, civilising processes, state-formation, civilisational

legacies and intercivilisational encounters. Even in this earlier period of writing, Arnason's use of the term civilisation is primarily in the plural ethnological sense that is similarly employed by Eisenstadt. Even if the normative sense of civilisation could be smuggled back in to refer to the different cultural interpretations of the civilised and barbarous, the broader ethnological sense of civilisations would still be an operative precondition. Consequently, it is more appropriate to discuss Arnason's employment of the term civilisations in the ethnological sense first and foremost. His two main comparative works on Soviet and Japanese modernities also straddle this earlier period of more fragmented reflections on civilisations. Since the next chapter will deal with those books, it seems appropriate also to discuss ideas that develop in parallel.

'Social Theory and the Concept of Civilisation' (1988) is Arnason's earliest English publication dealing with the concept of civilisation at length. Here he distinguishes between plural and singular understandings of the term, suggesting that a plural notion is discernible in social and historical literature due to the tendency to distinguish Western civilisation from non-Western ones whereby larger 'socio-cultural complexes…encompass smaller units of states or societies' (Arnason 1988: 87). In contrast, a singular notion of civilisation is implied in the rise, progress and pending collapse of civilisation, which generally refers to a universal process of world history and/or humanity as a species (Arnason 1988: 87-88).

It is primarily the plural notion of civilisation that Arnason is interested in, and he finds support for this idea in the later thought of Emile Durkheim and his nephew Marcel Mauss (1872-1950). Arnason suggests that in Durkheim and Mauss's 'Note on the Notion of Civilisation' (1913 [1971]), the notion of plural civilisations relates to phenomena that are not completely contained within a clearly defined social boundary but extend beyond national territories, beyond the history of a particular society, and may also encompass numerous societies in a broader 'moral milieu' (Arnason 1988: 89). Moreover, civilisations imply 'a common fund of ideas and institutions' which extend across groups of societies (Durkheim and Mauss 1971: 810; see also Nelson 1981: 83-84).

Arnason sees Mauss's 'Civilisation: Elements and Forms' (1968 [1929]) as further outlinings the compositional aspects of a civilisation ranging from 'techniques to myths, from money to models of political organisation and images of salvation' and these patterns to a varied extent are 'capable of travelling' (Arnason 1988: 90). They can achieve some degree of regional diffusion in which a 'family of societies' with similar patterns is discernible (Arnason 1988: 90).[40] However, Mauss also suggests that some societies can develop 'the ability to resist alien influences and

[40] This was originally a symposium paper presented by Mauss in Paris in 1929. It was published in 1968 in the book *Oeuvres*, but as far as I can tell, has not been translated from French to English. This statement is based on Arnason's translation.

survive the separation from other societies belonging to the same civilisation' (Arnason 1988: 90). Mauss calls more emphatic patterns in that direction 'singularisation': when a society attempts to singularise itself as unique against a broader civilisational background (Arnason 1988: 90).

Arnason points out that during the early twentieth-century inter-war years, Mauss was acutely aware that there were volatile potentials for the notion of nation to be elevated above humanity in ways that could 'transform the common fund of civilisational elements into instruments of particularistic violence' (Arnason 1988: 91). For Arnason, Mauss's insights point to a plural notion of civilisations, involving possibilities for the transmission of ideas but also the potential for hostilities and selective appeals to civilisational backgrounds, particularly in narratives of nationalist exceptionalism. Ultimately, Arnason highlights that Mauss raises three considerations that an analysis of a civilisation must deal with: the form of unification, the area of diffusion, and the links between societies encompassed by it (Arnason 1988: 90).

Another theory of civilisational unification and diffusion which influenced Arnason is that of Norbert Elias (1897-1990) in *The Civilising Process* (1978, 1982 [1939]) vol. 1 and 2. There, Elias presents an account of the civilising process and state-formation as it spiralled through Western Europe and beyond, offering a longer-term genealogy of Western European modernity. In Elias's reconstruction, these processes underwrite the rise and decline of feudal lords through an emergent nexus of interdependence between the urban courts of nobles, clerics, artisans, merchants and absolute monarchs in the Middle Ages, but also the gradual disintegration of courtly-absolutist rule in England, France and Germany from the seventeenth through to the nineteenth centuries amidst the rise of professionalism and nationalised monopolies of taxation and violence within particular territories (states) (Elias 1982: 96-104, 116-121, 160, 180, 7, 316).

Arnason discusses the merits and shortcomings of Elias's theory in 'Civilisations, Culture and Power: Reflections on Norbert Elias' Genealogy of the West' (1989d). For Arnason, Elias's two parallel long-term processes, state-formation and the civilising process, provide an insight into the shifting distributions of power.[41] Over the course of centuries from the Middle Ages onwards, the

[41] Elias highlights that as state-formation gains traction it forces a compromise between competing groups which in turn, elevates 'a special power and authority' within particular territories (Elias 1982; 166-170). State-formation marks a trend towards territorial units of social integration largely consolidated around monopolies of taxation and violence (Elias 1982: 104-105). The civilising process develops through subtle varieties of socially related fears that set in once the natural environment has already been sufficiently controlled and pacified (Elias 1982: 293-294). It is marked by an increased sensitivity to 'shame, repugnance and embarrassment' (Elias 1982: 292). Such increased sensitivities incentivise more instances of self-regulation related to the fear of losing the respect and esteem from others, or making others feel uncomfortable by transgressing social expectations (Elias 1982: 292-293). The expansion of polished social conduct and sophisticated tastes become a means of preserving social status and they achieve further elaboration to stave off the ascendance of lower status groups (Elias 1982: 300-304).

civilising process integrates the upper classes into the division of labour, but also gives more political autonomy to the lower classes, enabling an occupational middle class to emerge and making possible their upward mobility into positions of political leadership, in contrast to the slave economies of ancient Rome (Arnason 1989d: 53)[42]. The expanding nexus of mutual interdependencies parallels state-formation: the centralisation of violence and the reduction of explicit violence in wider arenas of social life (Arnason 1989d: 48-49). For Arnason, Elias casts the emergence of both the absolutist state and capitalist economy in mutually reinforcing terms, whereby the growth in taxable incomes props up state military service (Arnason 1989d: 61).

However, there are aspects of Elias's theory which Arnason find less attractive because too uniformly process-driven. Arnason contends that Elias obscures the specificities of historical creativity because in the long-term the industrial and democratic revolutions are cast as 'surface manifestations of an underlying and unbroken trend'—increasing interdependencies by which private monopolies over power and resources become increasingly publicly accessible (Arnason 1989d: 60-62). While Arnason acknowledges that Elias has a partially useful lens for the analysis of changing balances of power between groups within state-formation, he argues that 'cultural interpretations of power' appear as more epiphenomenal aspects of social life in contrast to an underlying 'network of controls and constraints,' (Arnason 1989d: 48-49, 60, 64). Instead, Arnason argues that ambivalent features of power are still subject to interpretation to define the meanings of 'constraint and control as well as the relations between them,' (Arnason 1989d: 51). Neglecting interpretive conflicts around the terms of power erases differences between notions of sovereignty.[43]

According to Arnason, the characterisation of power as a system of impersonal processes of constraint and control also leads Elias to overemphasise broader integrative aspects between states in the long-term and to pay less attention to 'specific characteristics of nation-states and their interrelations' (Arnason 1989d: 64-65). This is not entirely accurate. To be fair, Elias does discuss differences in 'national character' between English, American, German, and French contexts as particular patterns of interpenetration between civilised manners from the upper-classes above and moral demands in terms of greater equality from lower-classes below (Elias 1982: 309-311). Yet,

[42] Elias suggests that the use of slave labour in Ancient Rome leads to a scenario where both upper and middle classes were disinclined to engage in production labour and more inclined to engage in either supervision of slave labour, military defence and replenishment of slave reservoirs by force (Elias 1982: 52-57). By contrast, the spread of urban populations through the continental interior of Western Europe during the eleventh and twelfth centuries gave rise to trade networks increasingly based on free labour.

[43] Arnason argues fourteenth century Europe exhibits two dominant images of power, one based on a fusion of Christian and secular interpretations of the 'divine right of kings', the other more 'civic' re-interpretation of Roman law posits 'the state as an omnipotent yet impersonal power'. Both interpretations on his view fuse together different aspects of the traditional and the modern and are neglected by Elias's characterisation of power (Arnason 1989d: 64-65).

for Arnason, Elias's view the idea of nation is ultimately functionalist because it is cast as 'a form of social integration and communication that corresponds to the needs of a modern, i.e. highly differentiated, mobilised and secularised society' (Arnason 1989d: 65).[44] Consequently, Arnason argues that Elias's approach is unable to account for cultural interpretations of power, and that this blurs the 'contrast between democratic and totalitarian transformations of the relationship between power and society (Arnason 1989d: 69).[45] Rather, notions of nation and its emergent nationalist currents are better understood as a 'new type(s) of collective identity [with] ... political implications' (Arnason 1989d: 65). Here, Arnason implies that different forms of national self-thematisation in terms of particular political projects may not necessarily be conducive to expedient integration within a broader Western state-system. For Arnason, the links between a cluster of societies cannot be characterised primarily in terms of mutually impinging interdependencies.

There is another aspect which Arnason sees as absent from Elias's account. Arnason suggests that 'intercivilisational contacts' in terms of 'cultural borrowing' and 'more autonomous initiatives stimulated by contact' would provide some insight into the consequences of 'intensified contacts between cultures' in terms of the mutually constitutive aspects of state-formation (Arnason 1989d: 68). Admittedly, Elias does make marginal concessions to cultural context and creativity in ways which Arnason does not cite. Elias indicates that the Western style of conduct does not necessarily achieve wholesale replication elsewhere; rather, a commingling of civilising processes occurs according to the 'history and structure' of particular regions, giving rise to 'new varieties of civilised conduct,' (Elias 1982: 255). Yet elsewhere he claims that 'Western people, under pressure of their own competitive struggle, bring about in large areas of the world a change in human relationships and functions in line with their own standards' (Elias 1982: 255).

A tension emerges in Elias's thought. On the one hand, his account suggests the universal diffusion of Western European civilising processes and statist integration. On the other hand, there is a marginal concession—missed even by Arnason, who looks for this type of discrepancy—to the creative reappropriation of civilising and state-formation characteristics by non-Western partners in interaction, which is not reducible to the wholesale export of European institutions. But this also raises a more fundamental question about how much human interpretations feed back into structural patterns of civilising and state-formation processes. If state-formation and civilising processes are

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[44] Elias (1982:318) does acknowledge that the civilising and integrative interdependencies within European states is more comprehensive than between them. However, he does claim there are incentives for broader integration and ambivalent civility due to increasingly entangled production and monetary interests.

[45] Arnason (1982: 69) highlights that Elias reduces the development of law to a transition from explicit violence to abstract general law applicable equally to all within a given territory.

largely epiphenomenal, it is unlikely that they can be linked with Western self-thematisations of civilised conduct. They would operate as autonomous and impersonal processes independent of the meanings and values through which actors understand their own activities. We would only need to appeal to notions of population growth, population density and flow of peoples from one space to another to predict that more complex socially integrative neutralisations of inter-human conflicts should occur when human proximities and differentiations of activities are intensified.

Despite Arnason's critique of the neglect of culture in Elias's civilising process, he acknowledges that Elias's focus upon long-term shifting balances between populations and power centres, state and society, provides a useful lens for exploring different meaning complexes. Moreover, such a schematic is a plausible starting point to explore the interpretations of power and interpretive conflicts that shape social-historical self-thematisations within trajectories of state-formation. Like Elias, he accepts that there are broader processes which form influential patterns beyond the intentions of the actors themselves. However, he does not want to sever the connection between meaning and power in favour of power based upon mutual interdependencies and constraints. It seems that he still wants to retain the idea that interpretations account for some qualitative aspect of general patterns of power and the direction of their development and contestation. Furthermore, he wants to suggest that the replication of such patterns meets its limits when it confronts different instituted patterns amid intensified contacts between people from different civilisational backgrounds.

The claim that intercivilisational encounters are important presupposes civilisational diversity. Up until now we have only really touched on that possibility via Arnason's theoretical abstractions on culture. What evidence is there for such diversity in historical terms, beyond the proposition that they crystallise around different cultural articulations of the world? Arnason follows Eisenstadt in this regard and suggests that the Axial breakthroughs 'in the Greek, Judaic, Iranian, Indian and Chinese worlds … between the eighth and fourth centuries BC' do appear to exhibit transformations across societies which gave rise to distinct traditions amid limited intercivilisational encounters (Arnason 1997b: 62-62). As mentioned in Chapter 1, Eisenstadt describes these instances as the development of diverse human conceptions and institutions for overcoming the 'tension between the transcendental and mundane orders' by groups of 'cultural and political elites which unite around new models of order' (Arnason 1997b: 62). Eisenstadt also allows for heterodox secondary breakthroughs, such as the differentiation of Christianity and Islam from Judaism (Arnason 1997b: 65).

While Arnason generally agrees that the Axial breakthrough of the last millennium BC

provides historical examples for consideration of civilisational diversity, he is less inclined than Eisenstadt to employ it as historical point in time from which to construct a narrative of human tendencies towards more emphatic and elaborate forms of order (Arnason 1997b: 66, 70; 1992: 262). For Arnason, this is too close to implying that modernity, or modernities, are merely more elaborate attempts to overcome the tension between the transcendental and the mundane (Arnason 1992: 262). The 'transcendental order is conceptualised with greater precision and articulated into specific spheres' and can lend itself to a theory of 'functional differentiation [of] evolution and rationalisation' (Arnason 1992: 262-264).

Instead, Arnason argues that the notions of 'the transcendence, tension and order' are potentially so diverse that to imply general similarity in historical direction without giving countertrends and variations their due raises the suspicion that the 'relationship between unity and diversity is … conceptually prejudged' (Arnason 1997: 66-71). While Arnason's engagement with Eisenstadt's formulation of the Axial age is more sustained in *Civilisations in Dispute*, the general thrust of his argument retains the suspicion that Eisenstadt posits a 'uniform and unilateral impact of new cultural premises on the forms of social life' (Arnason 2003: 164-177). As Smith puts it, Arnason is not preoccupied with reconciling the field of historical research on the Axial age with the notion of multiple modernities (Smith 2017: 42-43). The Axial age and modernity can be treated as separate problematics without having to overplay the long-term impacts of one upon the other, and this allows for the contingent and emergent aspects of human interaction which form histories (Smith 2017: 43). However, Arnason does want to leave the door open for the possibility that civilisational legacies still provide interpretive reference points. As we shall see later, he provides a scheme for this which can be understood as a civilisational reinterpretation of Castoriadis's social-historical approach.

There is another avenue by which Arnason sees that streamlined histories and links to modernity can be disrupted, and this is—as briefly touched on with respect to Elias—intercivilisational encounters. Admittedly, Arnason's earlier reflections on intercivilisational encounters before the turn of the twenty-first century are more fragmentary, but they are still on his radar as an important background to modernity. In *Social Theory and the Japanese Experience,* Arnason suggests that Benjamin Nelsons's notion of intercivilisational encounters provides a concept by which to avoid treating societies from different civilisational backgrounds as 'closed and separate worlds' (Arnason 1997b: 53). However, there are subtle differences between the respective approaches of Nelson and Arnason. Nelson's outline of civilisations and intercivilisational encounters is set out in his text, *On the Roads to Modernity* (1981). Like Arnason, Nelson accepts Durkheim and Mauss's definition that the term civilisations refers to 'the cultural heritages that

constitute the accepted milieus of 2 + n societies, territories or areas which generally enjoy or have enjoyed a certain proximity' (Nelson 1981: 83-84).

As for the concept of intercivilisational encounters, Nelson suggests that they bring into focus the possibility of mapping transformations in human structures of consciousness that result from 'inter-cultural ... and international relations' (Nelson 1981: 84-85). He divides human structures of consciousness into three main types: 'sacro-magical, faith-based and rational structures of consciousness' (Nelson 1981: 92-96). The three structures of consciousness encompass different forms of 'cultural world-views, logics, images of experience, self, time, the beginning and the end (and) the extraterrestrial powers' (Nelson 1981: 84). On his view, intercivilisational encounters can open up shifts from one structure of consciousness to another (Nelson 1981: 213). The more that such structures of consciousness move towards a rational structure, the wider the scope for 'the universalities of discourse and participation in the confirmation of improved rationales' (Nelson 1981: 99).

On the surface, such a statement about rational consensus has echoes of Habermas. However, Nelson is not implying an evolutionary sequence or irreversible development of human structures of consciousness (Nelson 1981: 92). He allows not only for differentiations between the three structures but also degrees of severity within them, and even the possibility that aspects of sacro-magical structures of conscious may persist within modernity (Nelson 1981: 92, 97). Furthermore, in language not entirely foreign to Arnason, Nelson claims that societies cannot exist without 'creating cultural ontologies and mappings of their historically situated lifeworlds' (Nelson 1981: 231).

Despite Nelson's emphasis on situated cultural creation, Arnason claims that Nelson does not outline the 'underlying and unifying features' that enable generalisation about 'cultural structures of consciousness' (Arnason 1997a: 53). Arnason does not explain this criticism adequately in his analysis of Japan. We are left to assume that he is more satisfied with imaginary and interpretive articulations of the world as a prerequisite for cultural meanings. It is not until *Civilisations in Dispute* (2003), that Arnason engages with Nelson in a more sustained manner to distinguish how he understands his own approach to civilisations and intercivilisational encounters.

He does this in two general ways. First, Arnason sees Nelson's approach as having a 'more exclusive focus on cultural traditions and … institutionalised ideologies,' and less emphasis on how 'economic and political factors' intersect with intercivilisational encounters (Arnason 2003: 288-289). Second, he indicates that there is a dimension within Nelson's analysis of intercivilisational encounters that remains implicit but is no less important. Arnason refers to this as the degree to

which ‘visions of closure and efforts to achieve it’ emerge within ‘the exposure to other forms of socio-cultural life’ (Arnason 2003: 288). In this way he speaks to the issue of being less receptive to unfamiliar and foreign cultural interpretations and articulations, and it is not a stretch to consider that Arnason’s approach is more geared towards the political and economic implications of encounters that impinge on opening and closure to unfamiliar meanings.

Arnason also touches upon the notion of intercivilisational encounters briefly in ‘World Interpretation and Mutual Understanding’ (1992). In that article he claims that such encounters can animate ‘an intensified capacity for the problematisation of the world’ (Arnason 1992: 266). He indicates that a creative and reflective aspect suggests that intensified interactions can initiate the ‘articulation of perspectives and patterns of meaning that exceed current horizons of interaction’ (Arnason 1992: 249). Moreover, these patterns of meaning are not reducible to immediate communicative situations—for instance, references to past ancestors or future generations—for they rely upon an ‘interpretive excess’ (Arnason 1992: 249). On the one hand, he describes this interpretive excess as a view beyond in terms of a future-looking dynamic, which can ‘anticipate alternative forms of interaction’ (Arnason 1992: 249). Yet, on the other hand, he suggests that this can also stimulate the practical elaboration of ‘cultural premises’ (Arnason 1992: 249). Social units drawn into intensified interaction also get a brief mention. Arnason refers to encounters between Western European, Indic, Chinese, Islamic and Japanese civilisations from the early-modern period onward (Arnason 1992: 258, 266). He implies that these instances were constitutive of the Western self-understanding of modernity in terms of both ‘self-assertion’ and ‘self-relativisation’ (Arnason 1992: 258).

Wolfgang Knöbl and Jeremy Smith both claim that Arnason’s attempt to elaborate on intercivilisational considerations are important in so far as they tone down the ‘path-dependent’ view of civilisational trajectories (Knöbl 2011: 16; Smith 2017: 31). In principle, the term ‘path-dependency’ is just another way of stating Peter Wagner’s grievance—noted in Chapter 1—with the notion of civilisations and the implication that some original diversity is responsible for setting the scope of historical development and eventual crystallisation in a specific form of modernity. As we saw in section 3.1, Arnason detects an implicit path-dependent assumption in Weber’s work—logics related to attitudes towards the world remain operative in the long-term within the historical developments of Western Europe, India, and China.

Intercivilisational encounters unsettle notions of path-dependency. Such encounters suggest that ideas travel, that they are not locked within an initial context of origin but can give rise to developments beyond the intentions of those who transmit them and of those who reinterpret them.

The intercivilisational feature complements Arnason's ideas on interpretive conflicts and the possibility for creative and emergent characteristics as central to diverse cultural articulations of the world, as discussed in sections 3.1 and 3.2. The creative implications leave Arnason's perspective on modernity less open to the critique, raised by Gurminder Bhambra in Chapter 1, that when all is said and done, multiple-modernities thinkers imply that modernity is still stamped with Western European ownership. Indeed, in a later article, 'Understanding Intercivilisational Encounters' (2006), Arnason argues that even if Western Europeans were the forerunners of modernity who initiated a great transformation in the terms of human co-existence, they were neither in complete control of that transformation nor immune to its unintended consequences or to challenges from alternatives which emerged among non-Western societies (Arnason 2006: 51-52).

Despite the complementary aspects between intercivilisational encounters, interpretive conflicts, and creative/emergent characteristics that Arnason points to, for him this cannot be understood as total creation *ex nihilo* either. These dynamics must emerge in relation to the institutions that already exist whether in terms of affirmation, reform, or renunciation. Arnason claims that civilisational legacies also play a role in the varieties of modernity that emerge in terms of their institutional combinations, and this idea runs throughout his accounts of Japan and the Soviet model (Arnason 1993b: 14; 1997b: 399). He reiterates this claim some years later in rather emphatic terms. Civilisations do have 'specific legacies', an 'afterlife … with very real historical consequences … and there is every reason to assume that we will be living with them for a long time to come' (Arnason 2006: 52-53). However, as mentioned in Chapter 1, Wagner is sceptical as to how much relevance notions of civilisational continuity have for understanding modernity in the present. In fact, he argues that notions of links to original diversity might lead to uncritical relativist resignation implying incommensurable normative commitments (Wagner 2012: 33).

Aside from the normative problem, there is the issue of overplaying continuity and missing the unique features of emergent characteristics. As Gerard Delanty argues, 'the closer we get to the present the more difficult it becomes to account for change with recourse to civilisational logics. The most powerful influences on the present derive from the reflexive appropriation of new ideas and the development of normative and cognitive horizons opened up by modernity' (Delanty 2019: xlix). While this is a fair position to take, Arnason, as we have seen, does his best to side-step the implication of intact 'civilisational logics' through both an imaginary and interpretive casting of culture, but also through the possibility of intercivilisational encounters which can influence and alter cultural interpretations and articulations. Nonetheless, the question as to how civilisational legacies have an impact on modern self-understandings does not go away.

Arnason provides further considerations on three dimensions of otherness that imply interpretive reference points beyond immediate interactive contexts of the present. Here he goes some way to outlining a relationship between civilisational legacies, intercivilisational encounters, and modern self-undertandings. These interpretive reference points look to the past, to the future, and to others in the global arena (Arnason 1997a: 34-35). In a certain way, this general temporal-spatial scheme resembles Castoriadis's notion of the social-historical discussed in section 3.2, albeit in more contextual terms. Arnason argues that such temporal-spatial interpretive tendencies continue to influence the 'self-understanding and self-legitimation of Western modernity' (Arnason 1997a: 35).

For the first dimension of otherness, the past, Arnason draws upon Castoriadis' elucidation of a relational paradox that emerges with both seventeenth- and eighteenth-century distinctions between the ancients and the moderns (Arnason 1997a: 34). Moreover, the moderns understand themselves as progressing beyond the ancients with a potential for limitless progress, yet this understanding and the extent of progress itself retain a dependency on predecessors as ongoing points of reference (Arnason 1997a: 34). For Arnason, Western understandings of modernity invoke an interpretive reference to the past through an ongoing connection with ancient Greek precedents of radical democracy, classical aesthetics, and philosophy (Arnason 1997a: 34). As mentioned above in Chapter 1, Castoriadis sees ancient Greece as a momentous creation of the project of human autonomy with a brief reprise during the modern Western Enlightenment (Castoriadis 1991: 161-162).

Yet Arnason notes that the Greek heritage is not the only seminal reference point, suggesting the Roman world as an ongoing modern source of affiliation with relation to Roman law, the republic and imperialism (Arnason 1997a: 36). Arnason does not provide more detail on these in this article. We are left to hazard a plausible guess that he is referring to the way these Roman precedents become reference points for articulations of the world and interpretations of power. Roman law rests upon a distinction between persons, things, and combinations of permissible transactions, and it was further formalised by European jurisprudence (Pottage 2004: 4). Notions of the republic can refer to non-monarchical periods of Roman history, with both 509 and 31 BC as watershed moments in governmental legitimacy (Hankins 2010: 454). Notions of republic also invoke a mediation of executive power by the senate, an institutional feature which persists (Heller 2006: 263). Imperialism can relate to the notion that 'all ... are equal in their common subordination and dependency on the emperor' (Miles 1990: 637). However, it can also implicate the rise and fall of the Roman Empire, decadence, and decline (Turner 2006: 402).

The second dimension of otherness relates to visions of the future that differ from the present but are recognised as its 'legitimate and superior successor' (Arnason 1997a: 35). In its secular form, this anticipation of an improved future finds exemplary expression in Enlightenment and eighteenth-century discourse 'about civilisation and progress' (Arnason 1997a: 37). Arnason notes that in its most optimistic prophecies—with reference to the French Enlightenment figure, the Marquis de Condorcet—the overcoming of death through the 'progress of the human mind' becomes part of the long-term vision (Arnason 1997a: 37). Along with this—as discussed above—Arnason sees an affinity between revolutionary tradition and the Enlightenment in their anticipation that an improved human future is made possible by human intervention in the world.

Arnason seems to be implying that, for Western modernity, anticipations of an improved future are still primarily understood in relation to specific pasts, achievements and human interpretations of power, no matter how loosely or incompletely appreciated. When present deficits in democratic participation are lamented, reference to the ancient Greek counter-example are never too far away, but neither are rebuttals to overly Romantic views by highlighting the Greek status of women and slaves. Roman episodes also serve as reference points, whether in terms of the importance of government mediation or the long-term perils of both imperialism and fusions of religion and rulership. This is not to say that these are the most 'powerful influences on the present', but their complex legacies still have some relevance for how modernity and progress are understood. Even in emphatic renunciations of these traditions, we see rejections of particular historical others and not just of any other.

The third of Arnason's dimensions of otherness relates to intercivilisational encounters between peoples of Western Europe, Asia and the Americas (Arnason 1997a: 38-39). He claims that while Islam had been understood in Western Europe as a variant of monotheism that is incommensurable with Christianity, and as the only other 'major non-Christian civilisation' during the Crusades, the threat Islam posed was downgraded in the West by the close of the seventeenth century (Arnason 1997a: 39). While Islam was a more familiar other due to proximity, the encounters with India and China evoked a more 'constitutive and challenging other' (Arnason 1997a: 39). All three encounters were central to the development of the Western self-understanding. However, China became an interpretive reference point for the Enlightenment, whereas India was more significant for Romanticism (Arnason 1997a: 39).

Again, Arnason does not provide further detail on these points on intercivilisational links to the Enlightenment and Romanticism. A likely connection to China is the receptivity to Confucian ideas and the acknowledgement of Chinese institutional stability by European intellectuals during

the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (Israel 2006a: 640-662). China appeared to exhibit order through 'philosophical insight based on reason … the practical ordering of human life and politics on earth' (Israel 2006a: 641). Granted, Jesuit missionary translations attempted to prove an implicit theism within Confucian ideas to preserve the notion that human order and morality require theology, yet the encounter with China exacerbated a conflict of interpretations between European theists and those of atheistic persuasion looking for this-worldly alternatives (Davis 1990: 524, 533; Israel 2006a: 643-651). For German and French Romanticism, the inputs may have in part have emerged through travel literature and attempts to translate the Indic Sanskrit texts (Latronche 2001: 478-479). The encounter with India was interpreted by the Romantics, however, as presenting the possibility of an authentic spiritual renewal for Europe and India. This became a reference point for reconciliation with what appeared to be a more enduring civilisational legacy, which offered a holistic merger between spirit and nature and provided a counterpoint to the dualism inherited from ancient Greece and Rome (Latronche 2001: 478-479, 484-489).

Arnason suggests that the Spanish encounter with the indigenous societies of the Americas, while devastating for those populations, set in motion a long-term exploratory and self-relativising current in Western thought, culminating in twentieth-century anthropology (Arnason 1997a: 38). He claims that this opened the insight that non-Western European societies could be understood as civilisations in their own right, with distinct institutions. As Thomassen notes, by the 1980s anthropology was also questioning itself as an enterprise, reflecting on its marriage to 'Western assumptions of self and other' (Thomassan 2010: 321-322). Arnason implies that such decentred self-understandings have historical precedents and began to form, irrespectively of how imperfectly articulated and still cloaked in Eurocentrism, through much earlier intercivilisational encounters.

Arnason also touches upon the intercivilisational encounters between the West and Japan across the sixteenth and into the early seventeenth centuries and then again in the mid-nineteenth century. He notes changes on both sides of the first encounter in which Christianity made more of an impact in Japan than anywhere else in Asia and some Europeans were willing to accept the 'equality or even superiority of Japanese civilisation' in relation to other 'new worlds of early-modernity' (Arnason 1997a: 40). The Jesuits also described the Japanese as 'better natural Christians than Europeans—all they lacked was revelation' (Arnason 1997a: 41). However, this encounter and transmission of ideas was followed by the restriction of Japanese interaction with the West, instituted by Tokugawa rule for over two centuries (Arnason 1997a: 40). Despite this, Arnason claims that Japanese elites remained active observers of Western developments and emerged in the late nineteenth century as effective 'industrialisers, state-builders [and] imperialists' (Arnason 1997a: 40). He describes this as an 'initial Westernising turn … followed by a reactivation

of indigenous traditions' (Arnason 1997a: 42). Along with Japan, he also sees Maoist China, Islamic fundamentalism and even the Soviet Union as, in part, contextual responses to previous Westernising influences (Arnason 1997a: 42).

In outlining the othernesses of modernity, Arnason focuses mainly upon interpretations of the past, future and more, or less familiar civilisational others, which have potentially fed into the self-understandings of Western modernity. Nevertheless, he implies that constitutive references to past, future and civilisational others have not only been operative in the Western variant but are also at work amongst different peoples. By implication, civilisational legacies and intercivilisational encounters have served to shape the features not only of Western modernity in terms of its interpretations of power, but also of alternative modernities.

Conclusion

In the current chapter I have covered three rather large and unwieldy concepts as they emerge in Arnason's thought: culture, modernity and civilisation. The general claims discernible in Arnason's theoretical texts can be summarised as follows.

Culture is primarily an interpretive human relation to world which gives the world meaning and value over and above the physical properties of human environments. Not reducible to individual capacities and intentions, culture provides the trans-subjective patterns which make religious, political, economic, intellectual and aesthetic institutions of world order possible between people. Such institutional contexts are located at a point within an omnipresent global space and can achieve a degree of diffusion from local, to national, to civilisational levels. Occupying these interpretive horizons within a broader global horizon still implies limited vantage points on the world from a certain geographical and historical perspectives. This ensures that human interpretations and articulations of the world are never entirely immune to criticism, conflict and further elaboration.

Nonetheless considering the comprehensive scope of human interpretations of the world in comparison their limited physical access to it, cultural interpretations must have an imaginary basis. This imaginary capacity allows human interpretations of the past, future and others and animates the questioning and transformation of human institutions. There is no completely autonomous form of human instituting, everything that emerges takes shape in relation to what has existed before even if what emerges is not entirely determined by prior institutions. This frees Arnason from having to view history in instrumental terms and allows space for contingency, interaction and emergent characteristics.

Modernity is a field of tensions between different cultural interpretations of power. It emerges through Western imperial and capitalist expansion and responses to it. However, it is also a crisis of meaning because the comprehensive interpretations of the world from different parts of the globe no longer have the luxury of going unchallenged. These interpretive challenges open up the potential for diverse societies—at least those not destroyed by colonisation or subordinated to imperial rule—to seek alternative futures particularly amidst the geopolitical asymmetries of Western dominance. These can be understood as alternative modernities.

These futures give expressions to different interpretations of power along six discernible dimensions: imperialism, sovereignty, capitalism, revolution, democracy and nationalism. While this characterisation does not offer a comprehensive account of modernity per se, it does provide a cluster of concepts by which to analyse the lines of emphasis and directions of power that gain traction in macro-social units—primarily states and clusters of states. It is also a much more unsettling perspective on modernity than the optimistic internalist narrative provided by Honneth.

Civilisations can be considered as families of societies or states that move within the orbit of similar cultural articulations of the world. They emerge as long-term trends over time and between clusters of societies which exhibit similar patterns of monopolisation in terms of taxation and violence—state formation—and by implication similar interpretations of power. There are rather old examples of such patterns discernible in the Axial age, but the relationship of these episodes to modernity is separated by a vast distance of intercivilisational encounters, conflicts, schisms and emergent meanings and values, so that direct lines of continuity cannot be traced.

However, interpretive reference points in terms of civilisational legacies might still be discernible. The combination of civilisational legacies and intercivilisational encounters might also have implications for visions of the future, or rather self-understandings of modernity. Yet such self-understandings are not instituted solely according to discrete cultural preferences internal to civilisations, not even within the Western nexus. Arnason implies that, amidst Western Europe expansion, intercivilisational encounters have also played a role in different trajectories of state-formation and modernity. While civilisational legacies can operate as connections to a broader sense of identity and continuity with familiar historical milestones and cultural-political achievements, these aspects are not the last word on what emerges. Arnason implies that cultural interpretations and articulations of the world can travel and animate reinterpretations of cultural premises elsewhere.

Of course, to maintain this he still must imply that the meanings which gain traction beyond an original region of institutional inception have something to offer their recipients, otherwise they

are merely forms of imperial imposition. On the other hand, if he overplays a transmission from the Western constellation to those beyond as a wholesale improvement for the recipients, that would seem to imply a form of Western self-congratulation. This is the kind of implication which Arnason has been reluctant to identify with, and of which he has at times been critical. Luckily for Arnason, his two main works on variations of modernity deal with the Russian/Soviet and the Japanese cases, neither of which experienced significant Western colonial occupation. I turn to these next.

CHAPTER 4: THE SOVIET MODEL AND JAPAN: ALTERNATIVE MODERNITIES?

Introduction

In this chapter I pursue Arnason's notion of alternative modernities by considering the two examples to which he devotes most attention. During the 1990s he produced two books, *The Future that Failed: Origins and Destinies of the Soviet Model* (1993) and *Social Theory and Japanese Experience* (1997) (cited below as *SM* and *JE* respectively). The first book outlines the passage from Imperial Russia to the Soviet Union and the second Japan's path from the *ritsuryo* state to the economic recovery following the Pacific War. As Arnason depicts them, neither of these cases is an instance of a straightforward modernising ascendancy due to internal innovations. The Soviet case deals primarily with the transmission and transformation of a revolutionary counter-ideology, and the Japanese case exhibits a pivot from the selective borrowing and reinterpretation of Chinese notions of power towards those of Western European states. Each of these two cases is characterised by cultural interpretations of power in which there emerge visions of surpassing Western capitalism altogether or beating the Western European states at their own game of imperial expansion. Consequently, the Japanese and Soviet cases are described by Arnason as responsive counter-modernities, or alternative modernities, not merely different, as the term 'multiple modernities' would otherwise imply.

Nonetheless, thinking through Arnason's accounts of both cases in tandem with his theoretical ideas discussed in chapter 3, two questions emerge that are central to the current chapter. First, in what primary respects do the Soviet and Japanese cases present alternatives to Western modernity? As discussed in Chapter 3, Arnason discusses modernity as a field of tensions in terms of two broad socially encompassing horizons of meaning: rational mastery and autonomy. This framework can be further analysed into six elements of modernity: imperialism, sovereignty, capitalism, revolution, democracy, and nationalism. While these elements can be understood as cultural interpretations of power, they also imply distinct dimensions within which people interpret their place in the world in relation to others. Arnason suggests that there are expressions of these elements in Western modernity. However, it must also be the case that the otherness of alternative modernities is discernible along the lines of these six elements if these cultural interpretations of power are, as he claims, the central conflicts of modernity. Following a reconstruction of Arnason's portrayal of the six elements in both contexts, I will argue that the primary otherness of both the Soviet and

Japanese instances is that they move within the orbit of sovereign authority in ways less conducive to democratised notions of popular sovereignty than the Western states.

Second, why did these alternative modernities emerge? As also discussed in Chapter 3, Arnason claims that Western modernity is brought about by a reassessment of relations to the past, the future and civilisational others. Progress is understood in terms of distance from and improvement upon the ancients and other predecessors. The future is anticipated as a more legitimate successor to the present, and intercivilisational encounters prompt a reassessment of the centrality of familiar institutional forms in relation to different ways of life. While Arnason's theoretical reflections on the othernesses of modernity emphasise the Western experience, in *SM* and *JE* he also implies that such interpretive dynamics were operative in non-Western contexts too. I will argue that the alternative Soviet and Japanese modernities were formed by something like struggles for recognition at a broader geopolitical level. Moreover, the reinterpretations of civilisational legacies in combination with modern elements were in part struggles to be recognised as projects of modernity with their own unique identities and destinies in contrast with the Western states and China.

To pursue these lines of argument the current chapter will take the following steps. Section 4.1 will outline Arnason's perspective on the general institutional configuration of Western modernity as it crystallised in the twentieth century along with some prior historical milestones he sees as crucial. This general account will be followed by an analysis of the six elements of Western modernity. In sections 4.2 and 4.3, I will use the six elements of the Western narrative to show how Arnason distinguishes the Soviet and Japanese cases respectively and why it is that they emerged. In section 4.4 I will narrow down the general thrust of their respective alternative pedigrees and discuss the primary implications of alternative modernities in Arnason's account. This will set the scene for a critical comparison between Arnason and Honneth and their rival conceptions of modernity in chapter 5.

4.1 Six Elements of Western Modernity

If the Soviet Union and Japan are alternative modernities, the obvious question is: alternative to what? Here we need briefly to recall Arnason's view of the conventional narrative of Western modernity. Before setting out my six-part analysis, it may be helpful to review Aranson's general picture.

In *JE*, Arnason paints the 'build-up phase' of Western modernity in broad strokes (*JE*: 263). He suggests that the sixteenth century marks the transition to the early-modern period, whereby

Western European maritime expansion became more consistent and successful and further extended the reach of commerce (*JE*: 262).[46] Yet far from an integrated Western Europe, the region also experienced a schism in Christianity (the Reformation and counter-Reformation) in which competing churches diminished the legitimacy of religious authority and enabled conditions in which new monarchies could benefit from secular openings in political power (*JE*: 262-264). In turn, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were gradually shaped by the expansion of economic opportunity and shifts in Christianity, paving the way for the absolutist state, cultural articulations of capitalism, the Enlightenment, the responses of Romanticism and re-interpretations of Ancient Greek democracy (*JE*: 9, 262-263, 374). On the one hand there emerge ever more adaptive modes of accumulating social wealth and power, yet on the other there is an ongoing contestation of cultural meanings around terms of wealth and power and their societal manifestation (*JE*: 261-262). As a result, the general acceptance of debate and conflict within limits becomes a part of Western political and economic life and animates a recurrent assessment of the relations between state and society.

In *SM*, Arnason provides a brief elaboration of the institutional framework that supports this conflictual predisposition. The general institutional framework of Western modernity is liberal capitalist democracy (*SM*: 16). This entails the following: capitalist advancement and the adaption of market principles to new forms of social organisation while allowing institutional counterweights to economic rationality that regulate social conflict; institutions democratic enough to limit state overreach into society, yet stable enough to minimise widespread forms of political radicalisation and violent upheaval; a sense of pluralism which allows a variety of subcultures, world-views, and ideological positions, but without being a major threat to the central institutions (*SM*: 16). The durability of Western modernity, as he sees it, results from its being malleable enough to accommodate fluctuating lines of interpretive conflicts in terms of culture, politics, and the economy without settling them once and for all (*SM*: 16).[47] He admits that liberal-democratic capitalist combinations have developed within parameters of nation-states and that there are possibilities for future challenges due to intensified global interdependencies, emergent nation-states and/or the resurgence of ethnocentric visions (*SM*: 16). This cautious outlook prevents him

[46] The first Spanish colonies are established in South America, the Portuguese reach Indonesia and Japan, the French and British reach Canada (Stearns et al, 2007: 460-465).

[47] Here the Weberian schematic of economic, political, religious, aesthetic/erotic and intellectual world-orders is abbreviated as culture, politics and the economy. However, we can assume that given Arnason's perspective as presented in chapter 3, culture operates as the primary category as in cultural articulations of the world, whereas politics and the economy are preconditioned by the former and while they feed-back into the reproduction of culture they are never completely steer it. Arnason goes onto develop his tripartite schematic as meaning, power and wealth in *Civilisations in Dispute* (2003).

from seeing Western modernity as an irreversible progress moving towards a point of maturation or 'the end of history' (*SM*: 16). Consistent with Arnason's reservations about the dominant image of society, the open-ended implications of his definition lead him to suggest that the Western variant is better understood as a constellation than as a system (*SM*: 16). Arnason left the question open as to whether there could be flare ups of nationalism and authoritarianism in Western modernity, but he does imply that in the late twentieth century such orientations had become less palatable.

Beyond these condensed summaries, throughout *SM* and *JE* Arnason makes additional statements about the Western constellation in which the six elements of imperialism, sovereignty, capitalism, revolution, democracy and nationalism are discernible. In the remainder of this section, I will present these six elements as points for comparison with the Soviet and Japanese cases in sections 4.2 and 4.3 respectively.

The first element is imperialism. Arnason's description of the relationship between Western modernity and imperialism is primarily based upon the the notion of Western European states being the forerunners of global 'expansion and the imposition of…hegemony' (*SM*: 2). Modern Western imperialism is characterised by 'the division of the world between the Western powers…and their self-destruction in two world wars' (*SM*: 21). Although Western imperialism has a longer legacy, it is indirect and fragmented. The imperial legacy stretches back to the Roman Empire, its subsequent collapse, and then partial preservation of imperial centre by the Catholic Church in terms of papal authority and the Catholic development of administrative techniques (*JE*: 187). That heritage sets the scene for rival interpretations of Christianity, emergent absolute states, and the secular repurposing of bureaucracy (*SM*: 21; 1997: 187).[48] While Arnason notes that Western expansion begins at the turn of the sixteenth century, he suggests that the heyday of Western imperialism lasted from the nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries, in which period 'imperial rivalry' and 'inter-state competition' were mutually reinforcing (*JE*: 482-483). Across both *SM* and *JE* what appears as unique to modern Western imperialism was that it was a partially unintended consequence of an expanding world market which led to a more active period of economic intrusion and colonisation amidst empire-building rival states (*SM*: 12, 166; 1997: 485-487). Along with these intrusive activities 'non-Western civilisations' were placed under 'pressure to adopt models and arrangements that … most effectively contributed to Western hegemony' (*SM*: 14). Referring to modern Western imperialism as an inaugural intrusive global force provides Arnason with the opportunity to consider what responses emerged in relation to it.

[48] Arnason acknowledges that the interactions between the Ottoman, Habsburg and Russian empires with the European state system are also a part of this picture. However, he offers little more than a passing comment (*SM*: 21).

The second element of Western modernity is sovereignty. What Arnason points to in the above description is the changing role and distribution of power over time, whereby the centrality of religious authority is downgraded in favour of monarchical authority, which is then superseded by parliamentary authority (*SM*: 35). This recalls Elias's notions of state-formation and civilising process discussed in Chapter 3. Monopolies of taxation and violence centralise within territories and pacify populations, but these monopolies are transformed in the long-term by differentiations in the division of labour amidst commercialised competition, which ultimately enhances the dependency of rulers upon the ruled (*SM*: 34). The 'socialisation of the monopoly position' occurs through emergent demands for the accountability of executive power within the relationship between societies and state monopolies (*SM*: 34; *JE*: 183). The crystallisation of representative institutions and expanded bureaucracies are a part of this trend (*SM*: 34-35; *JE*: 183).

Third, there is capitalism. The development of modern capitalism rests on the coalescence of trade networks into a world-market beyond the European state-system (*SM*: 12). This was initiated in part through sixteenth century Western expansion and then accelerated following the European industrial revolution in the eighteenth century (*JE*: 5-6). A central orientation that animates capitalism is the 'accumulation of … wealth' conducive to extending 'the logic of the market'—presumably supply and demand—into emergent domains of social life (*SM*: 8, 16, 99-100). However, due to his Weberian sympathies, Arnason sees the unmitigated reign of economic rationality as complicated by the fragmentation of capitalism, science, and bureaucracy (*JE*: 355).

The 'growth of technically applicable knowledge' within Western science certainly played a role in the development of industrial capitalism and state power (*JE*: 354). Yet in the Western context the pursuit of rational mastery morphed into a semi-independent and specialised sub-cultures of scientific knowledge production differentiated from the political and economic activities (*SM*: 124). An indispensable feature of these scientific endeavours was the 'institutionalisation of permanent critique and revision' which allows a degree of uncertainty and reflexive innovation (*SM*: 124). Likewise, the spheres of capitalism and bureaucracy 'adapt the rationality of control and calculation to their (own) particular principles' (*JE*: 355). Yet neither sphere gains the upper hand completely. Within the relationship between science, capitalism, and bureaucracy there is some scope for 'uncertainty' which is conducive to creativity and 'technological innovation' (*SM*: 103, 207). This also allows for a loose co-ordination between the state and the market, but also 'elaborations of economic individualism' (*JE*: 321, 461). As discussed in Chapter 3, Arnason is more receptive than Castoriadis to the idea that the Western disposition to capitalism can shift between paradigms of rational mastery and human autonomy.

The fourth component of Western modernity is revolution, a dynamic which marks a proclivity for protest. Indeed, Arnason claims that notions of revolution are 'complex of ideas and images grew out of the French Revolution of 1789 and its aftermath' (*SM*: 58). As also touched on in Chapter 3, the revolutionary orientation shares an affinity with the Castoriadis's notion of the project of autonomy. Revolutionary impetus envisions swift and comprehensive political transformation as the only path to 'progress, liberation and reconciliation' (*SM*: 58). Nonetheless, Arnason also highlights that revolutionary upheaval tends to result in the reconstruction of state power and in some instances partial reactivations of old regimes (*JE*: 413). However, he implies—at least in his claims about less apparent trends elsewhere—that within the Western constellation the reconfiguration of authority did tend in the direction of popular participation and democratic innovations in the terms of legitimacy (*JE*: 413). While he admits that this cannot be confused with an 'irreversible extension of democratic principles' a by-product of revolution in the long-term was a democratic trend (*JE*: 359).

The fifth element is democracy, a consequence of revolutionary upheaval in the Western constellation which 'modified the processes of state-formation in the West' (1993: 123). Arnason claims that the 'fundamental premise of democratic institutions is the idea of popular sovereignty' (*JE*: 469). In the course of history this can be understood as a 'radical redefinition of the relationship between power and society' (*JE*: 469). The general thrust of democracy also shares an affinity with the project of autonomy. Democratic redefinitions of power, contest the established monopolies of wealth and power maximisation (*JE*: 356-357). However, drawing on Alain Touraine, Arnason implies that democratisation develops in along particular lines to counter-balance revolutionary discontent. It requires both the 'self-limitation of political power … the codification of fundamental and inalienable rights' but also the 'representativeness of political order … (in terms of) social interests, identities and projects' (*JE*: 469-470). Such redefinitions get their formal expression in constitutions as 'meta-legal principles' which outline the broader scope of power and a limiting reference point for the day-to-day procedures of legality (*JE*: 470). Democracy implies the 'socio-cultural construction of limits and counterweights to state power' (*JE*: 447). Arnason notes that liberalism is a key feature of the Western pattern in which the development of capitalism and democracy are couched in terms of an emphasis on individual sovereignty (*JE*: 381-382). Individual sovereignty is interpreted in various ways, whether as the acquisition of knowledge, the exercise of moral responsibility, the pursuit of self-interest or individual autonomy (*JE*: 382). Liberalism also comes with its own tensions between its economic and political variants (*JE*: 382).

Sixth, the Western experience is marked by nationalism as the emphatic politicisation of state identity. The nation-state is an integrative social unit for combinations of capitalism, bureaucracy, legality, and democracy with a link to identities and notions of citizenship (*JE*: 358-359). Nonetheless, Arnason highlights that the global expansion of capitalist networks and the universal potentials of democratic shifts radiated beyond the confines of any one nation-state and the 'integrative logic' rans up against another 'source of diversity'—emergent nation-states (*JE*: 360). Arnason sees this as part of the catalyst for nationalist trends amongst the Western powers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries century (*JE*: 360). This turn involved more 'emphatic and exclusive' notions of national unity and the utilisation of capitalist innovations for national aims (*JE*: 360). He claims that the emergence of European fascism is the most extreme offshoot of this trend (*JE*: 360).

As discussed in Chapter 3, Arnason does not see Western modernity as wholly the expression of the internal developments of the European state system. Rather, he sees Western modernity as 'co-determined by its interaction with the world beyond its original domain' (*SM*: 12). According to Arnason, not only did the expansion of the world market and imperial activities amidst interstate competition bring 'different civilisational centres and complexes' into contact—intercivilisational encounters—but out of these interactions emerges the possibility of 'counterweights and alternatives to Westernisation' (*SM*: 13). The following sections 4.2 and 4.3 will discuss how notions of imperialism, sovereignty, capitalism, revolution, democracy, and nationalism figure in Arnason's reconstructions of Soviet and Japanese modernities and in which respects they appear as alternatives.

4.2 Soviet Modernity—Revolution from Above

In *SM,* Arnason primarily focuses upon the features of Soviet modernity, but he also sketches the civilisational background to it in broad strokes. He discusses a series of developments that loosely equate to the periods of Kievan Russia (late tenth century CE) Mongol-Muscovite period (1237-1682), early modern Petrine-Imperial Russia (1682-1917), and then the Soviet Model (1917-1991).[49]

While Russian history is part of that story, the Soviet model implies something that could be extended beyond Russia. Indeed, in the wake of WWII the Soviet Union acquired a wider sphere of influence in Eastern Europe—Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia,

[49] Historical periodisation is fraught with specialist disagreements about what events mark pivotal points in history. I have merely used it here to provide a general chronology, so we can get some idea of what moments in human time Arnason is referring to. For a more critical account of periodising Russian history, see Martin (2010) 'The Petrine Divide and the Periodisation of Early Modern Russian History'.

Romania, East Germany (*SM*: 120, 129-155). The appeal of Soviet-type regimes also gained traction in China, North Korea but also post-colonial regimes of the so-called 'Third-world' (*SM*: 94, 172, 121). The primary Soviet export, Marxism-Leninism, animated political transformations in Cuba and North Vietnam in the 1950s, South Yemen and the Congo in the 1960s and South Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Benin, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Angola, Afghanistan, Nicaragua and Grenada in the 1970s (Katz 1986: 329). For a time—particularly following Stalin's repulsion of Nazi Germany in WWII—the Soviet Union appeared as 'a global alternative to the West' (*SM*: 131). But what kind of alternative did it offer and why did it emerge?

Arnason implies that to understand the Soviet model—the origins of the alternatives it offered and its limitations—we must reach back into Russian history, looking at prior monopolies and institutions of power to grasp the successive instituting shifts or reanimations. This is not to say that Arnason constructs path-dependent trajectories based on an intact long-term logics per se. However, he does suggest that certain institutional experiences and events place constraints on interpretive possibilities (*SM*: 55). These can be understood as legacies which set interpretive precedents and plausible responses. Accordingly, I shall now outline how Arnason depicts the six dimensions of modernity enumerated in the previous section – imperialism, sovereignty, capitalism, revolution, democracy, and nationalism – with respect to Soviet modernity. I will use the term 'Soviet model' as a heuristic category in the course coming to an understanding of what Arnason implies by the term.

The first of the six elements to discuss is imperialism. Soviet imperialism was primarily different from Western imperialism in two respects, historical timing and purpose. In terms of timing, Arnason claims that the Soviets pursued the maximisation of military power and political influence beyond the ruling centre at a time when such strategies had resulted in a destructive turn for the Western European empires during WWII (*SM*: 21, 200). In comparison to two of the more belligerent Western imperial players—Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany—the Soviet model also proved more conducive to longer-term global expansion (*SM*: 93). Expansion took three main routes: first it occurred by the direct takeover and imposition of Soviet style regimes in Eastern Europe; second through indigenous Communist movements which aimed to topple existing state monopolies from within but with some Soviet support, a pattern more characteristic of East Asian contexts; and third as a political strategy amidst state monopolies looking to consolidate their power and modernise their societies by emulation of Soviet-type arrangements—the post-colonial states in Africa, Central and South America, Central Asia and the Asia Pacific referred to as 'the Third World'(*SM*: 134; 199). Nonetheless for reasons that will be discussed further on below, imperial overstretch was unsustainable in the long run.

In terms of purpose, Arnason sees Soviet expansionist impulses as the unintended consequences of anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist revolutionary aspirations constrained by the practicalities inherited by a Russian imperial legacy. The Russian empire had been characterised by attempts to bring large expanses of land under the dominion of autocratic tsars since the sixteenth century (*SM*: 38-39). From the Muscovite to the Petrine periods, both military and territorial expansion became mutually reinforcing along with the push for more co-ordination and control due to the task regulating and taxing diverse of peoples across an extensive land mass (*SM*: 36-37). For Arnason, the Petrine period marks an important historical milestone as a 'revolution from above' (*SM*: 52). Under Peter the Great there was a thorough extension of the role of government in society, with greater emphasis on both resource mobilisation and improved production methods for the benefit of the Russian state and its military (*SM*: 51). Through 'intercultural learning,' Russia benefitted from Western innovations in bureaucratic and military technologies, however it was also caught in a recurrent struggle to preserve and extend its own position amongst the Western European states (*SM*: 71). While Russian victory over Napoleonic advances in 1812 bestowed Russia with the international status of a 'great power', an industrial lag behind the British and French became evident in the mid-nineteenth century when Russian forces experienced defeat to these better tooled adversaries in the Crimean War (Lieven 2006: xxi; *SM*: 54, 76). Without further Modernisation Russia 'faced the threat of regression to a peripheral status' (*SM*: 76). Consequently, the autocratic tsarist regime attempted to introduce industrial capitalism in a stifled manner from above while also pursuing further expansionism and this brought Russia into successive conflicts with Japan and then Germany in the early twentieth century (*SM*: 71-73, 77-78).

Arnason claims that despite imperialist activity there was no unified Russian imperial ideology during the nineteenth century; instead, orientations ranged between Russian nationalist, Pan-Slavic and Western-centric variants (*SM*: 79). In the long run, Marxism-Leninism offered Russian counter-elites a way to rationalise imperial strategies by other means, but this was more so an unintended consequence of dealing with instituted patterns and less so a clear-cut strategy of continuity. The Bolshevik revolution was directed against both tsarist imperialism and its complicity with Western capitalism (*SM*: 65, 71). However, the unintended consequences of previous imperial gains and preoccupations had left the victorious Bolsheviks with a large under-developed multi-national and rural polity in the early 1920s (*SM*: 85-86). The rapid resource mobilisation strategies of Joseph Stalin reanimated 'the imperial legacy of revolution from above' along with a new round of territorial expansion to consolidate the emergent USSR, particularly amidst the spoils of WWII (*SM*: 86, 97, 129-130). Nonetheless the echoes of imperialism and its relationship to the Soviet model cannot be cast as wholesale consolidation.

The transmission of Marxism-Leninism in East Asia was mediated by other imperial aspirations. China was an obstacle to the imperial self-understanding of the Soviet Union as a universally applicable alternative modernity and ultimately an instance where foreign interpretations of power were mediated by a long-established civilisational legacy. A series of events in the nineteenth century—what Arnason describes as a 'civilisational collision' rather than 'encounter' with the Western states—set precedents for a Chinese search for political-economic alternatives in the twentieth century (*SM*: 166). These precedents included surrendering port access to Western states after 1840 in the wake of the Opium war and a successive moment of crisis amidst the Chinese re-appropriation of Western Christianity during the Taiping rebellion of 1850-1864, which undermined 'the self-image and the legitimacy of the imperial order' (the Qing Dynasty 1644-1911) (*SM*: 166-167). Amidst provincial militias and nationalist conflicts in the early twentieth century, Stalin's example of rapid development offered Chinese communists a solution for overcoming imperial disintegration and opening the road to progress and rapid Modernisation (*SM*: 168, 170). However, while the ferment of 'anti-Western nationalism' served to legitimise the victory of the CCP in 1949 into the early 1960s relations between the Soviet and Chinese became strained—the Sino-Soviet rift (*SM*: 121, 131, 195).[50] Mao Zedong's reinterpretations of Marxism-Leninism, dissatisfaction with the Soviet retreat from Stalinism under Khrushchev, appeals to China's own imperial legacy to galvanise domestic support and China's brief attempt to forge a rival communist bloc with Indonesia, complicated the Chinese integration into the Soviet Union (*SM*: 160, 170, 198, 213). Arnason claims China's imperial legacy was more robust and its civilisational pedigree much older than the that of the Soviet Union and in the long run it proved to be more adaptable (*SM*: 177-178). Whereas the overstretch of Soviet imperialism and a cohesive identity were unsustainable over the course of the twentieth century.

The second point of comparison between Soviet modernity and the West is sovereignty. There were fewer limitations to sovereignty of political leaders in the Soviet model in comparison to Western states. Soviet sovereignty was characterised by variations of totalitarian autocratic or oligarchic rule. Admittedly, Arnason suggests that Russian autocracy itself was a precursor to Soviet variants in part through a political culture which was less affected by traditions such as Roman law—presumably its republican variants albeit he does not elaborate—which had otherwise placed constraints on executive of power amidst Western absolutist states (*SM*: 39). As for other forms of traditional constraint such as religion, Arnason briefly implies that the ability of the Petrine state to intervene within religious matters between the 'Old Believers' and a reformed Orthodox

[50] Taubman (2006: 284) indicates that between 1953-56 the Soviet Union financed the construction of 205 industrial complexes in China, but in 1960 Khrushchev removed Soviet advisors from China *en masse* and terminated contracts and cooperative ventures between the two powers.

Christianity, rendered autocracy the most effective articulation of power (*SM*: 78). In the pre-revolutionary Russian trajectory of state-formation, even if there were instances of oligarchical aspirations and antagonisms over rulership, the institution of autocratic rule itself was not effectively contested (*SM*: 41). This permeated the earlier Modernisation trends of the Petrine period because the development of cogent bureaucracies and innovative capitalist ventures were hobbled by self-preserving autocratic interventionism (*SM*: 72-73). In a broad sense, the political, economic, and religious spheres were ultimately beholden to the regulatory determinations of a common centre.

While tsarist autocracy was rejected by the Bolshevik architects of the Soviet model, Arnason shows that there were parallels in the form of paternalistic sovereignty that emerged (*SM*: 115). He claims that the notion of sovereignty that grew out Lenin's expedient reinterpretation of Marx was underwritten by materialist convictions that history had objective laws and that an elite group of revolutionary oligarchs could develop and apply a science of such laws to economic planning (*SM*: 67, 103). This took shape as the 'sovereignty of the vanguard' and 'the unlimited authority of the party-state' (*SM*: 84). Pretensions of rational mastery 'served to legitimise the systematic exclusion of alternatives and the reJEction of any constitutional limitations to party-state sovereignty' (*SM*: 93). The advantage of this interpretation of power is that is enabled a 'definition of the party as the only authentic representative of the people' and this side-lined 'the principle of popular sovereignty without openly rejecting it' (*SM*: 106). Party-state sovereignty could shift from phases of Leninist oligarchy to Stalinist autocracy and back to more oligarchic arrangements under Khruschev and Brezhnev (*SM*: 93, 98, 109). Even if the Soviet model was altered and made 'more adaptable to domestic interests' in China, Arnason still sees the initial receptivity to the idea of 'the party-state, legitimated by Marxism-Leninism' as enough to imply Soviet affinity (*SM*: 171).

This paternalistic form of sovereignty gained traction in other societies which adopted Soviet-type arrangements, and while Arnason acknowledges there was scope for variations and deviations from the Russian original, he also claims there were some 'omnipresent and interconnected features'— which he defines as 'totalitarian domination' (*SM*: 92). Totalitarianism can be understood as the reconfiguration of the imperial legacy in which the economic, political, and cultural activities of a society are more thoroughly 'subordinated to a common centre' (*SM*: 92). Totalitarianism can involve varying strategies of power from mass terror, intermittent coercion or routinised forms of control (*SM*: 93). Domination can be exerted by way of autocratic or oligarchic government, it can attempt to penetrate individual psychology and control the mind from within or merely control the parameters of public discussion, but in any case, totalitarianism tends towards an 'excessive emphasis on control' (*SM*: 93). The totalitarian tenor of Soviet-style sovereignty

contrasts with the liberal-democratic tendencies of Western modernity and suggests a different authoritarian form of modernity.

The third element of capitalism is a specific point of contradistinction between the Soviet Model and the Western modernity. Soviet model was predicated upon the Marxist-Leninist rejection of Western capitalism in terms of the chaos and precarity of the market, particularly when it is surrendered to the economic self-interest of individuals. Soviet totalitarianism was partly a longer-term—albeit unintended—response to the initial tsarist reaction to the disruptive geo-political identity crisis of the mid-nineteenth century. Russia was 'drawn into a global context of capitalist development and forced to adapt' while 'in competition with more advanced states' (*SM*: 71, 76). Late nineteenth and early twentieth century Imperial Russia is cast as 'a structurally distorted pattern…of capitalist development' troubled by contradictions between autocratic control, the requirements for both a more coherent bureaucracy and organic industrial-capitalist innovation from below (*SM*: 72-73). Interpretive conflicts emerged between those advocating further Westernisation and those protesting the disruptive effects of autocratic Westernisation (*SM*: 56). Arnason invokes Russian analogues to Enlightenment and Romanticism amidst the intelligentsia, replete with torch bearers for further economic and political 'progress' on the one hand, and Slavophile defenders of Russian traditions anticipating their potential 'destruction' the other (*SM*: 54, 56).[51] This is further complicated by an emergent urban working class whose interests were not included in the vision of the autocratic state and a vast rural population with patterns of law, property and Christianity a world apart from urban life and ultimately 'unadaptable to autocratic-capitalist modernising process' (*SM*: 73, 80).

Against this background an emphasis on regaining control emerged in the Leninist interpretations of Marx. Arnason argues that Russian readers of Marx were susceptible to 'an over-systemised image of capitalism' that neglected the 'social embeddedness' of capitalism they were experiencing and rather tended to interpret it as an 'external…totalising force' (*SM*: 62). Marx's critique of capitalism emphasises three main features of capitalism: an obstruction of the rationalisation of production based on human needs, a distortion of social bonds due to asymmetrical relations, and the prevention of free productive activities that enable self-realisation. Vladimir Lenin's interpretation emphasised the first aspect (*SM*: 65). Arnason claims that Lenin was preoccupied with fixing the irrational structure of capitalism and less appreciative of social bonds or productive self-realisation (*SM*: 65-66). This set the intellectual preconditions for the

[51] As Hill (1985: 8) notes, the Westernisers argued for the development of industry, urbanisation, political reform and the abolition of serfdom. Whereas the Slavophiles decried European influence as the erosion of traditional values and instead, saw principles of Orthodox Christianity, the *obshchina* (autonomous village commune) and the idealisation of the urban guild as indispensable to Russian society (Hill 1985: 8).

sovereignty of the vanguard and the potential for totalitarian solutions when the Russian revolution did not lead to a communist utopia as anticipated.

In contrast to Western visions of capitalism functioning on liberal incentives and market principles, the Soviet model followed visions of a centrally planned economy that could achieve an organised model of progress (*SM*: 93, 102). An image of the West—America in particular—became the Soviet benchmark for progress and the source of rivalry (*SM*: 119). As discussed above, within Western capitalism rational mastery finds partial expression in the unlimited 'accumulation of … wealth' whereas the Soviet model replaced the pursuit of wealth with 'the unlimited satisfaction of human needs' (*SM*: 103). We can only assume that such needs would be determined by the party-state bureaucracy. The Soviet planned economy presupposed 'a limited and fragmented autonomy of economic actors' who required a unified program and supervision for Modernisation (*SM*: 104-105). However, the primary weakness of the Soviet economy was not redistribution in comparison to wealth creation in the Western variant per se, it was the unsustainability of administratively prescribed mobilisation and production that proved 'resistant to innovation' (*SM*: 122-123).

Arnason argues that the party-state continuously intervened not only in the economy but also in scientific endeavours, and this gave the Soviet model a 'mono-organisational' tendency (*SM*: 124-125). This was partly because the ideology of Marxism-Leninism over-simplified the horizon of scientific enterprise as the discovery, rationalisation and application of laws that would replace all traditional beliefs with more legitimate notions of human purpose (*SM*: 124). In turn, scientific activity in the Soviet context was less insulated than it was in the West from economic imperatives and political supervision, and consequently less open to internal criticism and revision (*SM*: 124). As a result, the Soviet model was prone to 'pathological excesses within a pre-given technological paradigm, rather than exploration of new technological frontiers' (*SM*: 122). Arnason claims that 'gigantomania' and 'quantity drive(s)' but also 'unassimilable scientific innovations'—particularly an inability to adopt and diffuse information technologies—were symptomatic of such tendencies (*SM*: 122, 207). In this way the capacity to outperform and surpass capitalism faded from view in the longer-term (*SM*: 115, 202-205). The Brezhnev era (1964-82) marked a Soviet return to the Russian tradition of military expansion and posturing as the last remaining avenue for legitimation as a global superpower that could compete with the West once the Soviet economy slowed down (*SM*: 100-104, 114-115, 199).

This leads us to the fourth point of comparison, revolution. Like its Western democratic counterpart, the Russian revolutionary tradition drew upon currents associated with the French Revolution (*SM*: 58). In the Western case the logic of revolution was mediated by other orientations

such as democracy and the nation-state (*SM*: 102-103). In the Soviet instance Russian revolutionaries fused revolution with a more universal vision of the future in which scarcity and capitalist uncertainties would be overcome (*SM*: 58, 102-103). Yet an additional feature of this contrast is that while the Western instance can be understood as a revolution from below in which society overthrew the absolutist state, the Soviet model inverted this pattern in terms of revolution from above (*SM*: 55). This is partly due a particular current of the French revolution which Arnason claims gained traction amidst Russian revolutionaries—Jacobinism (*SM*: 58-59).

Jacobinism turns on the idea that a political elite can exercise superior political leadership and outline goals which represent the popular will (Delanty 2003: 293). Such orientations can develop into 'totalitarian … ideologies, which emphasise total reconstitution of the social and political order and espouse a strong, even if not always…universalistic, missionary zeal' (Eisenstadt 1999: 73). For Arnason, Jacobinism has self-negating potentials built-in because it attempts to overcome the dissonances between the ends of 'liberty, equality and fraternity' by suspending accountability in the exercise of executive political authority on the road to realising these higher ends (*SM*: 58). While Arnason admits that Jacobinism does not capture all the aspects of a diverse Russian revolutionary tradition, he also claims that it offered 'a strong and persistent pole of attraction' for vanguardism or populism and 'had a decisive influence on Russian Marxism' (*SM*: 59-60).[52] He claims Lenin utilised Marxist vernacular to 'rationalise the Jacobin vision of the vanguard', (*SM*: 66).

In the Leninist view, the visions of the revolutionary vanguard became the guiding light of emancipation for the industrial working class (and any class for that matter), whereas in classical Marxism the industrial working class was the key revolutionary force that merely needed to organise according to its own shared interest (*SM*: 84). This allowed Lenin to make tactical concessions to various anti-establishment movements but then suppress and/or out-flank them when they proved obstructive to the revolution. Arnason sees the Bolshevik seizure of power as a takeover amidst a revolution from below—the urban revolts that aided the ascendance of Soviet joint rule alongside the Provisional government in February 1917 and then the Bolshevik seizure of Moscow in October 1918 (*SM*: 74-75, 86, 135). Indeed, Arnason argues that a core commonality across emergent Soviet-type regimes was that those who came to power did so through takeovers, not revolutions from an oppressed class from below (*SM*: 134). Transformations generally occurred through a 'state or state-like apparatus' whether through direct Soviet influence, an emerging state or an established

[52] Such orientations on the side of vanguardism could be motivated to seize power, or instead a more future focused education and management of the population, whereas on side of populism they could animate autonomous and destructive action against the existing regime or the possibility of re-establishing institutions which bind communities together (*SM*: 59).

state redefining its identity (*SM*: 134). In this sense Lenin's reference to the revolutionary 'withering of the state' was in the broader passage of effective history, a 'self-deceiving evasion' (*SM*: 83).

Revolution from above was synonymous with a second transformative phase. The failure of the Russian revolution to both extend into Western Europe and lead to a productive utopia in Russia meant that the Bolsheviks had to accept a more incremental strategy in the early 1920s (*SM*: 96). This set the precedent for a more ambitious acceleration of revolutionary change under Joseph Stalin along with more ruthless methods to bring it about. Under Stalin's direction state intervention was rapidly increased with 'a military approach to economic problems' primarily with the collectivisation of agriculture and the policing of industrial and rural productivity (*SM*: 97).[53] Stalin consolidated his leadership in the 1930s through the elimination of political rivals and 'state terror' extended to civilian dissidents (or those suspected of being counter-revolutionaries) (*SM*: 95-99)[54]. While Mao never achieved the degree of autocratic control of the party that Stalin did, campaigns of Soviet-type revolution from above through resource mobilisation strategies based on rapid industrialisation goals were evident from the late 1950s to the late 1960s (*SM*: 174-175). However, the revolution from above in the original Russian context was cut short with the death of Stalin in 1953, and the post-Stalinist oligarchy also enacted military intervention against Chinese aggression during the latter's own cultural revolution from above (*SM*: 133, 196). The post-Stalinist phase was marked by a retreat from revolution from above towards the preservation of the existing party-state (*SM*: 198).

The fifth element of comparison is democracy. As Arnason sees it, the Soviet model exhibited a 'comprehensive monopolisation of social power, undisturbed by the democratic counter currents which had accompanied and modified the processes of state-formation in the West' (*SM*: 123). Moreover, the model featured an overemphasis on state above society as a mechanism to determine and intervene in social life without space given to social conflict as an important aspect of the feedback process in shaping the institutions of the state (*SM*: 124). As discussed above, this dynamic contrasts with the conflictual democratising aspects within the Western constellation which create tensions between the political, economic and cultural spheres. The Soviet model in its most anti-

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[53] Over the course of Stalin's ascendancy, a strategy of forced investment and central planning drove a rapid increase of industrialisation, urbanisation and education, with production output at four times that of the pre-Stalin era (Shearer 2006: 192).

[54] Part of Stalin's strategy to terrorise the population into compliance involved the Gulag—camps of forced labour established throughout the USSR between 1929-56, populated by mass arrests and mass internments in the millions. Article 58 of the 1926 Criminal Code set legal preconditions for the Gulags, it contains sweeping statutes which cast any actions or inactions that weaken state power as 'counter revolutionary' and punishments ranged from ten years imprisonment and to the death penalty (Rosefielde 1981: 66).

democratic phase is marked by attempts to eliminate such tensions and this pattern was at its zenith under Stalin, who demanded total assimilation at home in Russia but also abroad within the satellite states of the Soviet Union (*SM*: 145, 187). However, Arnason admits there was a partial shift under the post-Stalinist oligarchs during the Khrushchev era who undertook reforms and made concessions to 'pluralism' and 'diverse interests' as part of political process (*SM*: 126). The requirement for 'total cultural reorientation' of Soviet satellite states was relinquished (*SM*: 45). The Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras also made movement towards greater 'social legality' and a 'rejection of mass terror as a mode of government' (*SM*: 111).

Part of this adjustment in tone was expedient amidst reform attempts within the Eastern bloc (*SM*: 120, 126-128). There were attempts to reconfigure the Soviet model to allow 'more autonomy for social organisations…more freedom for public debate, more protection for individual liberties' and Arnason sees the Czechoslovakian reform movement of the 1960s as a shift in this direction (*SM*: 126-127). However, the residual inflexibility of the party-state posed limits to how far changes to the model could be initiated from the periphery and the Prague Spring of 1968 was met with Soviet military intervention (*SM*: 153). Irrespective of this, Arnason does not see the Czech instance as offering a viable alternative because it was 'self-contradictory', since despite the aspirations to economic, cultural, and political reforms, the 'leading role of the party' was preserved (*SM*: 153). The obverse side of reform communism was a more explicit constitutional consolidation of party leadership at the Soviet centre, particularly in Brezhnev's constitution (*SM*: 111). Ideological limitations placed on public discourse remained and open contestation was prohibited (*SM*: 129, 145). The Brezhnev era also led to immobility amongst the party for almost two decades with a preference for reproduction of the power structure over genuine reforms (*SM*: 198, 213). However, the precedents for partial democratic reforms were set and the aspirations reached expression with a change of leadership.

Gorbachev's Perestroika reforms in the 1980s were a search for a 'social basis for...[a] new modernising strategy' (*SM*: 187). This trend became protracted amidst the downgrading of party control over the economic sphere but with no coherent strategy (*SM*: 188). The resulting political impotence opened up vulnerabilities to 'popular protests' in the peripheral regimes of Eastern Europe (*SM*: 188). While the dynamics across peripheral regimes were not identical, Arnason notes there was nevertheless a general tendency toward unrest (*SM*: 188). Three key features of the 'restructuring to disintegration' were the unintended crises of Eastern European reforms propelling de-Sovietisation, perestroika provisions which inhibited Soviet recourse to military intervention, and Russian domestic backlash over the loss of Eastern European territories which led to the political

'paralysis' of the Soviet centre (*SM*: 192).[55] In February 1989 changes to the Hungarian constitution, which abolished the 'leading role of the Party', had a ripple effect through the Soviet bloc ending with the coup and a reorientation of political leadership in Moscow 1991 (*SM*: 193). The atrophy of the Soviet Union was partly a consequence of an oligarchical resistance toward the transfer of power from state to society. In the long run, the so-called alternative modernity did not offer a viable alternative, particularly when less authoritarian ways of life were available amidst the mythical Western adversary.

Nationalism is the sixth point of comparison. By contrast with Western modernity, the imperial impetus of the Soviet model could not accommodate independent nation-state sovereignties with their own respective approaches to international relations. This not to say that emergent nationalisms were not a problem in the periphery Western empires, nonetheless Arnason has little to say about this other than 'the loss of control in parts of the periphery' (*SM*: 201). Instead, he touches on this indirectly by indicating that the Soviet sense of revolutionary purpose and emancipation from Western capitalism meant the Soviets could understand themselves as a universal emancipatory interest which would transmit to emergent anti-Western post-colonial nationalisms and achieve Sovietisation (*SM*: 199, 201). However, this was out of step with the premises of initial Soviet expansion in Eastern Europe under Stalin which entailed 'political colonisation, economic exploitation and cultural assimilation' (*SM*: 145). The Soviet model had engulfed a vast array of ethnicities and societies and its stability and legitimacy rested upon compromise with and suppression of varieties of nationalism (*SM*: 118, 120).

Arnason identifies four interactions with nationalism discernible amidst the Soviet model. The first was Russian nationalism which gained some traction under Stalin particularly during his purge of elites in the non-Russian republics of the Soviet Union and his vision of 'complete assimilation' (*SM*: 99, 139) In the longer-term both the universal vision of a communist utopia and the reality of multiple ethnicities amidst the Soviet Union made any enduring goal of Russification untenable (*SM*: 99, 119). The second is national Communism which connected a notion of 'social revolution with national self-determination' with varying emphasis (*SM*: 119). Before Stalin's revolution from above both Ukrainian and Islamic nationalities where animated by these orientations, while in the wake of Stalinist expansionism, Yugoslavia made claims to national uniqueness, followed by claims of instituting a 'more authentic socialism', Romania and Albania congealed into their own Stalinesque nationalist autocracies, and both Hungary and Czechoslovakia developed much more reformist positions and rejections of Stalinist vestiges and imperialism within the Soviet model (*SM*:

[55] When Arnason refers to de-Sovietisation here, he primarily means reforms which transferred power from the party-state to other institutions amidst concessions to worker, business, religious and national interests (*SM*: 188).

120, 137). The third interaction with nationalism is a more instrumental relationship of the Soviet centre to different nationalisms (*SM*: 120). In this sense nationalism in Eastern Europe was perceived by Soviet oligarchs as strategically beneficial when it allowed the legitimation of local power elites amongst the satellite states who did not demand reforms or autonomy, but in the longer-term this concession proved a liability (*SM*: 121). The fourth interaction with nationalism is the adoption of the Soviet model by anti-Western nationalist regimes in the developing world (*SM*: 121). However, with the exception to Vietnam and Cuba, both ethnic and tribal conflicts proved antithetical to the combination of communism and nationalism in the Soviet periphery (*SM*: 121-122).

The Sino-Soviet rift led to a divergent path taken by China in the late 1970s when it sought an unofficial alliance with America and opened to greater participation in the capitalist world economy to overcome its own economic stagnation (*SM*: 195-196). In parallel to this the 'self-representation and legitimation' of Chinese Modernisation became couched less in terms of either Marxism-Leninism or Maoism, and more so in terms of nationalism and imperialism—albeit with the preservation of a Chinese party-state (*SM*: 177). Arnason speculated as to whether the Chinese fusion of nationalist and imperialist tendencies would 'mutate into a neo-authoritarian regime presiding over an East-Asian style capitalist economy' (*SM*: 177). This seems to be a mutation through which we are currently living and if alternative modernities are of relevance in the post-Soviet world, China is a prime candidate.

Arnason claims that 'the dissonance between the Soviet model and national cultural traditions was a recurrent problem' (*SM*: 151). Both the Chinese and Eastern European situations signalled interpretive conflicts and contradictions within the communist world which contributed to its disintegration (*SM*: 182). The Soviet extension out to client states of the 'Third-World' during the Brezhnev era also had its setbacks. A Soviet attempt to prevent pro-Chinese influence amidst Afghan nationalist communists caught in conflict with anti-communist Islamic forces in Afghanistan spiralled out of control into a larger scale Soviet invasion (*SM*: 200). This instance can be seen as 'a failure of both nationalism and the Soviet model' (*SM*: 121). However, it is the nationalist tendencies and reformist dispositions in the Eastern bloc which Arnason sees as major blow to the Soviet Union. As he sees it, the partitioning of Europe after WWII had been a significant part of the 'self-definition of the Soviet Union as a superpower' and when this unravelled it exceeded a legitimation crisis and became 'a crisis of identity' (*SM*: 192-193).

Looking at the six elements some general statements can be said about how the Soviet model offered an alternative to Western modernity. The Soviets engaged in territorial expansion and

resource mobilisation for the consolidation empire. Imperialism itself was not necessarily an alternative to Western modernity as a general geo-political pattern. The Western European states also undertook such intrusive and instrumental behaviours. However, it was the broader purpose of Soviet expansion which set it apart. The Soviet model was understood as another path to Modernisation under the sovereignty of enlightened elites who could steer away from the uncertainty of Western capitalism and lead the masses to a more universally legitimate future without material precarity. Western imperialism had no such readymade global antagonist.

Vanguard sovereignty took precedence in principle and practice over notions of popular sovereignty and democracy which had otherwise gained traction in the constitutional trends of Western modernity. Bolshevik takeover and Stalinist revolution from above through forced collectivisation were more symptomatic of the Soviet model than the French revolution legacy of revolution from below. In contradistinction to Western capitalism, in which individual economic self-interest and the free market are lauded in terms of opportunity and innovation, the Soviets embarked upon statist strategies for economic development. The planned economy was pursued through the party-state organisation and supervision of production. In the longer-term this led to an allergy to economic uncertainty, reassessment and innovation which resulted in the inability of the Soviet model to sustain growth in comparison to the Western states.

Nationalisms proved obstacles to enduring replication of the Soviet model. The upwelling of nationalism and reformist tendencies amidst the Eastern bloc were an ongoing problem. Initial Chinese receptivity to Leninism-Marxism did not stabilise the Soviet Union either. Instead, a reappropriation of the Soviet model occurred in Chinese terms to unify and modernise China following imperial disintegration, and this culminated in a rivalry and rift with the Russian centre and alternative Chinese path couched in terms of nationalism and imperial legacy. The uniform applicability of Marxism-Leninism across a range of different societies was misread.

As to why the Soviet model emerged and the challenges it faced, intercivilisational aspects also play a role in Arnason's account. In the Soviet case, revolutionary sentiments that gained traction in nineteenth century Russia were a reaction to the Tsarist autocratic attempts to institute capitalism from above. Arnason casts this as a reaction to Russian defeat in the Crimean war and the realisation that Russia was falling behind the industrialised Western powers. Granted the alternative pedigree of the Soviet model as an alternative modernity cannot be cast as an immediate response to this instance of geo-political devaluation, revolutionary fervour was a reaction to the unsettling aspects of autocratic capitalism. Nonetheless this is complicated by tendencies of Slavophile and some Russian revolutionary thinkers to cast capitalism as an intrusive Western

machination imposed from the outside. In this way the Crimean war is an indirect catalyst for the Soviet model but a direct catalyst for the Tsarist initiatives that animated revolutionary renunciation.

At various junctures in the Soviet model attempts to sustain or re-establish a more esteemed geopolitical identity as a global alternative project. However, it is also riven with counter-identities in terms of emergent nationalisms and heterodox interpretations of Leninism-Marxism. This transpired in part through Soviet competition with America, particularly the fall back onto militaristic posturing in the Brezhnev era when the economic credentials of the Soviet model had faded. In a sense this was a reanimation of a military tradition which had bolstered Soviet identity at the end of WWII and its sequel diverted focus from the legitimation crisis that faced the planned economy. However obliquely related issues also emerged in relation to the false universalism of Leninism-Marxism and Soviet paternalism in the face of emergent counter-identities amidst Soviet-type regimes. In the long run, the Soviet model did not sweep away ethnicities, traditions, nationalisms nor other civilisational legacies through some superior insight into real material conditions of history. While partial concessions were made to pluralism in the post-Stalin period to distance the oligarchy from the unflattering implications of autocratic excess, the commitment to preserve party-state authority proved terminal.

4.3 Japanese Modernity: Sacred Authority and Nationalism

Arnason's account of Japanese modernity in *JE* provides a more protracted reconstruction of state-formation than he presents for the Soviet case in *SM.* It spans developments across the Yamato, Soga (587-645), *ritsuryo* (649-794), Heian (794-1180), Kamakura (1180-1333) Kemmu Restoration (1333-1336), Muromachi (1336-1467) and *sengoku* (1467-1600) periods. He discusses this background in relation to the Edo period (1600-1867) of Tokugawa withdrawal from international relations and subsequent Japanese rapid Modernisation during the Meiji (1868-1912) and Taisho (1913-1925) periods and then the passage through the Pacific war during the Showa period (1926-1989).[56]However the apogee of Japan's alternative modernity as Arnason portrays it seems primarily situated between the Meiji and approximately the first two decades of the Showa period.

The most rapid period of Japanese Modernisation occurred between 1885 and 1919 when it became the 'first non-Western industrial power' (*JE*: 481). Yet Arnason also indicates that there were unique precedents which give Japanese modernity its character. These precedents emerged

[56] Far more nuanced subdivisions or alternative temporal groupings within Japanese history are possible of course, depending on the phenomena of interest. I have merely noted these periodisations because they generally follow Arnason's reconstruction but also allow a heuristic indication of where Arnason places Japanese modernity in a broader scheme and where pivotal precedents in his view, are located in the passage of time. For finely grained historical subdivisions in relation to Japan see *A Companion to Japanese History* (Tsutsui 2007).

amidst intermittent encounters with Western Europeans since the sixteenth century—some trade and religion based, some exploratory and some more volatile and threatening—but also longer-term interactions in the East Asian region (*JE*: 435-438, 498). In this sense Arnason casts Japan as part of the East Asian civilisational constellation of China, Korea, and Japan (Arnason 1999: 97; Smith 2011: 43).

Goran Therborn has characterised the trajectory of modern Japanese development as 'reactive Modernisation' whereby internal elites imported institutional models from elsewhere to stave off the threat of colonial domination (Therborn 2003: 299). While Arnason certainly acknowledges intrusive Western behaviours in East Asian region during the nineteenth century, he indicates that the dynamics of Japanese modernity cannot be cast as a marginal player trying to stave-off colonial threat, because Japan enacted ambitious imperial expansion and aspired to become a global contender itself (*JE*: 438, 486). Arnason casts the Japanese trajectory as the pursuit of an 'alternative modernity' to that of the West, that was simultaneously an affirmation of Japanese identity (*JE*: 397, 483, 498). If this is so, what kind of alternative did it offer and why did it emerge?

As with the discussion of the Soviet model above in section 4.2, I analyse Arnason's account of the Japanese case by comparing it with the six dimensions of the standard narrative of Western modernity—imperialism, sovereignty, capitalism, revolution, democracy, and nationalism.

The first element, imperialism, is a key aspect of Japanese modernity. Arnason claims that Japanese imperialism differed from the Western states in two key respects. To begin with, he suggests that 'no other modern state built an empire within a geopolitical and civilisational sphere of which it had previously been a marginal part' (*JE*: 487). This indicates a reassessment of Japan's prospects for the future in relation to a Sino-centric past. Territorial expansion into East Asia and Southeast Asia becomes an emphatic orientation amidst Japanese elites in the late nineteenth into early twentieth century along with an appetite for colonial empire (*JE*: 442, 454, 491). Initial Japanese colonial policies were like European approaches, geared towards enlightening and civilising supposedly inferior peoples in the colonies (*JE*: 486; Peattie 2005 [1988]: 238-240). However, Japanese colonial self-understandings then shifted to focus upon Asian cultural and linguistic affinities as a basis for assimilation to Japanese rule and law (*JE*: 486; Peattie 2005 [1988]: 240-242). This enabled the 'denial of the colonial character of Japanese domination' in the region (*JE*: 486). Instead, Arnason claims, Japanese territorial expansion resembled a recentring of the East Asian civilisational complex within the orbit a Japanese imperial centre (*JE*: 486, 491).

Further, Japanese imperialism was more politically strategic and connected to 'self-affirmation in the international arena' than the imperialism of Western states (*JE*: 483). Prior to the

Meiji transformation in the second half of the nineteenth century, Japan had been relatively insular country for approximately 250 years under the Tokugawa regime (*JE*: 265).[57] During that period, relations between China, Korea and Japan had been less volatile than those amidst the European states with their rival centres, more interventionist approaches to foreign policy and recurrent interstate conflicts (*JE*: 439). However, Japan's more insular period of stability was book-ended by intercivilisational encounters with Westerners which, Arnason suggests, played a role in Japan's withdrawal from international relations in the early seventeenth century and then in its turn to a more active imperialist stance in the late nineteenth century (*JE*: 251, 416). Like the Western states, Japan expanded in the in pursuit of wealth. However, unlike the other colonial powers, Japan built more heavy industry in its colonies with a vision of becoming a self-sufficient empire in terms of resource mobilisation—a lesson which it learnt along the way from observing the vulnerabilities of European powers affected by shortages in WWI (*JE*: 484, 490). Japanese expansion also allowed a transition from being a marginal member of the Western dominated international state system to 'recognition' as one of the central imperial players (*JE*: 481). Arnason sees this was formally achieved when Japan signed the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 (JE: 481).[58]

The second element of comparison, sovereignty, has a complex past in Japan. Sovereignty within Japanese modernity from 1868-1954 cannot be understood as evolving from divine into secular forms, as in the West. Rather, the sovereignty characteristic of the Meiji period maintained a strong element of divinity that became 'an obstacle to the idea of accountable government' (*JE*: 428). This is partly due to its entanglement with a 'poly-centric' constellation of indigenous Shinto traditions, in addition to Buddhist and Confucian inputs from China and Korea (*JE*: 92-95, 317). While there was an establishment of an imperial house in the sixth century CE followed by its mythologisation in the seventh, the succeeding centuries up to the late sixteenth were animated by counter claims by rival clans and claimants emphasising different combinations of the poly-centric constellation (*JE*: 90, 110, 113, 199). However, it is the early institution of peripheries within the orbit of a centre that Arnason claims was never entirely renounced—despite emergent military rulers (shoguns) and Buddhist factions over the course of the Kamakura, Muromachi, *Sengoku* and Tokugawa periods who became co-existent powers alongside the imperial dynasty or attempted to

[57] Japanese unification overlapped the arrival and presence of jesuit priests and Portuguese traders from the mid-sixteenth century (*JE*: 251). Concerns about the threat to burgeoning political stability due to Christian conversions amidst various daimyo, led dominant warlord Toyotomi Hideyoshi to reiterate the primacy of Japanese identity in his edict against the missionaries, opening with a declaration of Japan as 'land of the gods' (*JE*: 253). The Tokugawa regime came to power after Hideyoshi's death and relations between them and the jesuits went from devaluation to hostility due to instances of rebellion amidst Christian converts (*JE*: 259). The Tokugawa rulers issued the *sakuko* policy in 1639—often understood as closed country—to reduce Japanese relations with China and Europe to tightly regulated trade at the port of Nagasaki (JE: 259, 289).

[58] As Peattie highlights, between 1895-1945 the Japanese empire spanned Southern Sakhalin, Korea, Taiwan, the Liaotung Peninsula and the Islands of Micronesia (Peattie 2005 [1988]: 218-219).

become substitutes for it (*JE*: 202-203, 214-215, 232, 240-245).

This notion of a Japanese centre combined notions of sovereignty, sacred kingship, and kinship into a unique yet pliable interpretative horizon of power (*JE*: 98, 105). Arnason suggests that the mythologisation of imperial sovereignty in Japan's seventh century *ritsuryo* state ultimately became a legacy drawn upon for the legitimacy of radical Japanese nationalism in the late nineteenth century (*JE*: 115). Seventh-century reformers cast the Japanese emperor as equal to and possibly even superior to the Chinese one, according to Shinto traditions—*kami* worship (*JE*: 113).[59] The rule of emperor Temmu (673-86) marks the official linking of principle *kami*, the sun goddess Amaterasu, to the ancestral origin of the Japanese dynastic lineage—the Japanese notion of the *tenno* (*JE*: 94-95, 104, 112, 158). This allowed a reinterpretation of the Chinese notion of imperial legitimation, whereby the Confucian 'mandate of heaven' was recast as 'descent from heaven' claimed by the Japanese imperial dynasty (*JE*: 104). As Arnason sees it in the longer-term, 'the imaginary institution of an unbroken native tradition made it easier to learn from other civilisations without loss of identity' (*JE*: 135). Moreover, he argues that the narrative of Japan as a sacred territory under the guardianship dynastic rule, extends to an implicit notion of kinship tied to territory and constitutes a separate collective identity to the Chinese one (*JE*: 112, 114-116).

While imperial house played a role in ceremonial and ritual aspects of legitimation during the Edo period, it was the Tokugawa military regime—the bakufu—who regulated a two-tiered *bakuhan* state system in which different domains (varieties of *han*) had their own militaries, taxable populations and administrations, but restricted to the terms outlined by the Edo bakufu (*JE*: 268, 323, 330)[60]. However, in the mid-nineteenth century a second direct intercivilisational encounter with Westerners shifted the terms of Japanese power. The 'American expedition of 1953 (the first irreversible setback for isolationism)' and 'a crisis in foreign policy'— usher in the disintegration of Tokugawa sovereignty and the *bakuhan* order in an episode of 'traumatic change'—to be further touched on below (*JE*: 263, 423-427).

The Meiji transformation that followed between 1871-1890 was shaped by significant restructuring of Japanese society with the removal of the Tokugawa regime, the abolition of the

[59] *Kami* worship predated the *ritsuryo* state in the Japanese islands and was a heterogenous practice which incorporated the divinisation of nature and commemoration of various local *kami* entities via shrines (*JE*: 94-95, 104, 125, 158-159).

[60] As Bolitho highlights, the most immediate form of wider social organisation that most Japanese experienced was that of the *han* or domain (Bolitho 1991: 183-193). The *han* was responsible for construction of roads, bridges, dams as well as enforcement of law and the extraction of taxes. While arrangements varied from *han* to *han*, they were similar in that a *han* was a region of land with the capacity to produce a minimum of ten thousand *koku* of rice, ceded by a shogun to a custody of a daimyo who was compliant with the Edo bakufu and willing to render services—construction labour, military support or material resources—when required. During the Tokugawa reign there are thought to have been as many as 260 co-existent *han* scattered across Japan.

domains and the establishment of centralised unitary state based within the orbit of the imperial institution and a bureaucracy which acted as a delegation of imperial authority (*JE*: 430, 438, 466). The 'Charter Oath' mission statement of 1868 reaffirmed 'the divine origin, exclusive sovereignty, and undivided monarchical power of the imperial dynasty' (*JE*: 438). In this way the Meiji transformation has also been described in restorative terms as a 'reaffirmation of the link between dynastic continuity and collective identity' (*JE*: 426). However, Arnason also highlights that there was also a unique fusion between imperial sovereignty, capitalism and nationalism which cannot be conflated with restoration entirely and is more likely a reinventive interaction between a civilisational legacy and modernising trends (JE: 427-429, 499). Nonetheless, this also enabled the bureaucratic and military elites to claim the mandate of imperial authority as a justification for political decisions without requiring a popular census (JE: 429).

The third point of comparison with Western modernity is capitalism. This played a more political role in Japanese modernity than in its Western counterpart. Arnason claims that Japanese capitalism differs from the Western variant in that it exhibited a 'much closer co-ordination of state-building and capitalist development' (*JE*: 321). Rather than capitalist development being left to the wheelhouse of the market and steered by capital, Arnason suggests the Japanese entry into global capitalism was steered by the state (*JE*: 451). Yet the striking aspect of the 'state-business nexus' in Japan is that capitalist entrepreneurs widely identified with collective interests and aims amenable to the Meiji regime in a manner that cannot be state reduced to statist imposition (*JE*: 461-462). This was a relatively novel Meiji development in Japan. Admittedly, Tokugawa rulers had initiated reforms to regulate the terms of merchant power, and this brought the growing merchant monopolies into closer co-ordination with the imperatives of state-building and opened up education institutions to the merchant class during the eighteenth century (*JE*: 264, 308-314).[61] However, this did not necessarily lead to a symbiosis between capitalism and statecraft either. During the first half of the nineteenth century, civil unrest in the domains, followed by bakufu reforms to dismantle merchant and domain monopolies, resembled tensions between the centre and peripheries more reminiscent of earlier feudal power struggles (*JE*: 410-412). Rather it was capitalism filtered through the nationalist self-understandings that emerged in the late nineteenth century which allowed a more co-ordinated approach to capitalist development (*JE*: 461). There were externally induced incentives for this.

Amidst the encounter with the Westerners during the mid-nineteenth century that the *bakuhan*

[61] Arnason suggests the Kaitokudo academy in Osaka in established 1724 marks not only a milestone in the opening of public education, but also conceptions of economics and politics that were more naturalistic and socially inclusive than those inherited from the hierarchical tendencies of Confucianism (*JE*: 319-320, 323).

two-tiered state system and fragmented capitalist development became a liability. The capitulation of the bakufu to 'unequal treaties' which demanded the opening of Japanese ports to Western traders without granting Japan the same access to European ports in return, animated not only the delegitimation of the shogun but also an awareness that better co-ordination between state and economy was Japan's only option for parity with the Western states in the global arena (*JE*: 438; Beasley 1989: 286-290).[62] In the longer-term, Arnason claims that from the Meiji imperial phase and post-war reorientation, Japan reinvented capitalism in the guise of the 'developmental state' (*JE*: 457).[63] In the initial stages Meiji oligarchs engaged in 'consultation and co-operation' with merchant and business leaders and established a bureaucracy geared toward maximum control and co-ordination (*JE*: 457-459, 487). Like Western capitalism, private property and economic competition were acknowledged as engines of progress in Japan, yet unlike Western capitalism, progress was not primarily couched in terms of 'economic individualism' but rather 'on…its contribution to collective goals' (*JE*: 461). While the bureaucracy had to contend with a parliamentary apparatus in the early twentieth century, it was the bureaucracy that had the upper hand (*JE*: 459). After 1930 the imperatives of the developmental state were overtaken by a totalitarian, ultra-nationalist, and militarist aspirations to 'transcend the capitalist mode of development' (*JE*: 460, 467, 485).[64]

However, Arnason claims Japan's remarkable economic recovery and growth after the Pacific

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[62] As Beasley shows, Western 'unequal treaties' in East Asia, emerged through the treaty port system (Beasley 1991: 15-25). These treaties first developed during 1842-43 featuring which gave the British trading privileges in Chinese ports, free from Chinese regulatory interference and subject only to British law enacted by British consular courts on the China coast. These same provisions however were not extended to the Chinese in relation to British territory. A 'most favoured-nation-clause' was also introduced by the British, which implied a kind of 'co-operative economic imperialism' amongst the Western powers, for if any other nations secured a better deal, the terms of the treaty would revert to those more favourable terms. Similar French and American agreements ensued in 1844. Beasley notes that this was a severe 'diminution of Chinese sovereignty' and Russia, Prussia, Portugal, Denmark, Holland, Spain, Belgium, Italy had similar treaties signed up by the late 1860s. While American, Commodore Matthew Perry negotiated modest opening of Japanese ports to passing ships for refuge in 1853-54, the Western trade community was displeased that the arrangement was 'far short of what had been imposed on China'. An American consul general stationed in China, Townsend Harris, returned to Japan, to renegotiate port access 'in the Chinese manner', but also under the threat of British military force if the terms were not met. The Japanese officials conceded and in 1858 an American treaty based on the Chinese model was secured, Holland and Russia soon followed. Nonetheless, Harris did not secure a most-favoured-nations-clause, this was secured by the Earl of Elgin on behalf of the British and in the wake of this, France also secured a deal.

[63] Crawcour highlights following the Meiji period, the Japanese state played a leading role in industrial and technological development, through investment in administrative, transportation, communications and education infrastructure to support it. Government protections and subsides were provided primarily for heavy industry such as steelworks, shipping and engineering, motivated by the need for 'national military and economic security' whereas light industry, producing consumables for the domestic market experienced less government assistance and direction. While early Meiji attempts at the direct state operation of industries proved unsuccessful, the most successful industrial developments rested on a combination of industry initiatives and government guarantees to support complimentary infrastructure (Crawcour 1988: 444-449).

[64] I will discuss ultra-nationalism in relation to the sixth element of nationalism below.

War as reanimated notion of the 'developmental state' and a reorientation of Japanese identity in capitalist terms with a more balanced tension between party and bureaucracy and a down-graded sense of national identity (*JE*: 395). Ultimately, Arnason casts the developmental state as an agile and responsive feedback loop between bureaucracy, party and industry that can reconfigure foreign policy according to the lessons of contingent events to sustain industrial upgrading (*JE*: 492). In this way it is distinct from the notion of the planned economy of the party-state which was the core institution of the Soviet model. However, it is not so clear how Arnason's description of the developmental state differs from what Wagner describes as post-war era 'organised capitalism' in the West replete with Keynesian approaches and the 'state-monitored and state-supported national economy' that began to be dismantled in the 1970s (Wagner 1994: 82, 127). Irrespective of whether state co-ordinated capitalism exhibited by post-war Japanese modernity is a partial continuity of latent patterns set out in the Meiji era or a turn to partly analogous to the Western states, it is the Meiji period up to the Pacific War that Arnason sees as the initiation of an alternative modernity (*JE*: 498). Japan's alternative pedigree does not rest on a different interpretation of capitalism.

The fourth element of the standard modern narrative, revolution, is less applicable to Japan—at least in terms of transformation initiated from below associated with the Western legacy of the French revolution. Instead, Arnason sees the Meiji transformation as revolutionary in two main ways. First, Japanese Modernisation has an affinity with revolution from above (*JE*: 291). True, the twilight of the Tokugawa regime between 1853-1868 was marked by violent samurai dissent, peasant rebellions and widespread civil unrest in the urban centres (*JE*: 421-422). However, Arnason argues that the initial transfer of power from one monopoly to another did not issue from 'an increase of popular participation' nor did it involve a 'radical innovation on the level of legitimacy' (*JE*: 413). It was an alliance between two prominent domains—Choshu and Satsuma—and the imperial house which ultimately prevented the bakufu from regaining power amidst civil unrest (*JE*: 425). In this sense the Meiji transformation has parallels with the notion of revolution from above, and Arnason leans more towards this variety of revolutionary change as a description of Japan's Modernisation (*JE*: 412-422; Smith 2011: 46). The changes that occurred while dramatic spanned almost four decades (1853-1890) and were 'engineered by a political elite with a strong sense of historical mission' (*JE*: 417).

Another way in which Arnason describes Meiji Japan as revolutionary is in a broader structural sense of institutional discontinuities (*JE*: 412). Some of the transformative milestones which Arnason mentions are the 'Charter-Oath' mission statement released in 1868, the abolition of the Tokugawa status system in 1969, the abolition of the domains and the status system in 1871, moves toward nation-wide primary education and military conscription in 1872 and 1873, the

abolition of samurai stipends in 1876, the drafting of the Meiji constitution in 1889 and the 1890 imperial rescript for education (*JE*: 416, 429-433, 450). However, it is primarily within Charter Oath that references to a forward-looking reorientation and a departure from previous institutions are detected. Arnason highlights the phrases 'evil customs of the past shall be abandoned' and 'knowledge shall be sought throughout the world' (*JE*: 435; Sukehiro 2007[1989]: 495). He argues that these imply a three-part redefinition of Japan's 'civilisational frame of reference'—the critique of inherited institutions, a decentring of Chinese cultural influence and an openness to learning from Western experience (*JE*: 435).

Critique of inherited traditions and explanations was already evident in currents of thought amidst the Japanese intelligentsia which emerged in the late seventeenth in part through engagement with Western literature that had filtered through Dutch traders at the port at Nagasaki (*JE*: 319-322, 338, 340-342). Western approaches to astronomy and medicine, and the relationship to Confucian explanations from China had all been topics of critical reflection and incentives for alternative Copernican and naturalistic explanations of the world—particularly amidst Kaitokudo thinkers (*JE*: 317, 319-321, 339-340). While the 'most provocative writings … (of the Japanese intelligentsia) made no public impact' before the crisis of the mid-nineteenth century, Japan was still more well acquainted with the Western thought than any other non-Western peoples were (*JE*: 337, 340). It is likely that this longer-term intellectual acquaintance had already began the decentring of China as a civilisational role model if not in practice, then at least in theory (*JE*: 339).

The transformations of the Meiji period mark a transition 'from books to experience' (Sukehiro 1989: 462). The Iwakura mission of 1871-73 allowed Japan to undertake a pattern of 'selective westernisation' according to the most advanced and effective models observed and reported on by Japanese delegates sent to the European and American states (*JE*: 436).[65] The reinvention of Japanese institutions ensued, the navy was based on the British model, the army on the French and then German, education on the French, American and German models, communications on the British systems, the police on the French and the legal framework on the French and then German models and a constitutional monarchy based on Bismarck Germany (*JE*: 437). However, the scope of 'civilisational self-denial' had its limits and unlike its Western counterpart the Meiji constitution separated bureaucratic efficacy from the terms of imperial

[65] As Sukehiro (1989: 462-466) highlights, the Iwakura mission of 1871-73 comprised of forty-eight delegates and fifty-nine students, dispatched to Europe and America. The official narrative given for the mission was to revise unequal treaties, however the actual objective was to discover the condition of societies in the West and adapt the best attributes for the building of the Meiji state. While they appreciated the accumulation of Western knowledge through the ages, they also realised that the expansion of wealth and population in the European states had primarily owed to the industrial revolution and become more pronounced after 1800 and this made the prospect of closing the gap between the Western nations and Japan, but also the possibility of surpassing them plausible.

sovereignty and therefore retained the 'sacred authority of the imperial institution' (*JE*: 436-438). Therefore, the Meiji era is often described as both revolution and restoration, a complex synthesis of tradition and modernity (*JE*: 412-413).

The fifth element of Western modernity, democracy, is prominent in its absence from the Japanese experience. Arnason claims that, in contrast to Western experiments with democracy, 'it is undisputed fact that no democratic breakthrough during the pre-war phase' of Japanese modernity (*JE*: 467). The Meiji oligarchs constructed a 'minimal version of constitutional and representative government' in which the bureaucracy was 'protected from public and parliamentary control' (*JE*: 388). Although during the Taisho period (1912-1926) there was a shift towards liberal and parliamentary forms of government with greater ideological pluralism in the political sphere, Arnason claims that the bureaucratic and nationalist counter tendencies were too entrenched for liberal or democratic reforms to gain enduring support (*JE*: 406). The limits to democracy were indicative even within the interpretations of its liberal Japanese advocates. An influential translation and interpretation of democracy at the time—*minponshugi*—merged the notion of popular participation with imperial sovereignty, in contradistinction to a notion more amenable to popular sovereignty—*minshushugi* (*JE*: 473).[66]

Arnason admits that there were protest movements during the period between the Meiji transformation and the Pacific War, and it is likely that they were more important than is often credited (*JE*: 390). Yet because liberal or socialist movements did not make any enduring or significant impact on the political structure, he argues that this indicates a political institution with an 'anti-democratic core' (*JE*: 389-390). The immunity to 'democratic challenges' in comparison to the Western counterparts Japan drew upon for its transformation rested in the political malleability and ambiguity of imperial authority for ambitious oligarchs (*JE*: 389). Moreover the 'supposed direct access to absolute authority gave rise to conflicts within the power structure (whereby) factions and agencies invoked imperial legitimacy to strengthen their case against each other' (*JE*: 389). Such claims to be a delegate of imperial authority became a successful 'anti-democratic legitimising device' (*JE*: 389). Nonetheless, the resistance to liberal and democratic political transformations in Japanese modernity cannot be laid at the feet of the reanimated imperial legacy alone, for it had found an integrative substitute—nationalism.

[66] The distinction between the two terms *minponshugi* and *minshushugi* was formulated by Taisho era liberal Yoshino Sakuzo in his 1916 essay on the common spirit of constitutional government not the letter of constitutional governemnet. Yoshino argued that Western interpretations had conflated a political and legal grounds for the exercise of sovereignty. Whereas the legal interpretation did not apply to Japan due to sovereignty being vested in the emperor this did not matter. Instead, the power to govern really rested in maintaining the general welfare of the people and a representative parliamentary democracy that was elected by the people to do so could exist alongside an imperial sovereign. As such the 'dangerous thought' of popular sovereignty need not be equated with democracy (Duus 2005 [1988]:676-681).

Nationalism, the sixth element of Western modernity, plays a significant role in Arnason's account of Japan's alternative modernity. Japanese nationalism was different from that of the Western states in that it was premised upon a more radicalised image of solidarity and national unity (*JE*: 291, 434). Moreover, Arnason claims 'Japanese images of the nation were less open to interpretive dispute and alternative political applications than its Western counterparts' (*JE*: 464). Yet the nineteenth century geo-political circumstance of Japanese also differed from the Western states primarily because Japanese nationalism emerged amidst the swift abolition of a unique two-tier state system with rapid entry into international relations (*JE*: 463). Following 1868 Japan had to adjust to inter-state and economic relations dominated by the Western powers and did so successfully without ceding to Western rule (*JE*: 394). To do this Japan had to borrow extensively from its Western counterparts but amidst an imitative competitiveness 'that led to more explicit articulations of Japan's modernising project in contradistinction to the West' (*JE*: 394). Arnason describes a nationalist impetus in three different stages. The first objective was to become 'an equal partner' in the Western dominated state system and participate in strategic political and economic games (*JE*: 394). The second was to establish regional dominance in the East Asia, particularly when the rise of the Soviet Union and Fascism in Europe were drawing Western attention away from East Asia (*JE*: 394-395). The third was a post-war orientation which prioritised 'capitalist development as an alternative to military and state-building' (*JE*: 395). As mentioned above, the third phase seems less like an alternative modernity. It is the first and second phases which seem to have an alternative thrust. Arnason claims that from the Meiji transformation to the implosion of Japanese imperialism, 'the most important effect of the civilisational legacy was its contribution to the imagery and ideology of Japanese nationalism' (*JE*: 499). It was during 1868-1945 that Japanese nationalism was at its zenith.

As mentioned above, the Meiji period is not only referred to as a period of transformation but also restoration. However, Arnason indicates that restorative impetus of had already begun to crystallise during the Edo period. This is discernible at the beginning of Tokugawa regime when Ieyasu Tokugawa included the imperial court within the legitimation of military rule and formally outlined its role more explicitly than any previous shogun had done (*JE*: 427). Restorative themes also gained traction amidst the intelligentsia within *kokugaku* and Mito varieties of nativist thought. In the eighteenth century *Kokugaku* thinkers were concerned that Chinese Buddhism and Confucianism had diluted authentic Japanese learning (Jansen 2000: 205-206). They undertook an elaborate 'cultural rediscovery' of Japanese literature, history and mythology and a central theme was the 'idealised image of the imperial institution' within Japan's legacy—albeit with emphasis different *kami* than the *ritsuryo* version—offered a superior model to the Chinese one (*JE*: 341,

345-346). *Kokugaku* currents linked the imperial legacy to notions of 'Japanese distinctiveness' that could be drawn upon for notions of national identity (*JE*: 342). Early nineteenth century Mito thought was more immediately connected to nationalist themes with the notion of *kokutai* implying 'national essence or national community' (*JE*: 346-347, 462). Arnason is cautious about equating these interpretive patterns with Western Romanticism. Instead, he refers to Carmen Blacker's notion of mythical archetypes of a Past Golden Age and a Chosen People which rests on both images of an 'exemplary past' and an original 'act of creation' by Japanese ancestors at the beginning of time (*JE*: 345-346; Blacker 2012[1988]: 72-76).[67] Such ideas provided interpretive reference points for the developments that took shape in the Meiji era.

Arnason claims that Meiji Japan exhibited a totalitarian similarity to other 'modern alternatives to popular sovereignty' such as the 'racial core of the nation' typical of Nazism or the 'enlightened vanguard with an exclusive mandate of history' central to the Soviet model (*JE*: 471). The notions of exclusive national community along with the imperial mythology of 'sacred and familial authority' animated a 'defence of identity by means of expansion as a substitute for autonomy' amidst more challenging geo-political circumstances (*JE*: 471, 465). It achieved expression in the Meiji notion of *kazoku kokka*— 'doctrine of the family state' (*JE*: 465). Japanese national identity between 1868-1945 also posited 'symbolic boundaries' upon the extent to which Westernisation could be cast as submissive mimicry and instead operated as a 'defence of identity against the threats of modernising forces from outside' (*JE*: 396, 399). Yet this constellation was also susceptible to totalitarian excesses. Following the First World War there was 'a strengthening trend towards the ideological rejection of the West in the name of a more radical nationalism' (*JE*: 490). At its most militant during the 1930s has been described by Arnason in Maruyama Masao's terminology as ultra-nationalism (*JE*: 391, 406, 464). Ultra-nationalism is an interpretative and ideological framework which invests the nation and its institutions with 'absolute authority' and all other universal claims whether individual autonomy, political ideologies or religions are 'devalued in the name of the national collective' (*JE*: 392). The ultra-nationalist turn of WWII animated visions of a Japanese 'overcoming of modernity' and a 'complete civilisational alternative' to the West emerged (*JE*: 474). Ultra-nationalism led to the underestimation of opposing forces, an inability to form alliances against Western forces in the East-Asian region, a reluctance to debate issues around national interest and an unsustainable expansionist drive, ultimately met with defeat to Allied forces in the Pacific War (*JE*: 395).

[67] As Blacker shows, currents of *Kokugaku* thought invoked notions of a 'Past Golden Age' posited an idyllic and pristine Japanese Antiquity uncorrupted by foreign presence and ideas. Themes of 'a Chosen People', are also portray the Japanese as superior, because they emerged from the 'original act of creation' by divinities whereas all other countries and peoples were formed from whatever materials were left-over. (Blacker 2012 [1988]: 72-76).

From looking at the six elements in relation to Japan some general statements can be about its alternative modernity to the Western variant. Japan also pursued territorial expansion and resource mobilisation for the consolidation empire like the Western powers. However Japanese imperial expansion was not primarily couched in terms the pursuit of wealth and competitive edge in the world market. It was also undertaken in the pursuit of self-sufficiency, international self-affirmation and becoming the legitimate imperial successor to China as a recentring of East-Asian civilisation around Japan. In this sense Japan's alternative was less universal in outlook than the Soviet model but nonetheless a challenge to Western attempts to secure privileged access to East-Asian markets.

Sovereignty was couched in terms of a reanimated appeal to imperial divinity as the supreme embodiment of the Japanese family state and national identity. This also contrasted with the Western constitutional notions of popular sovereignty because the imperial authority as outlined in the Meiji constitution was beyond dispute and could be appealed to dismiss the prospect democratic reforms. National cohesion was presupposed and within the parameters of this interpretive horizon capitalism was developed in the direction of collective ends instead of the economic self-interest of individuals central to Western modernity. Yet in the Japanese instance the state-business nexus was more reflexive and open to reorientation upon shifts in national priorities than the Soviet model. Arnason characterises Japan in terms of the developmental state in which the dialogue between big business and bureaucratic management proved decisive in Japan's ability to bounce back from the Pacific War and emerge as an economic superpower later in the twentieth century.

Arnason claims the pattern of revolution from above also has similarities to the transformations of Meiji Japan. Japanese oligarchs initiated significant and sweeping changes to the institutional structure of the Meiji state through borrowing from the West. Despite instances of civil unrest amidst the domains Meiji Japan was ultimately initiated by a group of daimyo leaders in coalition with the imperial institution who overthrew the bakufu. The emergent Japanese oligarchs set up a central bureaucracy and sought significant and sweeping changes to the institutional structure of the Meiji state through borrowing from the West. So much so that the reanimation of imperial sovereignty as the supreme embodiment of the Japanese family state was a way of stamping such novelty with a sense of Japan's historical continuity and unique national identity. However, the particularistic Japanese national identity which facilitated a bureaucratically co-ordinated industrial revolution could be taken to extremes. The ultra-nationalist turn of the Japanese case led to a delusional overestimation of Japanese military might and a more belligerent form of military assertion that was unsustainable, culminating in the Pacific War.

Arnason's account highlights inter- and intracivilisational aspects which play a role as to why

Japan pursued an alternative modernity. In the Japanese case, the reanimation of imperial authority and its fusion with nationalism are more of a direct response to an intercivilisational encounter with the West in the nineteenth century. First in an instance of geo-political devaluation through the unequal treaty port system demanded by the Western states. Second in an exercise of intercivilisational receptivity facilitated by the Iwakura mission to garner the knowledge of the world. This resulted in comprehensive institutional borrowing from the Western states to enhance the Meiji state-building project. Amidst an extensive remodelling of the Japanese state, the imperial institution provided a newly forged national identity with a connection to a longer sense of historical continuity that was distinctly Japanese, divine in origin and superior to Chinese imperial order. The reanimation of the imperial institution also allowed the displacement of the bakufu who had capitulated to the humiliating Western demands in the first instance. However, a sense of Japanese uniqueness was also nourished by the echo of the nativist intelligentsia—*kokugaku* and Mito thought—which had already provided an interpretative thrust for the recovery of Japan's origin and destiny.

Japan's Meiji transformation was in the short-term an attempt to revoke the terms of the treaty port arrangements and to be recognised by the Western powers as an imperial contender and geo-political equal. In the longer-term it was to become the dominant centre of the East-Asian region. Both trends indicate that Japanese modernity was initiated by a sense of geo-political devaluation and undertaking significant steps to alter this situation. Whether it be via nineteenth century encounters with the Western powers or taking a more subordinate role to China in the East-Asian civilisation over a longer historical period, both dynamics were set to change according to Japan's nationalist vision.

4.4 The Implications of Alternative Modernities

It is in the relationship between sovereignty and democracy through which the Soviet model and Meiji Japan both contrast with Western modernity in a similar way. Both exhibited constitutional obstacles to a transfer of power, in principle, from state to society. The obstacles were set up either by those claiming to be acting in the name of the vanguard party-state or by those claiming to act on behalf of a bureaucratic delegation of imperial authority. Either way, both positions were constitutionally immune from critique by the broader populations governed. True, the paternalistic leadership in both contexts managed to animate acute instances of state-building, rapid industrial transformation, and global ascendance to rival the Western powers. However, both the Soviet model and Japan from the Meiji period to the Pacific war were prone to incontestable notions of authority. In the Japanese case this ultimately served to legitimise self-destructive militaristic ultra-nationalism. In the Soviet case authoritarian solutions were pushed to extremes within Stalin's

purges but survived in the successive oligarchy, its constitutional consolidation of party leadership and its attempts to maintain Soviet order at home or abroad with force and suppression if necessary. Of course, the implicit assumption which marks these anti-democratic patterns as different from the Western constellation is that constitutional allowances for popular sovereignty have been widely realised among the Western states. Arnason does not provide any further detail on this in either *SM* or *JE*, and this point would have more weight if he did. Still, the implication is that constitutional provisions for popular sovereignty are important and contribute to notions of a self-limiting state in which political actors are accountable to the populations they serve.

In this way Arnason's excursion through the two alternative modernities seems to imply that within the constellation of Western modernity human autonomy among state populations is less visibly infringed upon by political actors and statist projects of rational mastery than it is elsewhere. Yet focus upon this implication of Arnason's accounts alone arouses suspicions of a resurrected Western self-congratulation. Gurminder Bhambra argues that 'alternative modernities' accounts tend to highlight 'pathological' types such as 'communist Soviet … fascist, national-socialist types' (Bhambra 2013: 301-302). These are then held up as deficient counter-examples to the 'exemplary type' of Western modernity in which the tensions between 'autonomy, emancipation and reflexivity, on the one hand, and … discipline and restrictive controls on the other, have been resolved' (Bhambra 2013: 302).

However, the degree to which Bhambra's description fits with Arnason's position is minimal when the latter's additional social-theoretical presuppositions are considered. The caveat of interpretive conflicts is central to Arnason's perspective. The exemplary feature of Western modernity—if Arnason would be comfortable with such an evaluative phrase—is the opposite to Bhambra's characterisation. Liberal-capitalist-democracy has not resolved the tensions between conflicting interpretations of the terms of power. By contrast, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the disaster of Japanese imperialism were in part propelled by attempts to resolve the unsettling dynamics of modernity via Leninist-Marxist or nationalist ideologies. Indeed, hubristic proclamations of conclusive historical destiny and paths taken as a result within the Western constellation have in the past fallen prey to self-defeating episodes—national-socialism—and may yet again. Furthermore, Arnason leaves the door open for other alternatives to emerge rather than suggesting that they have been eclipsed by the Western variety. His speculations on the possible ascendancy of China as a combination of imperial, nationalist and capitalist orientations guided by an authoritarian party-state arrangement seem to have been accurate. As he suggested after the Soviet collapse, Western modernity 'for all its success … has not become – nor is it about to become – a universal pattern of modernity' (Arnason 1993: 16).

From another angle, criticism has been raised as to the legitimising effect alternative-modernities discourse might have for emergent authoritarian and oppressive alternatives. Arif Dirlik argues that 'for all its counter hegemonic implications, so long as it remains bound to modern categories of nations and civilisations, the idea of "alternative modernities" opens onto a historiographical parochialism, with hegemonic implications of its own in encouraging other centrisms' (Dirlik 2013: 9). Dirlik sees three main problems. First by couching alternative modernities in terms of large socio-cultural units such as nations and civilisations there is the temptation to imply a 'persistent cultural identity' that corresponds with those units as the source of alterity (Dirlik 2013: 7)—or what was touched on in Chapter 3 as path dependency. Second, too much emphasis on alternative modernities and their different political identities can provide a vocabulary through which 'ethnocentrisms' and 'political authoritarianism' can stake their claims even if such orientations are at odds with 'the improved physical, political and cultural welfare of most of humanity' (Dirlik 2013: 37, 42-43). Third, the search for alternative modernities can obscure the more pressing question of seeing the 'past … as a resource for addressing problems of a common human identity' (Dirlik 2013: 9).

Arguably Arnason's theoretical presuppositions and comparative analysis have done more explicitly to address the first problem than the second or third. While he does look at modernity through the lens of large socio-cultural units, his qualifications concerning their interpretive and conflictual basis along with their capacity for intercultural receptivity and transmission of ideas paints an open-ended picture of cultural identities in which emergent properties play a role. However, this does not mean that past and established institutional patterns have no bearing on emergent features and new challenges. Arnason's accounts suggest—to use two Weberian metaphors Arnason employed in his early writings—'the return of old gods' is possible amid confrontation with the 'iron-cage' of modern rationalisation (Arnason 1982: 4). In the Soviet context, a return of imperial expansion and statist intervention were the solution for an inconclusive revolution. For Meiji Japan, the reanimation of divine imperial authority provided a connection to Japanese authenticity at a time of radical institutional transformation and state centralisation. For China, the imperial legacy qualified the terms of Leninist-Marxist receptivity and Soviet centrism. None of these instances were uninterrupted civilisational identities per se, but it would be difficult not to acknowledge that earlier patterns in their respective histories provided interpretive reference points to viable state-building responses in a rapidly shifting geo-political environment.

It is less clear how Arnason's accounts of the Soviet model and Japan address the second problem of social-theoretical support for potentially bad alternative modernities. His ambivalent statements about the future of Western modernity leave open the possibility of emergent

alternatives which might be at odds with the liberal-capitalist-democratic constellation. The genesis of the Soviet and Japanese alternatives is marked by either asymmetrical military conflicts or unequal political relations with the Western powers in the nineteenth century. These episodes animated reassessments of Russian and Japanese pasts while projecting more legitimate futures and the prospect of an elevated status in relation to their Western antagonists. In a way, it is at least plausible that asymmetries and injustices of the past can be invoked in the pursuit of counter-projects and that such narratives could be latched onto by nostalgic reactionaries as a form of justification. However, it is difficult to see how a portrayal of two alternatives which ended in either disintegration or large-scale conflict and reorientation would provide support for further projects of authoritarian statism or closed notions of historical destiny. Nor does Arnason cast emphatic imperialist nor nationalist orientations in a particularly flattering light.

As for the third problem of engaging with the past as a resource for dealing with the problems of a common human identity, Arnason seems to have something to say about this issue albeit in elusive terms. As discussed in Chapter 3, the common feature of humanity in his thought is cultural plurality due to situated and limited interpretative access to the world from different contextual vantage points. Such contexts are not entirely self-referential. While peoples pursuing visions of modernity understand their place in the world in relation to pasts and the possibility of improved futures, they also understand themselves in relation to civilisational others whom they encounter in the global arena. In this respect, all human societies must reckon with the same problem of finding a way to make peace with a decentred self-understanding. Indeed, Arnason implies that some of the major traumas of Western and alternative modernities have occurred when decentred self-understandings were not forthcoming amid the competitive pursuit of wealth and power. In certain respects, Soviet and Japanese imperialism were counter-responses to Western imperialism. Even if Russia and Japan did not experience the imposition of foreign rule, the globally assertive examples set by the Western imperialisms and their appetite for wealth during the nineteenth century created a geopolitical environment in which abstinence from competition was a less viable course. The lesson from history is that coercive geopolitical behaviour can have knock-on effects and animate emphatic counter-projects which harbour self-assured claims to superiority analogous to that displayed by the initial antagonist. This is not a justification for alternatives but rather a caution to approach geopolitical relations with care and restraint.

The implications of alternative modernities point in the direction of the concerns outlined by Honneth in his reflections on recognition between states in Chapter 2. Given that Arnason discusses staggered trajectories of development and different distributions of power, there is a depiction of struggle for recognition at a broader geopolitical level. But there is also the implication that these

broader struggles feed back into relations of recognition between state and society and affect the scope of human autonomy facilitated within the states embarking upon global ascendancy.

Despite these possibilities, Arnason does not explicitly appeal to recognition. For the most part we get a story of different civilisational paths to modernity with divergent interpretations of power, particularly responding to the interpretive challenges of intercivilisational encounters. Arnason's tendency to retreat behind the ambiguity of cultural interpretations and meanings is a consequence of his attempts to eschew explicit normative commitments. If he were to explicitly invoke recognition in his reflections on civilisations, intercivilisational encounters and alternative modernities, he would have to allow that there was something universally and perhaps even morally important about a socially esteemed identity for all peoples. Despite his hermeneutic elusiveness, in the following chapter I will argue that central to Arnason's approach to modernity and civilisations is something like recognition, replete with a cluster of normative commitments.

CHAPTER 5: ARNASON OR HONNETH, OR ARNASON AND HONNETH?

Introduction

The present chapter returns to the central question, 'Arnason or Honneth, who provides the most convincing account of the orientations which animate modernity?' Yet before outlining how I intend to answer this question, the question itself could face a couple of counter-arguments. First, it could be argued that it is pointless to decide whose account of modernity is more persuasive because, as shown in the previous chapters, Arnason's and Honneth's respective approaches do different things. Honneth offers a social philosophy of modernity based on struggles for recognition, whereas Arnason utilises philosophical concepts to construct a historical sociology of civilisations, intercivilisational encounters and alternative modernities. Consequently, it appears that Honneth's theory is explicitly geared towards normative concerns and whereas Arnason's oriented towards comparative or descriptive issues. Such a counter-argument might suggest that we should merely leave each of these theorists to their own niche terrain and not be bothered with equalising the unequal to make assessments. However—notwithstanding Arnason's own statements about possible links to Honneth's theory of recognition—such a counter-argument would only be convincing if it really was the case that Arnason's approach was not underwritten by normative concerns at all. To the contrary, I will show that there are hidden, yet discernible normative considerations within Arnason's approach which makes his theoretical preferences amenable to concerns around recognition in their own unique way.

The second counter-argument would ask, how could we judge whether Honneth or Arnason has a more convincing account of modernity? Comprehensive criteria have not been provided in advance so that both approaches can be compared to as to their strengths and weaknesses. At best, Chapter 1 presented various conceptions of modernity and their changing shape, yet no major blueprint of persuasiveness was mapped out. While this is true, there are some general features that can be gleaned from Chapter 1. It was shown that both diversity in modernity and the diversity of modernities had become key considerations by the close of the twentieth century. A more convincing account of modernity would have to utilise concepts which could open onto diversity in modernity, and/or the diversity of modernities, and indicate what human modalities animate these socio-cultural differences. However, such diversity cannot be characterised as the free play of human differences and destinies either. A convincing account of modernity would also have to accommodate concerns around forms of power which place constraints on and obstacles to human autonomy, the latter of which is a key aspiration in modernity.

With these preliminary points in mind, I will argue that Honneth provides a more convincing account of why people—including theorists themselves—are invested in the interpretations and meanings which shape the terms of modernity. Nonetheless, I will also suggest Arnason still makes a significant and valuable contribution because he outlines aspects of broader social-historical import which figure into different interpretations of power and identity that shape the terms of modernity. In this way Arnason's account serves further to complicate a more linear reading of Honneth's work. Indeed, the interpretive conflicts which Arnason lays out would be an indispensable feature of struggles for recognition. Nonetheless, attempts to pursue alternative futures and preserve aspects of different civilisational legacies could hardly be laid the feet of culturally different interpretations and meanings alone. Some other dimension must be operative—the demand for recognition as autonomous and sovereign contemporaries, capable of developing formidable and estimable ways of life.

The argument will be structured in the following way.

In section 5.1, I will discuss how the conflicts central to modernity are characterised in Honneth's theory and how they relate to his normative claims. I will query how Honneth deals with the charge of ethnocentric theory and show that his core concept of recognition is quite robust because he builds his theory on anticipations of expanded recognition and human autonomy which his critics must presuppose. However, I will also indicate difficulties around how affirmatively the claim that struggles for recognition tend towards mutual recognition and just outcomes can be maintained.

In section 5.2, I will show that despite Arnason's own hermeneutical allergies toward building normative commitments into theory, he still invokes normative claims in his theoretical considerations. Although he tries to side-step the suspicion of ethnocentric theory by avoiding explicit normative commitments, he also argues that civilisational plurality and intercivilisational encounters have something to tell us about cultural diversity and the terms of power in modernity. I will outline a series of normative presuppositions which stem from these descriptive preferences. I will also suggest that this cannot be based upon theoretical and empirical pedantry alone, it implies that inherited theories are not only inaccurate but also in some sense unjust. Indeed, scattered throughout Arnason's theoretical and historical sociological works are clues to his normative preferences which turn out to overlap—albeit indirectly—with Honneth's concerns about recognition. However, I will highlight that Arnason emphasises particular aspects of human interpretation at times, which make it difficult to tell whether interactions with others are based primarily on the positing of meanings or on responses to a limited field of practically possible

meanings.

In section 5.3, I will then discuss how Arnason contributes to our understanding of modernity by outlining the cultural preconditions for diversity and features of cultural conflict which impinge upon visions of the future and impressions of the past. In this way Arnason indicates complexities around recognition and struggles for it which Honneth is less attentive to. Nevertheless, these are only discernible if the implicit concern with recognition is acknowledged as part of Arnason's approach. Honneth's notion of recognition is still a prerequisite for highlighting why we might care about such possibilities at all.

5.1 The Strengths and Difficulties of Recognition in Honneth's Account of Modernity

For both Arnason and Honneth, there are fundamental aspects of the human condition that must be prerequisites for conflicting and competing claims about the terms of modernity. For Arnason, this fundamental aspect is characterised in terms of human interpretations of both meaning and value. Such interpretations are in principle contestable because they issue from situated and limited human vantage points upon an otherwise shared global space. By contrast, Honneth describes this fundamental aspect primarily as the human requirement for recognition which he sees as an indispensable part of identity formation, socialisation and social integration. Nonetheless, interpretive conflicts are also presupposed by Honneth's perspective.

In *The Struggle for Recognition,* Honneth acknowledges that 'societal goals' are often based upon the 'dominant interpretations' aligned with those groups which have managed to secure recognition for their achievements and ways of life as particularly valuable (Honneth 1995: 126-127). But in modernity, inherited privileges and legal status become differentiated and identity formation is less beholden to fixed hierarchies. Honneth claims that under these conditions there is greater scope for 'secondary interpretive practice[s]' which animate struggles by different groups to elevate 'the value of abilities associated with their way of life' (Honneth 1995: 127). In Honneth's response to Fraser's charge that he has abandoned the critique of economic disparities in favour of identity claims, he indicates that interpretive conflicts about both meaning and value underwrite the terms of economic (in)justice and ultimately struggles for recognition. Moreover, he counters that cultural conflict usually occurs over the 'definition' of what activities count as 'socially necessary and valuable' in the first instance (Honneth 2001: 54). This does not mean that Honneth surrenders to interpretation wholesale. Acts of recognition are not merely interpretations that attribute meaning and value. Rather, he sees them as more socially attentive forms of interpretation.

For Honneth, acts of recognition imply a receptivity that responds correctly and appropriately to the positive qualities of others (Honneth 2012b[2007]: 80-81). In this way Honneth primarily leans upon the German usage of the term 'recognition', which implies the positive affirmation of qualities exhibited by individuals or groups, without entirely relinquishing the French and English usage, which implies identifying or recalling (Honneth 2012b: 79-80). While he admits that this receptive model of recognition implies a 'kind of value realism' he qualifies that such assessments are not based upon a fixed objective criterion, but are made according to the 'historically variable' spectrum of values that is available within 'the horizon of a particular lifeworld' (Honneth 2012b: 82-83). He further suggests that the implication of evaluations as beholden to strict historical and cultural relativism can be avoided if a moderate value realism is combined with a notion of progress (Honneth 2012b: 82-83). Progress in Honneth's sense is based on a learning process that enables people increasingly to appreciate the valuable qualities of others and to limit their own egocentrism (Honneth 2012b: 82-83, 85).

This learning process is characterised by a struggle for recognition. The struggle gains traction in the wake of the Enlightenment, and the French and American democratic revolutions, and animates cultural shifts through which ethical obligations began to be understood as based upon this-worldly human justifications, not religious and/or metaphysical ones (Anderson 1995: xiv; Honneth 1995: 124-125). From then on, the 'unequal distribution of rights and burdens' is, in principle, no longer permissible (Honneth 1995: 109, 125). Struggles for recognition by various social movements—whether capitalist, workers, women, racial, ethnic or sexual minorities—expand legal provisions from the right to liberty uninhibited by state overreach, to the right to participate in political deliberation, and eventually to the right to a fair share in basic goods and security to be able to enjoy the previously attained rights (Honneth 1995: 115).[68] While the expansion of rights has not followed this three-phase sequence for all the group categories previously mentioned, Honneth argues that abstract legal recognition alone does not satisfy recognition requirements anyway.

Beyond equality under the law, people also require recognition, according to Honneth, in both family and community arrangements (Honneth 1995: 125). In the event that there remain provisions in law that discriminate against some category of people, the capacity of the broader public to afford positive evaluation of the legally misrecognised group in solidarity can animate socio-political pressures which incentivise legal reforms. Yet social recognition in the community also allows people to develop their identities and abilities beyond immediate family relations so they can

[68] As noted in Chapter 2, Honneth borrows this sequential elaboration of rights schematic from TH Marshall's *Citizenship and Social Class* (1950).

be esteemed for their particular endeavours and achievements (Honneth 1995: 123-125). In the event that family life does not afford someone sufficient recognition, and if legal recognition is too abstract to provide anything emotionally tangible, recognition in the community can affirm their identity. Conversely when recognition in the community is withheld or withdrawn, whether due to established discriminatory practices or setbacks like being made redundant or failing to achieve culturally esteemed milestones, families or close personal relationships can afford recognition to support self-confidence. Of course, there are all sorts of combinations of recognition deficits such as post-traditional types of family that are not socially recognised, or domestic labour and child rearing that may not be recognised as contributions to the community. Nonetheless, these also come under the auspices of struggles for recognition.

Ultimately, Honneth outlines the general outcomes of recognition that we should want because of our shared predicament of starting out as children situated amidst others and having to learn how to become autonomous individuals in ways that allow others to do likewise. The best recognition conditions, according to Honneth, are: first, familial or interpersonal relations that give us confidence but also, by implication, mediate our worst impulses and give us adequate appreciation for the aspirations of others; second, legal relations that grant us abstract respect and protections as persons, but by implication, also outline our obligations as full members; and third, community relations which provide us with esteem for our own particular contributions but by implication, also the expectation of personal accountability (Honneth 1995: 77-81, 100-107, 133, 127-128, 171).

Admittedly, it is quite plausible that recognition is never entirely secured by most people in all three spheres of interaction without some discontents and deficits, but Honneth is simply saying that the more human relations move in this direction the better life will be for more people.[69] This hinges upon Honneth's conviction that an undistorted sense of self and the possibility of individual autonomy must be built on the understanding that our 'autonomy depends on the autonomy of [our] partners in interaction' (Honneth 2003: 259). Of course, this provokes the question, what if some else's autonomy violates our own? For Honneth, such a scenario would be a performative self-contradiction because a violation of our own autonomy by another would imply both an egotistical misrecognition and therefore a lack of autonomy on behalf of the violator. Admittedly, it is likely that the prerequisites for autonomy that Honneth outlines do not exist in any pure sense within human interactions. He is merely pointing out that people's autonomy increases to the degree that

[69] Honneth expands the schematic of recognition spheres in *Freedom's Right* from three to five spheres of recognition. They are interpersonal relationships, morality, law, the economy and democratic politics (Honneth 2017: 128). Nonetheless he has not relinquished his view that mutual recognition is ultimately connected to the conditions for autonomy. Therefore these expansions do not alter the overall thrust of his view of modernity.

interactions move towards the mutual mediation of egotistical impulses in the acknowledgement that the other is a person of worth that deserves the respect one would like for oneself.

Honneth wears his normative preferences on his sleeve. He explicitly states that the moral expectations of equality—which are also interpretations of the scope and limits of power—that have gained expression in liberal-capitalism are morally superior to the expectations which animated the honour societies that preceded it (Honneth 2003: 184). But it would be a misunderstanding to suggest that Honneth is merely a status-quo apologist for liberal-capitalism. Indeed, he does not endorse the outcomes of neo-liberal deregulation that, since the early 1980s, have transformed the structure of employment towards more flexible and precarious short-term work arrangements and nourished the promise of individual autonomy without, as he sees it, delivering the institutional conditions for its material realisation (Honneth 2012b: 91-93). Under such conditions, employees become cast as employers of their own labour within a competitive, risk-laden market in which they are encouraged to advertise themselves appropriately and where every new job is characterised as a product of their own decisions, not an institutional structure that minimises obligations to employees and maximises returns to shareholders (Honneth 2012b: 91-94; Honneth and Hartman 2012[2004]: 175).

Despite such problems, it does not appear that Honneth is prepared relinquish the claim that, in principle, liberal-capitalist modernity allows greater scope for recognition-based combinations of individual autonomy and social inclusion—that can potentially be built upon—than did previous forms of honour societies. When queried about whether he could be wrong about the possibility of progress to this end, just as the Eurocentric thinkers of the Enlightenment were wrong in certain respects, Honneth has responded that 'the problem is not whether we or not we might be wrong, but whether or not we have any normative basis for saying they were wrong' (Honneth, Allen and Cooke 2010: 167). In this way Honneth stands by the notion that struggles for recognition—whether towards fairer working conditions, more reciprocal forms of interpersonal relations, greater political participation, more just treatment of minorities and unconventional identities—have expanded the horizon of what we have culturally learnt and what we can draw upon in our evaluations of what is fair in our relations with others. Even if the injustices of capitalism, colonialism, imperialism, patriarchy or racism are raised as a counter to Honneth's optimism, he can simply point out that these are instances of misrecognition and that struggles for recognition and expectations of a normatively improved future based on adequate recognition actually underwrite denunciations of these shortcomings.[70] Such denunciations appeal to norms of equality which

[70] Indeed, he has indicated as much when he has taken issue with what he sees as Fraser's and Taylor's separation of identity politics of from older material and legal grievances. For Honneth, the struggles of the worker's movement, the

found articulation in Enlightenment and revolutionary aspirations, albeit unevenly and insufficiently instituted.[71]

Even so, Honneth's approach can also be viewed with suspicion. How can he manage to avoid merely speaking through the standards and values of Eurocentric social philosophy? Honneth would likely say that although he cannot avoid thinking through the tradition in which he is most familiar, this does not automatically lead to a misrepresentation of unfamiliar identities. Instead, Honneth would ask, upon what normative commitments does such an accusation rest? This is ultimately the same question that Honneth asked of Foucault's characterisations of modernity, as discussed in Chapter 1. Indeed, he argued that if Foucault and his readers had not relied upon some implicit notion of human autonomy that was being infringed through psychiatric, medical, penal and sexual forms of normalisation, none of his books would appear to the readers as critical at all, but merely descriptions of events (Honneth 1991 [1988]: xxiv-xxvi). Even then, the question of normative commitments returns because the selection of certain events and not others also implies a particular reconstruction of history by which the author aims to inform the reader not only factually but also morally.

Likewise, the criticisms of Honneth on the grounds of ethnocentrism face a similar kind of dilemma, because such an accusation would have to assume that some kind of representational injustice is done to identities vastly different from Honneth's. If such a critique rests upon the claims—similar to those noted in Chapter 1, taking their cue from the cultural turn and the various post-isms of the late twentieth century—that only the local can describe the local then by extension only the local can evaluate the local, this position confronts a few self-negating problems (Alexander and Smith 2003: 22). First, in making that claim one is already speaking beyond the boundaries of locality, for the claim encompasses a broader field of localities in a circle of concern and speaks for them in advance so they can be allowed to speak on their own terms. This is really a quasi-universal claim about the justness of representation.

Second, relativist positions of this ilk have terrible implications when asserted too emphatically, for they lead to the impossibility of making comparisons between social patterns and discerning which ones might be preferable. Consequently, they make it difficult to critique whatever exists in a given context through an appeal to counter-factual possibilities. For example,

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women's movement, the black civil rights movement and movements for national independence from imperial rule all come under the banner of what he sees as struggles for recognition (Honneth 2001: 53-54).

[71] It seems Honneth is willing—albeit very briefly— to acknowledge older precedents for notions of justice in the theological re-acquaintance with Ancient Greek philosophy in the thirteenth century à la Thomas Aquinas (Honneth 2014 [2011]: 17) but also the outgrowth of secular notions of human rights from Christian humanism (Honneth 2007c: 208-209).

contexts in which the recruitment of child soldiers is a widespread social fact cannot be criticised by an appeal to contexts where this practice is not an acceptable form of socialisation.

Third, if one attempts to retreat from normative concerns to a supposedly descriptive level of relativism and claim that we cannot compare the incomparable, another problem arises because notions of the incomparable can only emerge from comparing (Waldenfels 2014: 84). If different forms of socio-cultural life were so radically incomprehensible to each other that we cannot compare them, then we could not say what is different about them, nor could we distinguish what is particular to our familiar ways of life. The relativist position of incomparability saws off the branch upon which it is perched.

In contrast, Honneth's core concept of recognition is rather robust. Accusations levelled against him about the limits of Eurocentric theory still rely upon something like moral expectations of recognition for different identities and a notion of human autonomy which is unjustly infringed in the absence of recognition. Of course, this in itself does not let Honneth off the hook entirely, particularly with respect to the range of possible conflicts that struggles for recognition might entail and whether the outcomes of such struggles lead to normative improvements. There are doubts as to whether struggles for recognition always arrive at more just outcomes. Moreover, struggles for recognition may not lead to instances of withheld recognition being dissolved. Instead, it may be the case that new polarisations can emerge between, on the one hand, those deemed to be withholding recognition from particular groups and individuals and, on the other hand, those who have withdrawn recognition or enact derecognition for positions of withholding out of solidarity with the misrecognised.

For example, the active pursuit of social justice may seek newer frontiers by which to illuminate withheld recognition once the scope of recognition has begun its post-traditional trajectory. Along with new possibilities and opportunities for identity formation, expanded and detailed vocabularies and matrices of injustice can also emerge. This dynamic is certainly captured by notions of intersectionality which aim to disclose 'deeply entrenched inequalities of race, class, gender, sexuality, ability and citizenship status' and highlight the difficulties that may confront those whom experience the least privileged combination of such patterns (Bilge 2014: 407).[72] The zealous quest for social justice could also animate interpretations that overemphasise a deterministic matrix of injustice and intersectional tropes as self-evident guides to how power operates. People with attributes which appear to resemble those of groups who were earlier beneficiaries of modern recognition gains—white, male, heterosexual, Western, etc—may be more readily identified as

[72] Also see Walby et al. 2012 for a general overview and Crenshaw 1989 for introducing the idea of intersectionality, albeit with more modest scope.

complicit reproducers of oppression, or withheld recognition in Honneth's terms. This oppressor/oppressed lens might be reinforced in the light of both the persistent inequity between different demographics overall and the failure of those more advantaged to adequately renounce their own privilege. Admittedly the foil against simplified oppressor/oppressed interpretations moving too far in this direction, would be recognition for the particularity of persons. This would acknowledge the possibility not only of inter-group solidarity but also of intra-group disagreement—particularly, among those cast as oppressed, disagreements about what forms of oppression are the main causes of disadvantage and to what degree they determine outcomes. There does not seem to be anything inconsistent with these possibilities in Honneth's thought, but a streamlined reading of his struggle for recognition hypothesis might underplay the challenges that emerge around questions of recognition.

However, it is also plausible that struggles for recognition face additional difficulties. There may also be scenarios where those who identify with conservative and progressive orientations can become more polarised and double-down on their recognition claims due to a bid for intra-group social esteem and to minimise intra-group dissonance by opposing divisive claims.[73] These dynamics can take more extreme forms, whether those of emboldened far-right groups or enraged far-left activism, particularly in light of unexpected political swings such as Brexit or the election of Donald Trump, which signal a nostalgia for the bordered socio-cultural uniformities of the past. Yet there are seemingly more benign forms that still pose significant tensions within democracies. The potential for such instances seems to be particularly apparent in Taylor's formulation of the discrepancy between the politics of equal dignity aiming to preserve identical treatment in legal terms and the politics of difference asserting that formal equality is not social equity of outcomes and therefore that differential concessions need to be made to balance the scale of history (Taylor 1997: 39-40).

In contrast, Ricoeur's approach to recognition highlights that preoccupation with abstract notions of justice in terms of equivalence can lead to vengeful patterns of blow for blow or obligatory patterns of gift for gift (Ricoeur 2005: 227-231). This pattern can only be broken through acts of asymmetry which, in a sense, recognise asymmetry, whether through forgiveness, surrender or genuine generosity that does not ask for anything in return (Ricoeur 2005: 227-231). As discussed in Chapter 2, Ricoeur potentially points to avenues out of vicious circles of withheld and

[73] 'Doubling down' can describe a strategy by which people sought to ease the unsettling discomfort—cognitive dissonance—that emerges from a discrepancy between their beliefs and contending information. Instead of mediating beliefs and ideologies in the wake of such dissonance, there can be tendencies for 'new justifications to reaffirm … original outlooks' (Jacob 2017: 1).

withdrawn recognition. But they involve instances of compromise and personal responsibility that are challenging and risky for people to enter into. Additionally, Ricoeur seems to speak primarily in terms of relations at a more strictly interpersonal level than Honneth. It is harder to pin-point how broader social relations are laid open for these ruptures in tit-for-tat institutional patterns, without overwhelming crisis, policy response and regulatory intervention.

In more recent reconstructions of modernity, Honneth has explicitly acknowledged how fragile and uncertain is historical progress towards the social conditions for individual autonomy (Honneth 2014: 321). He notes that every expansion of recognition 'run[s] the risk of passing into fear and terror' (Honneth 2014: 321). There are certain periods which he claims cannot be integrated into normative reconstructions and are 'mis-developments' which standout as an aberrant historical 'Other' (Honneth 2014: 321). One such episode is Hitler's rise to power and National Socialist attempts to redraw international relations and the German constitution in terms of 'the nation's destiny' that had been 'temporarily interrupted' by 'internal' and 'external' enemies of a natural 'people' (Honneth 2014: 321). Admittedly, a cycle of failed recognition is potentially at play here too, particularly in the light of German aggression and then humiliation after the First World War due to the severe restrictions and reparations demanded by the Treaty of Versailles (Honneth 2014: 318). However, Honneth is less interested in cycles of failed recognition than avenues for its greater realisation. While all history is a selective recounting of events, this tendency in his thought at times resembles a normative highlight reel less sensitised to the episodes that deviate from the preferred end game. Despite Honneth's disclaimer, the National Socialist episode is still a part of the story of struggles for recognition and a frightening reminder of how such demands can mutate into distortions with dire consequences, particularly when mediated by charismatic political figures seeking an uncompromising correction to the course of history.

At any rate, this brief excursion through the various difficulties that surround the terms of recognition, is enough to cast doubt upon the degree to which Honneth can say that struggles for recognition necessarily tend towards the expansion of mutual recognition and normative improvements. Elaborated vocabularies of social justice and an extended range of marginalised identities have expanded what counts as withheld recognition. By contrast, this may also give rise to instances of resistance and to calls for a return to a simpler time. Such calls may be attempts to neutralise both the possibility of less flattering self-understandings and challenges to the status quo posed by potential shifts in the dominant interpretations. The slogan 'Make America Great Again!' is a stark reminder of what such combinatory pressures of withheld and withdrawn recognition can lead to.

Beyond this, aberrant episodes—or mis-developments—would also be a significant feature of the moral learning process that Honneth sees as part of modernity. Human activities that seemed like struggles for recognition but were in retrospect actually fraudulent notions of recognition which pandered to egocentrism and ethnocentrism would be important sources of historical reflection. They would be important not only to understand the institutional alterations that led down those paths and the misrecognitions which took place, but also to assess the distance we have been able to place between ourselves and such events for better or worse. These precedents feed back into our evaluative horizons and are indispensable for any notion of progress that is concerned with expanding the scope for mutual recognition and human autonomy.

Honneth's theory is primarily geared to diversity within modernity. The modernity he highlights is of a specific order. It is a potentially global condition in which the unequal distribution of burdens, rights, privileges and opportunities—within state arrangements—becomes an intolerable prospect for individual human identity formation and animates struggles for recognition (Honneth 1995: 109, 125).

Nonetheless, Honneth's ideas still seem to spill out into broader categories of identity and difference. Not only has he pointed to broader collective and anonymous forms of identity such as those of nations and states, he has also indicated that recognition is plausibly operative between states. (Honneth 2003: 123; 2014: 318-324; 2012: 141). Moreover, the policies pursued by state political representatives and their justifications to the populations they govern rely upon ideas beyond the functional outcomes of policy and are generally tied to notions of past cultural and political achievements and attaining 'an appropriate self-image in the eyes of the world' (Honneth 2012: 141-144). These ideas fit with Honneth's struggle for recognition within modernity to the extent that states move towards accommodation of increasing numbers of recognition claims. To the extent that they do not facilitate individual recognition claims yet exhibit other structural trappings of modernity—science, technology, capitalism, and bureaucracy—and still strive for recognition in the broader global arena, are they still a part of modernity? It is less clear how Honneth's approach relates to the diverse expressions of modernity, other than by potentially labelling them a 'mis-development'.

5.2 The Normative Implications of Interpretation in Arnason's Account of Modernity

In this section I discuss Arnason's conceptual preferences and the normative implications that result from the way he thinks modernity *ought* to be considered. For Arnason, the interpretation of

meaning is the prerequisite for human world making. Like Honneth, he accepts that this entails evaluations, whether positive or negative, but for him—following a unique rereading of Max Weber—the first step of interpretation is to lend the world significance in a particular way, amidst a broader field of physical processes that could have occupied human attention in different ways than they otherwise have (Arnason 1993a: 92; 2003a: 89) .[74] As we shall see, Arnason's strong reading of this meaning/evaluation dyad—more recently discussed in terms of ideas and interests—does raise some questions.[75] It can lead to unidirectional influence of culture upon power or as McLennan argues the 'subordination of power to culture' (McLennan 2000: 288). However, this issue does not entirely square with other aspects which Arnason points to. Suffice to say for now, Arnason does not imply that such interpretations are entirely arbitrary, for he suggests that there is a discernible unity in interpretive and linguistic patterns amongst a group of people that can be generally understood as culture (Arnason 1992: 248).

For Arnason, the unity of culture is not wholly determining per se, for he admits that culture can encompass plural perspectives on the world (Arnason 1992: 248). Yet he also claims that culture can develop into a more 'explicit and structured conflict of such interpretations' (Arnason 1992: 248). Of course, this would presuppose that some shared forms of evaluation and debate have gained dominance over others so that patterns could emerge between people that make the practical ordering of human experience possible over time while allowing for ongoing conflicts about the terms of order. This also implies that people are involved in patterns which are not the sum total of individual intentions, but rather the emergent qualities of interactions which create pressures, constraints and possibilities for directions of social life. Arnason would accept this because he could merely say that patterns of human societies are discernible according to particular tensions between their established institutions and their ongoing instituting activities (Arnason 1989a: 32)—social-historical patterns of 'history made and history in the making' à la Castoriadis (1987 [1975]: 108).

However, Arnason wants to emphasise the signification of meaning as a prerequisite for socio-cultural relations, primarily so he can relativise the evaluative horizons which emerge from them (Arnason 1982: 9; 1993: 93; 2003: 89). Part of this preference stems from his sympathy for Castoriadis's critique of Marxist and functionalist pretentions to identifying meta-historical societal

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[74] The human capacity for making aspects of the world meaningful, as Arnason sees it, has been noted in both phenomenology and classical sociology. Moreover, discerning a figure on the ground in Merleau-Ponty's terms or positing a finite segment in an infinity of physical processes in Weber's terms.

[75] This Weberian dyad is still a current feature in Arnason's thought. However, he has rephrased it in terms of ideas and interests. He suggests that for Weber 'interests were the driving forces of human action, but the interpretive role of ideas channelled the interests in specific directions' (Arnason 2020: 146). Arnason then goes onto utilise this schema to discuss Bolshevik scientism and its relationship to statist management.

needs that are the determinants of history and that provide the key to stable social orders (Arnason 1989a: 29). Instead, Arnason refers to the world as a broader ultimate horizon that can be comprehensively articulated from diverse cultural points of view—what he calls sometimes cultural articulations of the world and at other times horizons—but never entirely reducible to any of them (Arnason 1992: 255; 2003a: 206; 2010: 69). In this way he allows for the possibility of conflicts of interpretation not only within cultural-institutional contexts but also between these broader patterns in a global space (Arnason 1992: 256-258).

The relationship between interactions in the global arena and meanings of longer social-historical import underwrite Arnason's notion of modernity 'as a field of tensions' (Arnason 1991 [1986]: 185). Such tensions emerge because while societies 'caught up in the global process of Modernisation at a later date' can use earlier modernisers as reference points, they can also move beyond imitative models of state-directed development towards competition, enhancing these alternative notions of progress with reference to respective traditions within 'rival projects' (Arnason 1991: 193, 203). This partly receptive and partly antagonistic relationship between Western European and North American states and their Soviet and East Asian others, becomes a key motif that underwrites Arnason's reconstructions of the Russian-Soviet, Chinese and Japanese state-formation as 'alternative modernities' (1993a: 128; 1997a: 498; 2001: 147; 2020: 115-118).

Arnason implies that the Soviet, East Asian and Western states also count as civilisations in the sense of 'a common fund of ideas and institutions' which can extend across groups of societies (Durkheim and Mauss 1971: 810; Nelson 1981: 83-84). Moreover, as Arnason concisely puts it, a civilisation can be understood a 'a common horizon and a spectrum of possible variations' within whose orbit multiple societies move (Arnason 1997b: 54). Such patterns also have intercivilisational implications. Interactions between states that move within the orbit of different horizons impact their respective pursuits of 'wealth and power' in state-building projects, but also their 'self-questioning and self-transformation' in light of exposure to others (Arnason 1997b: 374). In this way Arnason implies that the limitations to Western modernity, or rather to wholesale westernisation, can only be understood by tracing the impacts of intercivilisational encounters and the translation of particular civilisational legacies into alternative modernities (Arnason 1993b: 14; 2006: 52). Approaching the analysis of modernity in this way allows for a 'previously impossible recognition and understanding of plurality' (Arnason 1997b: 374).

Of course, the question can be raised, why bother with this task at all? The results could imply convoluted detours from more viable patterns, particularly if it turns out that two of the main alternative modernities that Arnason has focused on ended in either disintegration (the Soviet

instance) or reorientation (Japan following the disaster of the Pacific War). Would this approach not merely function as a nuanced vindication of Western liberal-democratic-capitalism as, if not the best—Honneth certainly anticipates that it could be better—then perhaps the least-worst existing variation of modernity?

Arnason does not seem to come to this conclusion. He has consistently been a naysayer with respect to convergence narratives, whether theories of uniform Modernisation, the unfinished project of Enlightenment, or the end of history, and he has often indicated the possibilities of resurgent geopolitical tensions (Arnason 1993b: 16; 2003a: 326; 2003b: 33; 2006: 51-53; 2020: 28). This cautionary intuition is reasonable. The continuation of authoritarian regimes in China and Russia, but also the resurgence of nationalist populism amongst the Western states in the early twenty-first century lend some plausibility to such a disposition (Ji Zhe 2008: 250; Maslovskii 2015: 58; Delanty 2019: 365-397).

However, there is a difficulty with Arnason's position, for he claims that his 'pluralistic and comparative turn calls for a more clearly value-neutral idea of modernity' without 'strong normative orientations' (2003b: 32). Arnason is reluctant to outline explicitly what forms of modernity might be preferable to others, primarily because in doing so he would be at risk of merely reproducing the standards of meaning and evaluation of his own social-historical horizon.

Arnason's hermeneutical allergy to bold normative claims colours his critique of Habermas's *Communicative Action* formulation of the evaluative discrepancy between modern and traditional views (Arnason 1982b, 1986, 1987, 1992, 1993a, 1996, 1997a). By contrast, the evaluative discrepancy between the modern and the traditional, as we have seen, is a distinction which Honneth seems sympathetic to, particularly in the light of his claims about the moral superiority of post-traditional forms of recognition. Arnason is much more wary about making such claims because he is less convinced that traditional interpretations are entirely superseded by modern ones. Instead, they can still affect the particular institutional expression of modernity. Indeed, it is the emphasis upon theoretical correctness which makes space for diverse paths and trajectories of modernity on Arnason's side and the emphasis on the normative requirement of recognition to foster human autonomy on Honneth's side that appears the be the primary divergence between the two theorists.[76] Despite this, there are still overlaps between their respective positions.

We get a glimpse of Arnason's own normative presuppositions in his early criticism of

[76] An ongoing philosophical problem that runs from Hume onwards concerning the distinction between is and ought. Similarly, Habermas refers to the discrepancy between fact and value. However, the issue can be traced further back to the Ancient Greek legacy in terms of the discrepancy between *physis* and *nomos*.

Habermas in 'Modernity as Project and a Field of Tensions'. As we saw in Chapter 1, Arnason does not see modern views based on Habermas's communicative rationality as the universal prerequisite for mutual understanding, for he is not convinced that distinctions between truth, justice and taste that have become accepted within Western modernity can capture the variety of modern self-understandings (Arnason 1991:181-182).[77]

Of course, questions remain. Why would the risk of false universalism in theorising matter? On what basis would a turn to comparative historical sociology as a 'counterweight to parochialism' be important?[78] Is it because certain interpretations have ascended alongside exercises in technological, economic, administrative, imperial and colonial power, so that all the different potentials of cultural interpretations and ways of life instituted prior to Western maritime expansion and modern transformations have not been given their due?

Answers to these questions can be given on behalf of motivations for theoretical/empirical correctness which aim to understand the complexity of interactions, interpretive appropriations, instituted counterpoints and various historical trajectories which do not fit with more streamlined affirmative or critical narratives of Western modernity. Yet answers can also be given on behalf of justice in terms of acknowledging that historical exclusions have not really enabled the conditions for Habermas's notion of symmetrical ideal speech situations. So, as the beneficiary of dominant modern narratives, one should mitigate the potential for ethnocentric hubris by providing a more nuanced account. Whether Arnason sides with one or the other or some combination of both is not entirely clear. However, he does emphasise the importance of two aspects: first, there should be 'greater recognition of diversity'; second, 'no balanced account can be given without a historical analysis of different trajectories of modernity' (Arnason 2001: 132).

If the issue is framed in this way, it is plausible to surmise that through his disagreement with Habermas and his preparedness to consider alternative contexts of modernity as a result, Arnason implicitly agrees with Habermas on two points. First, he does not see all interpretations as equal. He must accept that some interpretations are either more accurate or more just than others. If he did not, proposing an elaborate set of theoretical propositions as the potential anchor points for

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[77] Habermas sees modernity as both a shift in interpretive differentiations between validity claims that can be made with respect to science, law/secular ethics and autonomous art/art criticism which accompany the structural transformations in market economies within territorial states. As he sees it modern understandings develop through an intersubjective accountability process which is less likely to conflate facts about the natural world and physical processes, with the socially constituted terms of morality and what individuals feel about them (Habermas 1984: 84-101; 1987: 316, 397-398).

[78] Arnason discusses 'historical research (as)…an indispensable counterweight to parochialism' in his article 'Theorising History and Questioning Reason' (1996).

historical sociology would be pointless.

Second, he implies that our statements about the world should be mediated by the claims of others. While Habermas discusses such mediation primarily in terms of intersubjective communication between two or more people (for which Honneth would see recognition as a prerequisite), Arnason transposes this onto a much broader level between patterns of modernity and state-formation potentially underwritten by civilisational differences. In this way, Arnason suspends claims about what constitutes the socially and morally preferable normative thrust of modern self-understandings. This is primarily because he seems to suggest we are not in the position to say anything too comprehensive about them without, at the very least, exploring ambitious alternatives.

Nevertheless, we might ask, why focus on modernities at all? Critics such as Gurminder Bhambra and Arif Dirlik, assert that the multiple modernities thesis just reaffirms Eurocentric assumptions that statehood and market participation are the definitive markers of what is modern while only making a concession to the cultural modulation of these institutions in non-Western contexts (Bhambra 2007b: 878; Dirlik 2003: 284-285). According to these critics, such an approach upholds the core categories of state and market derived from European experience as the lenses by which to qualify the modernity of a given social group. While their respective critiques suggest that slavery, colonialism and empire are aspects of European ascendancy that get short shrift from those sympathetic to the notion of multiple modernities, the common core of their arguments is that the institutions of states and markets are somehow intrinsically both European and modern—at the very least, modern through a Eurocentric lens.

However, both states and markets were evident across societies that predate modernity by a significant margin, so perhaps they mean nation-states and industrial capitalist markets.[79] In this respect, they are right to note that robust forms of nation-state identity and capitalist markets driven by industrial production emerge in Western Europe earlier than elsewhere. However, to imply that such dynamics retain their European character once they gained institutional traction in non-European societies overplays European control of the institutions by which non-European peoples began to live, but also underplays the agency of those who confronted them. It seems more plausible that certain aspects of these institutions were drawn upon and other aspects resisted, thus crystallising in re-interpretive inventions and novel combinations within societies beyond Western Europe, not replications (the so-called modern aspect) with different cultural modulations (the so-

[79] Archaeologists, discuss use the term ‘pristine states’ to discuss early stratified and politically centralised societies such as Egypt and Mesopotamia in 3000 BCE and 200 BCE in what are now known as Mexico and Peru (Flannery 1999: 3). Archaeologists and anthropologists also discuss intermediate commercialised economies in Sumerian, Mixtec and Aztec city-states and advanced pre-capitalist economies in Old-Assyrian, Swahili and Classical Greece city-states along with the Roman Empire (Smith 2004: 79)

called multiple aspect). By allowing for such institutional mediations and reconfigurations, it is possible to side-step the implications—to which such characterisations ultimately lead when stated too strongly—of mutually reinforcing cultural essentialism and cultural appropriation at a geopolitical level between whole societies.[80]

Beyond this, one might view Arnason's own hermeneutical allergy to normative commitments with suspicion and argue that there is still every possibility that some standards and values derived from his own social-historical context will find their way into the analysis of contexts vastly different from his own. Such a risk would be particularly pertinent in discussions of Asian contexts, whereby a misrepresentative orientalism might creep in. It is likely that Arnason would agree that the utilisation of the available theoretical vocabularies at hand issues from the unavoidable circumstance that his own interpretations have particular cultural-institutional parameters, discussed above as evaluative horizons. It does not follow that he would agree that this inevitably leads to characterisations of cultural others which are entirely fallacious. Nor would he agree that there is inevitable slippage into representations of the East as inferior in contrast to a glowing self-understanding of an ascendant West, further extending the hegemony of the latter. As Arnason sees it, the deconstruction of orientalist scholarship should have opened up the possibility of 'less prejudiced' views, not the 'rejection of intercultural dialogue' or the 'projection of an unchanging power structures' that assert themselves from West to East (Arnason 1992: 265; 2003a: 49, 336-339). Again, learning to acquire a more balanced interpretation of cultural others emerges as an important theoretical endeavour for Arnason.

Like Honneth, who claims that recognition has historical precedents that open up onto struggles for recognition and potential learning processes to that end, Arnason also points to instances that have similar implications. He claims that critical self-reflection emerges as the unsettling side of Western self-questioning in the wake of intercivilisational encounters and interactions otherwise characterised by colonial conquest and expansion (Arnason 1996: 19). The long-term confrontation with cultural otherness becomes a source of vexation and challenge to the more self-congratulatory interpretations of historical experience within the Western civilisational complex (Arnason 1997a: 38-42). Arnason notes that Western scholars had to confront the possibility that they were merely from one form of civilisation amongst many and that they must learn about those other civilisations (Arnason 1997a: 38; 2020: 100, 214). The discipline of anthropology—which Arnason claims emerged from this process—is not without ongoing self-

[80] For an acknowledgement of the mutually constitutive conceptual relations between cultural essentialist claims of definitive outsiders and insiders and cultural appropriation claims of harms done to insiders by the use and display of cultural forms—often aesthetic—by outsiders, see Matthes (2016).

criticism of its role in producing knowledge about the colonised and its potential complicity in reproducing derogatory schematics.[81] Arnason also admits that Eurocentric self-assertions as the industrial spearhead of progress were very much in vogue from the early nineteenth century to the First World War (Arnason 2020: 200-201).

Nevertheless, Arnason implies that the potentiality for decentred self-understandings had already become influential within the development of social thought, as a by-product of Western expansion, long before more widespread sensibilities about marginalised and misrepresented others were articulated within the late twentieth century. Granted, the scope of this critical self-reflection should not be overstated. Arnason does acknowledge that Western expansion into the Americas, destruction of indigenous populations and the importing of slave labour from Africa are also part of the story (1997a: 38; 2020: 94). However, the exercise of power was not entirely unidirectional. Arnason suggests that 'the subaltern political condition' imposed on cultural others in the global arena, did not 'defuse their cultural challenges to the West' some of which animated the largest conflicts of the twentieth century (Arnason 1997b: 9). His preference for reconstructing a historical-sociological interpretation of Japan as an alternative modernity emerges as a rejection of both wholesale Westernisation narratives and overdrawn accusations of orientalism. He refuses to overstate Western dominance or wholesale institutional transmission, and he abstains from the infantilisation of Asian others.

Of course, there is a bias in Arnason's social theory towards societies of a particular type. Jeremy Smith highlights that Arnason's approach 'clearly privileges only those (civilisations) clearly connected to imperial and national states' (Smith 2005: 29). Stateless and non-stratified societies have not occupied much of Arnason's attention (Smith 2005: 29). In this sense Arnason's accommodation of diversity is incomplete. However, it seems that the focus on concentrated social-units of power—states—in the margins of the West or non-Western contexts serves to prevent swift conflations between the West and the rest with oppressor/oppressed schematics. Arnason's approach shows how Western episodes of state-building, imperialism and colonialism are of interest. The effect is not to absolve Western imperialism or to imply a deep-seated human proclivity for domination irrespective of cultural backgrounds, but rather to acknowledge that under certain geo-political conditions assertive responses and emphatic counter-projects become plausible options.

To summarise, Arnason's framing of modernity rests, implicitly, on several normative

[81] For critical discussions on the relationship between colonialism and anthropology, see Pels (1997; 2008); also Lewis (1973).

commitments. First, he emphasises meaning over evaluation and instrumentalism. This is not a moral claim in itself, but it indicates that Arnason does not want to naturalise power and end up with a perspective that implies that dominant societies have the most adequate grasp of the world unmediated by ideas and interpretations of power. He veers away from a rationalisation-evolutionary narrative and this, in principle, allows for inquiry into which ideas and interpretations have led to different patterns of political power, forms of stratification and respective relations between elites and populations within different territories. His approach can be seen as an intermediary step towards asking what arrangements of power we might prefer given dominant trends in different contexts and at different periods.

Second, the recognition of cultural difference and diversity in modernity is more balanced and appropriate than a narrative of historical convergence. It is more appropriate because it enables us to consider different societal trajectories not as failures to modernise, or as inferior modernities, but instead as struggles to retain some meaningful connection to inherited institutional contexts while confronting difficulties of interstate competition and the impersonal implications scientific, bureaucratic and capitalist trends.

Third, despite cultural differences there are still possibilities for intercultural receptivity. This implies that cultural relativism is not wholly determining. Ideas travel between societies from different cultural backgrounds, and we may stand to learn something from exploring the transmission of ideas and interpretations that cannot be reduced to imposition or cultural appropriation, but rather speak to the issue of recognising the positive qualities of others and human creativity.

Fourth, there are limitations to trans-cultural duplication of institutions, and we also stand to learn something from this. This follows from the previous points on the preservation of inherited meanings and the possibilities of intercultural receptivity. The transmission of ideas and interpretations have their limits. They are limited because cultural-institutional differences crystallise over time and animate generations of people. These patterns become ongoing reference points to historical continuity, whether in terms of institutional affirmation, reform, or renunciation. The scope for receptivity to foreign ideas is also mediated by geopolitical asymmetries, past experiences of social instability, instability amid the presence of foreigners, defeats in armed conflict or capitulation to the unjust demands of foreign powers.

Fifth, it is important to mediate our own self-understandings by reference to others and to build upon the precedents which have opened up our interpretive/evaluative horizons. This speaks to the issue of decentring ethnocentric and egocentric hubris in our understandings of history and

the contours of modernity. Self-congratulatory narratives of modernity require rethinking in relation to alternatives. Even the self-defeating episodes of alternative modernities can function as analogues for hubristic statist, nationalist or emancipatory claims to which those moving within the orbit of liberal-democratic-capitalism are not immune.

These five normative features of Arnasons theoretical preferences all seem to have an affinity with Honneth's notion of recognition. However, it is one thing to say that a set of norms is desirable because it provides a nuanced and balanced view; it is quite another to say that a set of norms is desirable because it supports a fundamental social and individual need that should not be violated. This latter step would not really be open to Arnason if, at the level of fundamental concepts, he is primarily hitched to the ubiquity of interpretation and meaning, and if the human capacity to give aspects of experience meaning is primordial to human capacity to evaluate them.

The unidirectional meaning/evaluation dyad is misleading and does not square well with other aspects of Arnason's thought in two ways. First, Arnason's recasting of Castoriadis's notion of imaginary signification places much more emphasis on variable continuities with established institutions in different societies than Castoriadis does. This implies that cultural/civilisational diversity is not just a matter of different constellations of interpretations, but also of human responses to the physical terms of their existence. Such diversity does not follow solely from different meanings, but also from institutions which have transformed ideas into materialities and geographical settings that already exist and provide limitations to the scope of interpretations. One would have to go back to some prehistoric point of the human condition, before tool making and language, to assert the primordiality of meaning with force. Even then, the question of human responses to particular climates, available resources, threats posed by other species, and so on, would be cause for scepticism as to what degree we can lay human evaluation primarily at the feet of our capacity for meaning. That Arnason allows for both institutional and situational influences on human meanings is enough to imply that there are states of affairs that exist independently of the human capacity to posit meaning that impress limitations upon our meanings and evaluations.

Second, this understanding is particularly important when shifting the frame to intercivilisational encounters and the emergence of alternative modernities. The development of alternative modernities in Arnason's analysis generally follows from some instance of exacerbated interpretive conflict and identity crisis in the wake of intercivilisational encounters. In the Russian circumstance, this is couched in terms of defeat in the Crimean War and dysfunctional attempts by the Tsarist leadership to implement industrial capitalism from above after being drawn deeper into it, while still having to confront underdeveloped capacities and popular resentment (Arnason 1993:

54, 71-81). In the Japanese context, such a crisis occurs after 250 years of closely regulated contact with Western traders ends with unequal treaty port conditions imposed upon Japan by the Western states backed by threats of force and a disruption of the *bakuhan* system (Arnason 1997b: 423-427). Similarly, in China unequal treaty ports relations, the Opium war, the Taiping rebellion and Japanese intrusion were challenges to Chinese self-understandings (Arnason 1993: 129, 166-167). All three regions imported ideologies and institutional arrangements in the wake of these volatile inter- and *intra*-civilisational encounters, yet combined unfamiliar interpretations with inherited imperial aspects to lend legitimacy to their respective state-building strategies (Arnason 1993: 67, 96-99, 168; 1997b: 436).

In all three cases, each region was responding to industrialising inter-state competition. The reality of adversaries or would be adversaries—the Western states—who had managed to develop superior productive, military and travel capacities, also created material conditions for potential existential threats. There are practical limitations to both meaning and evaluation in the wake of crushing wartime defeat by a better-equipped adversary, intrusive force enacted by a formidable adversary or threats of force. Such limitations would entail some form of capitulation or resistance, or some combination of them. Arnason's whole case for the emergence of alternative modernities requires us to consider them as responses to certain developments with potentially harsh psycho-social and/or physical consequences, not merely conflicts over different meanings. To be sure, interpretive conflicts and reinterpretations of civilisational legacies animate novel meanings of human autonomy and anticipations of alternative futures with particular preservations of the past. However, these evaluations are not solely generated from within the human capacity for meaning itself because they also involve responses to concrete geopolitical situations. They entailed more or less appropriate responses to the positive qualities of others in Honneth's terms, and they involved struggles when acts of assertion or aggression limited the scope of evaluations to a narrower field of practical options.

This brings us to an important juncture. It seems that Honneth's theory of recognition offers a more plausible way of linking meaning/evaluation to the responsive dynamics of human interactions within modernity. Moreover, Honneth provides a way of understanding why people might respond to others in a more or less assertive and less defensive manner. To be sure, Arnason provides us with a more nuanced approach than Honneth to categories of interaction that shape modernity. However, Arnason does not provide us with a clear understanding of why we should care about the implications of cultural difference and interaction, even though he simultaneously maintains that we should care according to norms that seem to imply that recognition is a central concern.

In that case, what do we have to gain by engaging with Arnason's implicit recognition theory which is otherwise cloaked in the garb of hermeneutic normative allergy? Would it not be better to go straight to Honneth and just expand upon what can be considered as part of the struggle for recognition? The short answer is no. Arnason still makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of modernity via the subtle complexities of diversity and conflict which can be gleaned from his theory and analysis.

5.3 Arnason's Contribution to Understanding Modernity

I have made some critical comments about certain implications of Arnason's theory regarding his normative commitments and emphasis on meaning over practical limitations to evaluation. However, this does not imply that meanings beyond the practical limitations of situations are unimportant. Even Honneth points to meanings beyond practical limitations in three fundamental ways: first, by reference to culture as a predicate for conflicts about what activities are necessary and valuable in modernity (Honneth 2001: 54); second, as unrealised possibilities for progress beyond the present (Honneth 1995: 171, 175-177); third, as the symbolic horizons which encompass historical achievements and cultural milestones drawn upon in recognition between states (Honneth 2012: 143). These three aspects can be thought of concisely as human notions of necessity and value, anticipations of the future, and impressions of the past. Arnason has something to say about them albeit in a more panoramic way than Honneth.

To do so, Arnason provides a more developed outline than Honneth of what culture is and how human diversity precedes modernity. The cultural and ultimately civilisational dimensions of the social world are, for Arnason as they were for Weber, made possible through cultural interpretation, not merely as a predicate, but *the* predicate for meaning and value (Arnason 1982: 6-8). He outlines culture in terms of a 'trans-subjective context of reference' which gains its most immediate hold at the local level, with potential for transference to an intermediate social unit such as a state, but which can also spread out across a regional level to form a constellation of affinities between states or state-like units (Arnason 1989a: 32; 1982: 4-8; 1992: 258). The general spread of family resemblances is indicative of a civilisation (Arnason 1988: 89). Granted, these broader interpretive horizons also acquire a degree of regional diffusion, in practical terms through long-term contacts, trade, migrations, conflicts, conquests and the transmission of ideas. Arnason discusses this process using the example of affinities between China, Korea, and Japan (Arnason 1997b: 84-87, 97-98, 105).

However, civilisational diffusion has limits in a broader global context. Arnason utilises Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological vernacular to situate and relativise cultural contexts within a

common global space and to highlight the limited interpretive access to this broader global horizon from different contextual vantage points (Arnason 1992: 255). This is a precondition for traditions like Buddhism and Shinto-infused Confucian imperial sovereignty to be more familiar in Japan during its Modernisation than, say, Christianity, liberalism and the notions of popular sovereignty more characteristic of Western Europe and America (Arnason 1997b: 104, 253, 473). Due to diverse human traditions and ways of life, Arnason is convinced that it must be the case that a human capacity beyond the instrumental tendencies of rationality is responsible for sparking comprehensive interpretations of the world, particularly considering that for much of human history there has been such limited human access to knowledge of the world.[82] This is where Arnason's appropriation of Castoriadis's concept of imaginary signification is employed to capture the attentive, creative and evaluative feature of human interpretation that supplies meaning over and above what is merely available in the spatial-temporal locations that people occupy (Castoriadis 1987: 108, 143; Arnason 1989a: 39-40). This combination of assumptions allows Arnason speak to the three aspects touched on by Honneth in a different way.

Honneth implies that when it comes to the way modernity is organised and acted upon, there is no pure necessity of the necessary, no pure value of the valuable. There is scope for conflict around how the contributions of human activities are understood. In addition, Arnason indicates an interpretive conflict around notions of necessity and value. Like Castoriadis, Arnason wants to be rid of the idea that there are optimum social functions and adaptations that can be discerned according to some meta-historical criterion (Arnason 1989a: 30). History is not merely a story of social groups developing more effective tools and control over resources. There may be evolutionary elements in the mix, but such developments are so entangled with emergent meanings, values and more effectively destructive human technologies along the way that it would be naïve to draw a straight line to human functional optimisation and adaptation. Arnason does admit that there are more, or less effective ways of doing things – for example, he highlights that there were dysfunctional aspects of the Soviet model (Arnason 1993: 122-124, 207). Nonetheless, those dysfunctions were, paradoxically, the unintended consequences of elites who imagined a world premised upon pure material necessity and a future in which greater rational mastery would ensure that such needs would be satisfied (Arnason 1993: 58, 102-103). A lesson from that episode seems to be that clinging to notions of the necessary and valuable too tightly, and imposing this vision upon others located elsewhere with potentially different interpretative horizons, is fraught with disintegrative potentials.

Through reference to the imaginary feature of cultural interpretations and the creative

[82] Even today with our extended digital reach, much of our access to the world is mediated by algorithms.

dimension it implies, Arnason is, in principle, also able to accommodate 'emergent characteristics' (Arnason 1996: 9). In turn, it is likely there are emergent characteristics of the necessary and valuable which were not previously self-evident. These characteristics are ultimately related to emergent forms of identity.

This complements Honneth's claim that recognition implies attentiveness to the positive qualities of others, which he believes must already be there just waiting to be recognised (Honneth 2012a: 80-81). However, it cannot be the case that all possible human identities existed at the beginning of time, with modernity finally providing the epistemic space for them to be recognised. Honneth's outline of the struggle for recognition implies otherwise: new opportunities emerge for human identity formation and self-realisation. Honneth also relies upon a notion of historical learning which pushes open the boundaries of evaluative horizons to accommodate previously unrecognised notions of the valuable, and this learning is the transcultural key to expanded recognition possibilities and progress (Honneth 2012a: 82-83). However, it seems unlikely that the openness to such learning and attentiveness merely springs forth from bearing witness to recognition struggles. This attentiveness would also issue from a query that reaches towards a surplus of meaning as to what is possible when encountering ways of life which are unfamiliar. For Arnason, 'the imaginary is what ultimately undermines closure and makes total identity impossible, makes a culture capable of questioning itself [when] confronting other cultures' (Arnason 1994: 167). This allows 'alternative patterns of orientation [to] emerge' (Arnason 1992: 257). In this sense, Arnason provides some additional considerations on the potentially creative aspects of recognition.

Honneth also points to progress beyond the present in terms of expanded recognition and autonomy as a central presupposition of modernity as bequeathed by the Enlightenment. As mentioned with respect to the Soviet model, Arnason is interested in future-oriented notions of improvement associated with modernity, but his perspective on the Enlightenment legacy is less optimistic and he indicates contexts more or less amenable to recognition as a result. Arnason acknowledges that the vision of human autonomy can animate social change through challenging the institutional boundaries to human identity and the role and distribution of power, and he admits that the French revolution had some beneficial democratic knock-on effects in this regard (Arnason 1989c: 330; 1993: 58; 1997a: 37). Indeed, his characterisation of democracy stipulates the self-limitation of state power, the articulation of fundamental rights and representativeness of political order (Arnason 1997b: 469-470). Along with this Arnason notes that conflicts and tensions between economic, political and cultural spheres of life are the democratic trade-off. These conditions are analogous to an institutional arrangement in which struggles for recognition animate debates about

institutional imbalances, overreach and exclusions.

However, Arnason also cautions against certain particular ways of pursuing autonomy. Moreover, he argues that revolutionary movements are susceptible to self-negating potentials when more sweeping visions of renunciation are fused with the suspension of political accountability while trying to institute a more comprehensively just social world (Arnason 1993: 58). Arnason seems to more sensitised than Honneth to the possibility that state power can be hijacked by radical visions, allow all kinds of overreach into and restructuring of people's lives in the name of a superior future and then morph into an overbearing power structure similar to what such revolutionaries had originally sought to overcome. This sort of institutional arrangement seems less amenable to recognition. Admittedly this seems more applicable to the context of the Soviet model, but it also serves as a reminder of what is possible when the antagonism of democracy gets shunted aside in dogmatic pursuit of this-worldly salvation.

Another potential obstacle to recognition, as alluded to above, is a vision of progress which emphasises the unlimited expansion of rational mastery. Rational mastery in its ideal-typical form is consonant with an emphasis on the improved ordering, control and power over nature and persons, whether by bureaucratic, economic, scientific, military or industrial means (Arnason 1989c: 331; 1991: 209; 2003: 325). Arnason sees the 'unlimited' variety of this orientation as the sinister side of the Enlightenment legacy (Arnason 1991: 209-210). The seductiveness of rational mastery to this end is that once certain practices yield highly reliable and effective modes of prediction and control, it is harder to question whether they are good for us and easier to see them as self-evident paths to human omnipotence. True, the notion of rational mastery has been a well-worn avenue of concern and critique in relation to modernity ever since Weber. However, Arnason's contribution to this problematic is that it is never just the ideal of rational mastery that is at stake in all its instrumental purity when it comes to modernity. His outline of cultural and civilisational differences affords him the proposition that there are alternative modernities in which rational mastery is pursued for different purposes due to diverse civilisational backgrounds and different experiences of Western expansion (Arnason 1993: 14). The crisis of modernity in terms of interpretive challenges to identities posed by intercivilisational encounters does in some sense relate to confronting displays of rational mastery by an external other and/or the prospect being on the receiving end of it—for example, the Russian experience of the Crimean war and the Japanese experience of the treaty port demands (Arnason 1993: 54, 76; 1997b: 374-375, 423-427).

Visions of rational mastery are further complicated because of geopolitical asymmetry, which can generate an impetus for greater power and control that becomes fused with undemocratic

notions of human autonomy. Such notions of human autonomy can then be filtered through the lens of imperialism, sovereignty, anti-capitalist revolution and nationalism. Such developments can be understood as a struggle by an aspirational state to be considered as a formidable and player in the global arena entitled to its own sovereignty and imperial status. It can also lead to what Arnason sees as the 'totalitarian perversion of democracy' in which interpretive conflicts within aspirational states are suppressed and substituted for the 'symbolic fusion of a unified society and an unrestricted power' (Arnason 1990: 43). This is not to say that both the Russian and Japanese trajectories were cases of burgeoning democracy interrupted, but Arnason does indicate that there was evidence of civil unrest and discontent with the terms of rule in both contexts prior to the Meiji transformation and Russian revolution (Arnason 1993: 68, 87; 1997b: 421-422). Indeed, within Japan and Russia there had also been intelligentsias who had 'crossed the threshold of modernity' in terms of historical reflection on the terms of power and engagement with Western literature which predated both the Meiji transformation and Russian revolution (Arnason 1993: 54, 56; 1997b: 292). Arnason implies that obstacles to democracy posed by nationalist or imperialist rational-mastery strategies were not entirely reducible to the internal limitations of Japanese or Russian political culture. Geopolitical asymmetries with the Western states and a volatile international environment of competing imperialisms also played a role. It points to a struggle for recognition between states seeking parity.

Arnason provides additional considerations which have relevance for Honneth's notion of recognition between states. Recall that, according to Honneth, political elites tend to justify the exercise of power in terms which exceed the mere instrumental content of foreign policies. In fact, the terms do not merely exceed formal policies, they also exceed the historical present generally with reference to a shared history or cultural-political milestones achieved in the past. Impressions of the past are invoked to galvanise a sense of shared societal identity and purpose.

One way in which Arnason refers to impressions of the past and a shared sense of identity is through Romantic responses to Enlightenment. Enlightenment implies anticipations of an improved future facilitated through greater rational mastery and human autonomy in the world, whereas Romanticism invokes a longing for the world that has been devalued and left behind (Arnason 1991: 209-210). Granted, the constellations of Enlightenment and Romanticism are far more varied than this characterisation suggests, with potentials for admixtures, but for the current discussion a simple distinction is useful enough.[83]

[83] This simple distinction between Enlightenment and Romantic orientations is more immediately useful here than Arnason's more nuanced descriptions. For a more differentiated description see *Civilisations in Dispute* (Arnason 2003: 48-49, 231).

The relevance of this for recognition between states is that Romanticism can also be susceptible to nationalism and the vision of rebuilding the 'structures of meaning and overarching unity' that were eroded during Modernisation and global trends (Arnason 1991: 209-210; 1997b: 375). While a shared history and distinct culture associated with a specific territory are presupposed in any notion of nation, nationalism politicises this in terms of either international assertion in or withdrawal from global context (Arnason 1990b: 217, 226-228). Admittedly, Arnason is cautious as to how this tension can be applied in non-Western contexts (Arnason 1997b: 344-345). However, indicates analogous examples. The Soviet model shows that an overemphasis on the rational mastery—particularly when its radical subsidiary revolution is combined with statist and imperial projects—can animate counter-projects of nationalism with aims to preserve different identities, whether in the Eastern Bloc or China (1993: 119-122, 177, 182). While nationalism was not necessarily applicable to the Soviet centre per se, renewed military posturing, tied to Romantic nostalgia for past Soviet military achievements, was invoked during the Brezhnev era at a time when a crisis of identity was occurring for Soviet economic management in comparison with the efficacy of capitalism (Arnason 1993: 192-193). Romantic tendencies to reanimate a former era of greatness is one of the central tensions which Arnason detects within modernity and has implications for the 'trans-personal visions' peddled by political figures (Arnason 1982: 5).

Arnason also provides considerations relevant to recognition between states in terms of civilisational legacies and intercivilisational encounters. He outlines the othernesses of modernity in which modern self-understandings are formed in relation to examples of power from the past, visions of a more legitimate future and the self-reflections sparked by intercivilisational encounters (Arnason 1997a: 34-35). In the Western case, ancient Greek democracy and philosophy, the Roman republic and imperialism, and Christianity are all legacies which still reside within the Western interpretive horizon of thought as cultural milestones of affiliation and benchmarks of progress (Arnason 1997a: 34-36). As we have noted, Arnason sees different intercivilisational encounters amidst Western expansion into Asia and the Americas as having a partial decentring effect on Western self-understandings, just enough to entertain the idea of other civilisations and different notions of order (Arnason 1997a: 38-39). With reference to Claude Lévi-Strauss, Arnason refers to 'landmarks in the development of humanism', no matter how incomplete or riven with injustices and persistent asymmetries (Arnason 1989a: 35).

The othernesses of modernity are also discernible in Arnason's reconstructions of alternative modernities. In his account of the transition from Tokugawa to Meiji Japan this can be understood in terms of a relationship to the legacy of Chinese Confucianism and imperialism and to Japan's own Shinto-infused imperial legacy (Arnason 1997b: 104). Some of the critical distance from the

Chinese model was prefigured by the early-modern Japanese intelligentsia during the Edo period (Arnason 1997b: 313, 314-317, 320, 340-341). However, the reanimated Japanese imperial institution and its fusions with national identity occurred at a later stage after a significant decentring of Japanese identity. This decentring occurred initially through a devalued experience of unequal treaties. But then it developed in a much more comprehensive way through the restructuring of Japanese society, dismantling of samurai privileges, and universal education, according to an eclectic reappropriation of institutions from the Western powers in the wake of the Iwakura mission (Arnason 1997b: 423-427; 435-437). The enduring cultural-political milestone and symbol of shared history appealed to by Japanese bureaucrats during the Meiji, Taisho and early Showa periods was the authority of Japan's sacred and enduring imperial institution (Arnason 1997b: 389). This symbolic horizon became a justification for their visions of empire and autonomy in the global arena.

Combining Arnason's theoretical propositions with his historical examples tells us a few things about the difficulties involved in the longer-arc of recognition struggles between states with different experiences and visions of modernity. The intercivilisational receptivity to the positive qualities of others has its limits. It is also possible that intercivilisational instances of misrecognition create legacies of their own and become an interpretive reference point for counter-projects at a later point of history. Instances of cultural decentring cannot necessarily be understood as the path to more just forms of recognition; contingent factors at different levels of the social world matter. Indeed, it is not always clear what attributes of cultural others should be valued. Some, such as dismantling systems of privilege, may expand the scope for recognition if adopted. Other attributes, such as aspiring to become a formidable and autonomous global power through the imperial domination of others, might be the wrong example to follow and to base recognition claims upon. Arnason's account of alternative modernities, the othernesses of modernity and modernity as a field of tensions provides insight into the complexities of struggles for recognition once the implicit importance of recognition in his approach is acknowledged. Indeed, it would be difficult to view his ideas as providing anything more than an exercise in social-theoretical subtlety if something like the importance of recognition were not presupposed to indicate why some of aspects of modernity are more problematic than others.

CONCLUSION: FROM RIVALRY TO COMPLEMENTARITY

My central question has been, 'Arnason or Honneth, who provides the more convincing account of the orientations that animate modernity?' On this question I have sided more with Honneth, primarily because his basic concept of recognition provides a more compelling story irrespective of whether modernity is one or many. The ideas of 'struggle' and 'recognition' speak more directly to what animates social-cultural conflicts and desires for improved futures through which people can understand themselves and their relation to others in less devalued terms. Certainly, Arnason provides ways to discuss cultural diversity, different visions of the future, impressions of the past and the mixed results of intercivilisational interactions upon institutions of power over time. However, I have argued that casting alternative modernities in terms of counter-responses to Western modernity relies upon some notion of recognition.

Along with this, I have argued that at the level of theoretical preferences Arnason himself must be concerned with recognition. I outlined five related normative commitments discernible in his approach: first, a refusal to naturalise power, but rather to focus upon how it is interpreted and experienced by peoples in different circumstances; second, an insistence upon a more balanced approach to understanding different paths to modernity and the difficulties posed by staggered trajectories of social-cultural transformations; third, a sensitivity to moments of intercultural receptivity in which the attributes of one culture are understood as positive by another and worthy of adoption; fourth, a balanced appreciation for the limits of intercultural receptivity and institutional duplication due to contingent factors, primarily power asymmetries and different civilisational legacies; fifth, an impulse to decentre more streamlined self-congratulatory narratives of modernity or over-simplified narratives of Western domination. All these concerns have a similar thrust to that of Honneth's idea of having a less distorted relationship to oneself, couched in terms of a less distorted understanding of the triumphs and tragedies of modernity. It issues a caution to affirmative or negative zeal.

Despite what has been said, and once the complexities raised by the question of modernity have been fully taken into account, perhaps the real answer to the question of whether Honneth or Arnason provides the more convincing account of the orientations which animate modernity depends upon which features of their respective accounts we focus upon. While Honneth's core idea of recognition is a plausibly robust feature of socio-culture conflicts, a strong linear reading of the struggle for recognition leads to disputable claims. By contrast, some of Arnason's considerations pick up on the possibilities of re-emergent and emergent orientations which suggests that the terrain of modernity is fraught with unintended consequences and tensions between

modernity and traditions, global capitalism and national sovereignty, rational mastery and autonomy. In this way it is possible to position the accounts of Arnason and Honneth not as rivals but rather as complementary views in which each thinker balances the omissions of the other.

As mentioned in Chapters 2 and 5, Honneth's perspective on modernity has been accused of vestigial Eurocentrism. Moreover, it has been objected that, on Honneth's account, the institutions of liberal democratic capitalism become the vanguard of recognition claims and the preconditions for expanded human autonomy and moral progress. The upshot is that a simplistic reading of Honneth's depiction of the struggle for recognition would posit that the institutional transmission from the West to the rest, and subsequent exacerbations and resolutions of recognition claims, are crucial for the development of a morally superior rollout of modernity.

However, Arnason indicates that this is not necessarily the case. He shows that it would be unlikely for institutions to take on identical forms and combinations when travelling from one region to another due to different historical and geopolitical events and experiences. Indeed, as shown in Arnason's reconstructions of the Russian, Chinese and Japanese contexts, institutional transmissions can give rise to patterns of culture and power which take on a life of their own as unique combinations of tradition and modernity, and of reproduction and creation. Of course, as I have argued, to claim that international disputes emerge in part from alternative pursuits of modernity presupposes that the demand for recognition is operative at a cultural and geo-political level. Furthermore, Arnason is convinced social-theoretical discourse would be better off with a more nuanced appreciation of plural civilisational backgrounds, of the terms of intercivilisational encounters and of their impacts on modernity. All this indicates that he, too, sees adequate recognition as important.

Too much emphasis on a streamlined reading of Honneth also presents other problems. If we focused solely on the expected trajectory of the struggle for recognition and assessed Honneth's theory on whether or not more just outcomes appeared over time, and if that result came back in the negative, then his theory would be unconvincing. Even within democratic states it is not entirely clear that struggles for recognition arrive at more just outcomes, in fact it is not always clear which recognition claims are just and genuine in the first place. Of course, we can agree with Honneth that recognition claims which rest upon the misrecognition of others are not genuine claims, particularly regarding unambiguous cases of exploitation and denigration. However, when it comes to more subtle forms of withheld recognition that might rest upon orthodox interpretations of religious or traditional values, this gets tricky, particularly if the withholder belongs to a minority group themselves that has been disadvantaged or mistreated in the past. Due to complex scenarios and

contingent factors, operationalising the withheld or withdrawn features of recognition, and the just and unjust potentials of recognition claims for an empirical enquiry might prove very difficult.

Yet it is hard to avoid the intuition that the difficulties an empirical enquiry would face would not be caused merely by concerns about the validity of definitions, but also by potential misrepresentation of the groups and individuals studied. We expect such representations to be better, not worse, than descriptions previously articulated, better not only in terms of accuracy but also in terms of fairness. In that case, concerns of recognition are smuggled back into the expectations of knowledge production where they invoke the idea of progress. Honneth's theory of a struggle for recognition may be more convincing as a guiding presupposition of modern orientations than as an empirical predictor of the practice and consequences of recognition between people.

There are various difficulties around the struggle for recognition at the interstate level. Political discourse amongst state leaders concerning misrecognition invokes the suspicion of ideological manipulation for the justification of policies. It is not so clear how this relates to modernity as progress in terms of expanded recognition either. There may be episodes that lead to policies of withdrawal from international agreements on the grounds that they are not in line with national interests (Amirfar and Singh 2018: 443-444). Such turns may even serve to embolden proclivities for withheld recognition within states, between those with more cosmopolitan and those with more nationalist leanings – for example, the divisions caused in the US by the Trump phenomenon (Norton 2016: 434-439). Nevertheless, in the context of Trumpism, there were still expectations of an improved future, a more estimable position in relation to others in the global arena and ambiguous references to a shared history and cultural achievements of the past which could be reanimated.

Here, Arnason's considerations on interpretive horizons which extend beyond immediate interactions are pertinent. An example is his account of how Romantic longings for a lost past through which people once understood cultural life in more positive terms can conflict and combine with Enlightenment anticipations of an improved future built on human autonomy and sovereignty. These forces are reflected in moments of nationalist opposition to Enlightenment derivatives such as neo-liberal capitalist mastery, in which deregulation, reduced public spending, the outsourcing of manufacturing to cheaper markets and increased global economic interdependence, coincide with wage stagnation and economic precarity for middle and low-income Americans (Gamble 2019: 984-993). In parallel, the military mastery which enabled America to restructure the world order after the Second World War, no longer attracts the international esteem it once did, particularly

following its inability to decisively win any of its numerous protracted military campaigns abroad since Vietnam (Streeck 2017: 1, 4). American military intervention often had strong support among the working classes, whereas the military setbacks undermine America's identity as an invincible superpower particularly when socio-economic conditions for those most vulnerable appear to be limping along at home (Streeck 2017: 4). As in Arnason's portrayal of Soviet economic stagnation, subsequent identity crisis and reanimated military posturing to recast the Soviet international image in terms of former glory, America is confronting an identity crisis with selective appeals to the more flattering features of its own legacy. The Trump phenomenon signalled a longing for return to an 'isolationist and nativist tradition' which reinstates 'America First' (Gamble 2019: 993). This appeal to the restoration of national sovereignty to mitigate global economic interdependence has also gained traction across the Atlantic in Italy, France, the UK, Austria, the Netherlands and Germany (Streeck 2017: 2). In this light, the narrative of modernity as entailing the unidirectional expansion of desirable recognition claims is not so convincing, yet the expectation, or at least the perceived justice, of improved recognition is still a relevant feature. Of course, just who or what should be recognised remains in dispute, and Arnason's characterisation of modernity as a field of tensions still rings true even if the demand for recognition is an implicit and pivotal feature of such tensions.

Arnason's notion of modernity as a field of tensions and his sustained reflections on the Soviet model also offer insights into recent shifts in geopolitics. China's ascendancy as a key international player and the extension of its reach through soft power investments in states of the global South, both military and non-military forms of coercion in the South China Sea, and reluctance to recognise Taiwan or Hong Kong as separate entities raises themes discussed by Arnason in the Soviet context (Degué-Nevers 2017: 73; Zhang 2019: 117; Hsieh 2020: 190-194; Fong 2017: 524). The tensions between visions of imperial expansion and peripheral nationalism are playing out in the conflict between Chinese party-state sovereignty and Hong Kong democracy and elsewhere. Notions of interpretive conflicts, struggle and recognition are relevant, but the expanded scope for recognition is debatable.

Still, the characterisation of contemporary China as an alternative modernity that has emerged from a struggle for recognition with a longer arc is plausible. This is not to say that the current authoritarian combination of imperial-nationalism and party-state sovereignty experimentations with capitalism are estimable qualities, but they are understandable in relation to a much longer civilisational history of imperial unification, episodes of Western intrusion in the nineteenth century and the Sino-Soviet rift in the twentieth century. In this way, Arnason's views on the Soviet model and intercivilisational encounters may help to mitigate an overemphatic image of China as the new

global villain without lapsing into endorsement.

Arnason's historical-sociological and theoretical insights in combination with Honneth's reflections on recognition between states suggest useful paths for further inquiry. Moreover, Arnason's considerations may be particularly useful for focusing on the past/future/others architecture of political discourse which Honneth frames as the symbolic horizon of recognition between states. If it is the case that narratives of past cultural and political achievements, and instances of humiliation and disrespect are imbued in the justifications of political actions in the geopolitical arena as Honneth sees it, then Arnason's notion of the othernesses of modernity may serve as a lens for understanding the longer arc of these recognition claims made in the present. Thinking with both theorists in tandem can help us be attentive to, and gain a clearer understanding of the ways in which political figures depict civilisational legacies, intercivilisational encounters of the past and visions of the future, to legitimise current exercises of power. Armed with that understanding, we will be better placed to subject that power to critical assessment.

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