In Search of Modernities (excerpts from ch6 of Cultural Studies in the future tense)

In chapter 2, I argued that the present conjuncture can be seen as a problem space constituted by multiple struggles against euro-modernity, and in particular, against that version of it—liberal modernity—that was established in much of the North Atlantic world by the mid-twentieth century (with its own variations in other parts of the world). Additionally, I have asserted my own belief that formulating the best political responses to the context, the best strategies aimed at making the world "better," depends upon producing the "best" knowledge we can about the context, and that depends on both empirical and theoretical work. How one theorizes the problem space will shape one's ability not only to understand the present but also to imagine other possible futures. Finally, I have argued that the dominant ways in which modernity has been theorized assume that all possible modernities are simply variations on the universal model of euro-modernity. Such theories of "alternative modernities" constrain the ways we can imagine other realities, and hence, the ways we can analyze the present. So the question is, is there another way to theorize modernity, which might then give us another purchase on understanding the conjunctural struggles against it, and imagining that other worlds—some of them modern-- are possible.

The unavoidable question is how a particular configuration can be asserted to be modern. How do we define modernity as a changing same or, adopting a phrase from Precarias a la Deriva (n.d., 42), a "singularity in common"? One must distinguish not only between the modern and the non-modern, but also between variations within a common modernity (i.e., alternative euro-modernities), and distinctly other modernities.

The question is neither empirical nor conceptual but conjunctural and discursive. To theorize the problematic of the modern requires us to investigate the production of the discourses of the modern—what are its conditions of possibility, its effectivities, and its dispersions. Or to put it differently, it involves questions of what might be called conjunctural and epochal ontologies. What are we saying about a context when we call it modern or when we deny it such a description? What was it that was brought into existence under the sign of euro-modernity that is what we refer to as "the modern"? What sort of answer would not simply condemn the modern to forever becoming euro-modern? What can possibly be signaled by the complexity of the contexts and claims made about and for modernity? The analysis does not seek to define either an essence or a simple unity; rather, it points to the virtuality of modern, to a reality that has effects but is never fully actualized, because it can be actualized in multiple ways.

What constitutes a mode of being as modern, and how do we construct its diagram? I assume that the modern describes and circumscribes, even as it constructs, a certain variability in the ways people can belong in the world, or in what I have called the ways of being modern. understood as simultaneously material, discursive, ideological and affective. In this way, I do not define modernity as a particular kind of subject, experience, logic or institution; I do not identify it with a particular (set of) social or structural norm(s). Instead, I follow Talad Asad (2003, 14)-- "Modernity is not primarily a matter of cognizing the real but of living in the world"--and Gilroy (2000, 55), for whom the modern is "a distinctive ecology of belonging."

I have tried in the previous three chapters to suggest some ways to think about and map conjunctures in ways that do not always re-inscribe the assumptions of euro-modernity about the nature of the social totality. I have presented three machines or diagrams of the modern (and euro-modernity): (1) I have questioned, in admittedly small ways, a territorializing machine of euro-

modernity, which divides and distributes the lines of force shaping any context into a specific configuration of domains (economy, culture, politics). (2) I have described and challenged, again in small ways, a coding machine of the modern as the construction of the other, and the specific form it takes in euro-modernity, which places every difference, every distance, every boundary, every other, under a sign of negativity. (3) I have offered the outlines of a diagram of power as it shapes the terrain of euro-modernity. In addition, I have described some of the apparatuses (of commensuration, mapping and translation, capture) that operate within any modernity.

I want to further elaborate the ontology of modernity as a multiplicity, by considering the operation of one more machine, the constitution of another—stratifying machine or diagram--of modernity as multiplicity: But first, let me elaborate this project. Consider the arguments of Takeuchi and Gyekye, that in both China (as opposed to Japan) and Africa respectively, modernity was internally generated. Gyekye describes African modernity as a self-created modernity; similarly Takeuchi argues that China's modernity was created as renewal, within the encounter with the otherness of its own past. In the early 20th century, the Kyoto School of history sought to establish an Asian origin of modernity, located as early as 10th century China. And new interpretations of the Qing dynasty have suggested that it was an expansive, multicultural—modern—empire.[1] Perhaps we should not be surprised by such claims; after all, neither Nkrumah of Ghana nor Nehru in India (key figures of the Bandung conference of unaligned nations) were willing to assume that modernity was a singular process that committed the third world to westernization, nor were they willing to settle for hybridizations of the West.

I do not want to debate the historical merits of these arguments but to display them as other discursive logics of the modern and discursive statements of other modernities. It may be that Kahn (658) is right: "But did the key elements of modernity really appear first in the West,

only then to be transported and indigenized elsewhere? Evidence can certainly be produced to demonstrate that the modernization of the West and at least part of the non-West--Russia, Japan, China, the centers of the Islamic worlds …--were contemporary processes rather than being merely cases of early 'Westernization,' raising the possibility of more genuinely parallel, multiple, or plural modernities."

The question is not when or where modernity belongs but what it is to belong to modernity. I am not concerned with the contradictions within modernity but with the possibilities of contradictions among modernities. What would it mean to see modernity as multiple, to think that there are always radically other modernities? It would mean refusing to assume a single narrative of modernity, or even a fractured linear narrative through which modernity moves, whether smoothly or rupturally, in a series of states. It is not a matter of variations, however great, around a set of themes, nor a continuing process of the hybridization of some originary formation. We must "unlearn to think of history as a developmental process in which that which is possible becomes actual... to learn to think the present—the now that we inhabit as we speak—as irreducibly not one" (Chakrabarty, 2000, 249). We must ask, with Gilroy (2000, 56-7), "in what sense does modernity belong to a closed entity, a 'geo-body' named Europe?" We must wonder whether C.L.R. James was right to think that modernity was invented in the "periphery" of the world system, in the Caribbean. This is to think "modernity elsewhere" (Gilroy, 76) and I might add, else when;" it is to offer "an altogether different, a-centered understanding of European history" (80).

Perhaps this is what Chakrabarty (2000) meant by "provincializing Europe," which seeks to find, for those outside of Europe, ways of articulating something other than "subaltern subject positions." For Chakrabarty (43), this requires us to understand how the multiplicity of

modernities has been apparently defeated: "If a language . . . is but a dialect backed up by an army, the same could be said of the narratives of 'modernity' that, almost universally today, point to a certain 'Europe' as the primary habitus of the modern." This entails more than critiquing Enlightenment rationality; it demands questioning the assumption that the equation of a "certain version of Europe with modernity" is "the work of Europeans alone" (43). Gyekye (274) is surely correct that "the link between modernization and westernization can only be empirical, not conceptual."

How would one begin to challenge the discursive tactics by which euro-modernity is always remaking itself from a singular universal to the universal singular? How would one think of the category of modernity as something other than a universal singular? How would one multiply modernities as something other than hybrid variations within that singularity? How might one imagine a multiplicity of singular universals, each a complex relationally constituted statement or embodiment of modernity? If the concept of a multiplicity of modernities defines a problem space, rather than answering its question, then perhaps we can now specify the question: how do we constitute a concept of modernity as a multiplicity? Scott suggests that we are all "conscripts of modernity." That is to say, too often, the very demands we make against euro-modernity are articulated by and inside that modernity (e.g., Toussaint's demand in the Haitian revolution, "I want my freedom"). But if we begin with a model of a multiplicity, then there is always a line of flight, always the possibility of an other (including alternatives to modernity). And there is always another demand: I want to live otherwise.

An ontology of being modern

I propose that modernity is, additionally, the product of a stratifying machine that produces a set—a diagram--of ways of belonging to and in time and space, defined in large

measure as a configuration—a doubled difference—of four distinct but articulated apparatuses of spatial and temporal belonging. The actuality of any possible modernity will be defined by particular articulations of each of the terms of lived temporality—change and the event-- and lived spatiality—institutional space and everyday life –as well as the relations among them. They are virtualites that can be differently actualized to create a multiplicity of ways of being modern.

The diagram is defined by the belonging together, the double articulation, of (across and within) two dimensions. The first dimension comprises the necessary belonging together of Chronos (historicality) and the event (the now) as modes of belonging in time. As Chakrabarty (2000, 8) put it, modernity is located in the space where "the urgency of the 'now' [is] in tension with historicism's not yet." Insofar as the chronotope of the event focuses entirely on now, as it were, it gives up not only any notion of change, but of any possibility of theorizing the "historical" specificity of the event itself. And insofar as the chronotope of Chronos focuses entirely on change, it gives up the possibility of understanding the immediacy—and hence, the subjectivation—of the lived. In the contingent relation between the two modes of being-in-time, each of which is itself contextually actualized, in the life lived in both chronological and eventalized time, human life is opened to the mediation of material, affective and semiotic regimes. As I have suggested, in euro-modernity, presence is lived as phenomenological experience,[2] and change is lived as History/histories.

The second axis--of lived spatiality—comprises the relation between two modes of belonging in space: institutional and the spaces of everyday life as modes of belonging in space. In the contingent relation between the two modes of being-in-space, each of which is contextually actualized, in the life lived in both institutional and everyday spaces, human life is opened to the

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very real possibility and even necessity of multiplicity itself. Again, in euro-modernity, the former is actualized as the space of the nation-state (and within that the space of civil society, corporations, etc.) while the latter is actualized as a commodified and biopoliticized space.

But the diagram is defined not just by these two axes, but also by articulations across them as well. "The experience of modernity is constructed as a relationship between time and space. It is a particular way of expressing one in terms of the other" (Mitchell, 2000, 13). There are always relations constructed—and then assumed—across the axes, between spatiality and temporality. How they are articulated is again a matter of specific and multiple actualizations so that, for example, in the diagram of euro-modernity, history is closely linked to institutional space (of the nation-state) while the present is for all practical purposes equated with everyday life. It is this double articulation—a doubling both within and across—the two axes that results in the apparent mirror structure of the diagram.

It is the articulations within and across these axes that make socio-political change structurally necessary and "normal" within the multiplicity of modernities. The changing relations between everyday life and institutional spaces, between Chronos and the event, and across the two dimensions, allows for the rapid multiplication of sources and loci of resistance, struggle and the effort to seek out and produce the new.[3] I might very tentatively hypothesize that in non-modern societies, the differentiations made explicit in this diagram do not exist or are not lived as distinct and significant within the modes of being-in-the world. This is not to say that such spaces and times do not exist or more accurately, that they cannot be identified; it is a matter of their lived effectivity.[4]

How are such articulations within the diagram itself accomplished? How are the different modes of belonging that constitute the actuality of being-modern mediated? I might hypothesize

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that the agency or vector of articulation is constituted by the construction of modalities of individuation. It is the articulation of the simultaneous and multiple ways each modality of belonging constructs a subject–and possible agency—of time and space. Individuality does not have to be equated with embodied singularity; subject-hood does not have to be equated with the locus of phenomenological intentionality and experience; agency does not have to be equated with self-reflective and self-conscious intention. None of these have to be located within codes of negativity and none need to be defined outside of complex webs of relations. Yet, this is precisely how individuality as the fundamentally euro-modern way of being in the world is constituted: individuality, identity, subjectivity, and agency are articulated into an assumed chain of equivalence, which is simultaneously distributed (territorialized) into the various realms of the social formation (economic individuality, political individuality, etc.) and coded into a logic of negative differentiation.[5]

While this diagram describes an axiomatic geometry of multiple modernities, it is not sufficient, either as a theory of modernity or as a description of any specific configuration. I have tried to make clear that this stratifying diagram of belonging in time-space is always and already articulated by other diagrams, including those of coding (i.e., relationality or mediation, otherness), territoriality (e.g., dimensions vs. domains) and power, by regimes of value, expression, and power, and apparatuses of commensuration, mapping and capture (the subjects of chapters 3, 4 and 5 respectively). Still, we have to inquire into the forces that actualize the various diagrams of modernity as a concrete social formation (even if we assume with Althusser [1970] that it is always a "teeth-gritting harmony"). Perhaps we can think of it as an always incomplete movement toward totality--articulated into the specificity of conjunctural problem spaces. Additionally, I am well aware that an ontology of ways of being modern cannot answer all the

questions.[6] On the contrary, many questions remain. To find "answers," we have to go on to map the very different ways people live out these diagrams as modes of being in the world, given the social and material complexities that concretize a way of living. But that would already assume a different way of theorizing the multiplicity of social formations as interconnected, fragile, mobile, porous, rearticulated and rearticulating "totalities." In the end, we cannot avoid following this risky path from diagrams to actualities, from abstractions to conjunctures.

Before ending this discussion of multiple modernities, I want to address one final challenge. One might, confronted with the claim of <u>other</u> modernities, ask why I call them modern instead of something else, perhaps even alternatives to modernity. This question deserves a serious answer, although I want to reiterate that I do not think that other modernities are the only possibilities that are being struggled over. There are certainly alternatives to modernity even in the broad sense that I am using it, but there are also some possibilities better thought of as modernities. I have no doubt that at least one reason for this conclusion lies in the "origins" of this investigation in my effort to find a better way of understanding the contemporary conjuncture of the United States. This led me to a story about struggles over the "coming American modernity." As happens too often, having "discovered' modernity as the definition of a problem-space, I discovered that many others have been addressing the question of (and demand for) in other—both geographically and historically—conjunctures.

A second reason is that I want to avoid paradoxically reproducing the negative logic of euro-modernity. The question—are these other possibilities not outside of, or other to, modernity itself—can too quickly become a euro-modern negative difference. Perhaps, by thinking about multiple modernities, we can move our interrogation onto other topologies; the effort to find ways

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other ways of thinking relationality is itself a part of the effort to think beyond euro-modernity, but without the analytic work, it can easily remain an imaginary logic.

But the most important reason is what Gaonkar (21) describes as the "rage for modernity" and what Lisa Rofel (xi) captures, describing her fieldwork conversations: "'modernity' was something that many people from all walks of life felt passionately moved to talk about and debate." Rofel (cited in Deeb, 2006, 189) continues: "In the end, despite its messiness, the attempt to redefine the terms of discourse around being modern was really an attempt to posit a way of being that is neither West nor East, and that is both 'modern' and 'authentic.'"[7] Of course, I could have chosen to invent another term for other modernities, given the power of euro-modernity over our imagination of modernity itself, but I want to resist such a temptation to give in to the power of euro-modernity. We cannot start by denying people's desire to be modern, nor should we underestimate their ability to imagine the possibility of being modern without following in the path of the North Atlantic nation-states. Nor can we take for granted that we understand what it is they are reaching for in this desire.

Gyekye (263) asserts that modernity "has in fact assumed or rather gained a normative status, in that all societies in the world without exception aspire to become modern, to exhibit in their social, cultural and political lives features said to characterize modernity—whatever this notion means or those features are." He is clearly not suggesting that the whole world is trying to become Europe; in fact, he similarly describes a number of writers in the Middle Ages (269): "In characterizing themselves and their times as modern, both Arabic and Latin scholars were expressing their sense of cultural difference from the ancients . . . But not only that: they must surely have considered their own times as advanced (or more advanced) in most, if not all, spheres of human endeavor." On what grounds do we deny such claims or judgments of

modernity? Even Lefebvre (1995, 185) acknowledges that the "'modern' is a prestigious word, a talisman, an open sesame, and it comes with a lifelong guarantee." Admittedly, the relations to discourses of the modern are often extraordinarily complex and contradictory. Deeb's (2006, 229 and 233) research with Shi'ites leads her to conclude, "The concept of modern-ness is used as a value-laden comparison in relation to people's ideas about themselves, others . . . Incompatible desires came together here—the desire to undermine dominant western discourses about being modern and the desire to be modern (or to be seen as modern)." I want to suggest that at least a part of the complexity of these discourses is precisely the thinness of our vocabulary—and understanding—of modernity.

Thus, the answer to why I want to think through and with the concept of a multiplicity of modernities is because the contest over modernity is already being waged, because it has real consequences, and because we need to seek a new ground of possibility and hope, and of a new imagination for future ways of being modern. Cultural studies has always taught that any successful struggle for political transformation has to start where people are; the choice of where to begin the discourses of change cannot be defined simply by the desires, or even the politics, of intellectuals. Of course, there is another perspective on such matters that we also have to take account of: Blaser (2010), for example, has suggested that I am taking people's desire to be modern too literally, and failing to consider that their use of the term may be an adaptation to or the equivocation of a demand. That is, might not the demand for modernity also be the product of the political positioning of such populations?[8] I have no doubt that such questions need to be raised in specific conjunctural struggles, and for specific actors. I have no doubt that there are, as Deeb (2006, 189) declares, "other stories to be told."

Becoming cultural studies

It is time to look forward, to ask where we go from here. I am trying to participate in a conversation, speaking from the particularity of my own context (into which, ultimately, I want to speak) but also speaking with other specificities and with the recognition that a certain globality is unavoidably a part of the problematic of modernity. At the same time, the problematic of modernity does not define the "essence" of the contemporary conjuncture; conjunctures have no essences, and problem-spaces are always themselves contested and contestable. Modernity is not the only reading of the problem space, even of the U.S.; it is not the only way of seeing the contours of the conjuncture. Nevertheless, questions about what's going on and our possible futures remain paramount.

I want to both accept and reread de Sousa Santos' (2002, 13) perceptive statement that we face "modern problems for which there are no modern solutions." I would prefer to say that we face modern problems that challenge us to think outside the possibilities of our own ways of being modern. Thinking about multiple modernities might enable us to admit that we no longer know what questions to pose. What effect does the hypothesis of a multiplicity of modernities have on the generation of imaginaries of economy, nature and development, for instance, or on social movement strategies, or on strategies of place-making and temporalization? How do we create questions, vocabularies and concepts that sufficiently capture the complexity of forces, technologies and struggles operating in the midst of numerous struggles over, and transitions among, different visions and formations of possible modernities and alternatives to modernity? How do we imagine questions and languages that sufficiently capture multi-polar, multi-temporal and multi-scalar webs of connectivity, relationality, and difference, which are driving the creation of contemporary geo-economic, political and cultural formations and spaces, and new subjectivities and collectivities within and across them?

I have tried in this book to do some of the ground-clearing work necessary to find analytic positions that can open up political futures and embrace a different kind of universality: not the universal singular but the singular universal. If the former defines a hierarchical abstraction out of the particular against which all future particulars have to be measured, the latter sees universality as a movement or relations across non-hierarchical arranged particulars. This is a universality that is neither teleological (developmental) nor expansive (totalizing). It opens "[t]he capacity to hear that which one does not already understand" (Chakrabarty, 2002, 37), which depends on the recognition that "other temporalities, other forms of worlding, coexist and are possible" (Chakrabarty, 2000, 95).

The imagination of other ways of being modern requires us to begin re-imagining imagination itself: the virtual, unlike "the possible" is after all real. Williams (1979) seems to have understood this, giving it substance in his concept of the structure of feeling. While the concept described affective homologies in his early work, in his later work it points to the necessary gap between the known and the knowable, experience and the discursive, the lived and articulation, the gap that is the site of emergence and creativity. It is the event of the virtual that may enable us to find new ways of (re-) constituting and re-imagining our ways of being in the world. This may reveal new ways to connect to the multiplicity not only of disabling and pessimistic realities but also of hopes, dreams and desires, and to seek a new collective project of reinventing the "possibilities" of imagination and the ways of being modern. For in the end, I am inclined to agree with the Peter Amato (88): "It is thus only in the prospect of African [or at least an other] modernity that the hopes of European modernity may have any chance of success... a conscious movement from one particularity toward an inclusive plurality of particularities seeking convergence."

So where does this leave us? I hope it is obvious that, for me, the way forward for cultural studies cannot be separated from questions about the way forward for the world. The futures of both (the latter being eminently more important of course) are both intertwined and as yet not guaranteed. But the future of both will be shaped in part by what we say and do, and in part, by what we say and do as intellectuals—because I do believe that ideas matter—by the stories we tell, because bad stories make bad politics. Even if we cannot know in advance what cultural studies will look like, I do know that "making it up" and eventually, telling better stories of the conjuncture, will take serious time and even more serious labor. It will take more than simply intoning the mantra (which I have certainly done too often) of contextuality, complexity, contradiction and contestation. It will require us to reinvent ourselves as intellectuals and scholars, to change our intellectual practices and to produce new kinds of collective and collaborative scholar-subjects.

The project of thinking beyond euro-modernity will require conversations of many voices and contexts, many discourses and knowledges. Such conversations must be both geographically diverse and interdisciplinary; they should make us think about whom we want to think and speak with, and the forms and practices of heteroglossia that can animate such conversations. We must accept at the outset that they will be ongoing, incomplete, uneven and inconsistent. They have to go beyond the recognition that answers are determined by the "location" of the researcher, to embrace the more fundamental challenge that questions are similarly determined. Thus if we want to converse across the particularities of contexts, we have to find new ways of asking questions.

Conversations are more difficult than we like to admit, and the kinds of conversations I am talking about will challenge many of our practices as academics and intellectuals. We have to

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give up the model of the singular heroic intellectual, and to stop thinking that our success, our intellectual accomplishments, can only be built on the devastation and ruins of other people's work. Our contributions should be measured by our participation in the collaborative conversation, not by claims of originality and difference, which can only be established by demonstrating the utter failure of everyone else (except of course for a privileged few, usually including one's mentors and friends). We need to respect each other as allies and recognize that different theories, methods and even politics are not necessarily in opposition, that they each make some things visible and others invisible, give voice to some things and silence others. We need to invent a practice of passionate and agonistic conviviality!

We can notice how easy it is for habits and institutional norms to undermine the efforts at conversation, which become: too sporadic; too sharply divided between theory and empirics, the general and the specific, the global and the local; too comparative--constrained by assuming the questions and the normativity of the allegedly universal knowledge practices and epistemologies of euro-modernity and its institutions; and too beholden to the disciplines as the sole guardians of knowledge and judgment.

This conversation depends on our willingness and ability to speak and listen across many of the taken for granted boundaries of intellectual work, to work with knowledge producers who are: outside the academy, from think tanks and NGOs to social movements (a trans-institutional conversation); producing other kinds of knowledges (a trans-epistemic conversation); located elsewhere to us, across sedimented but shifting geo-political boundaries and locations (a trans-national and trans-regional conversation); living in different relations to the world, respecting that the world as such is not simply answerable to our theory and desires (a trans-ontological conversation); and finally, in other disciplines or in the spaces between disciplines (a trans-

disciplinary conversation).   This conversation will demand new practices of translation and commensuration—it is necessary to distinguish these—see my note below*-- that will enable it to reflect on its own geo-political, epistemological and disciplinary positions, its questions, modes of inquiry, and pedagogies, even as it seeks to fabricate better stories of what's going on.

Let me speak for a moment about interdisciplinarity requires collaboration. As hard as one might try, one cannot be interdisciplinary by oneself and the collaboration cannot simply reproduce a disciplinary division of labor (e.g., I bring culture, you bring economics, …). Interdisciplinarity challenges the ways disciplines have divided up the world and constructed their objects by isolating them from the contextual complexity of the social formation and usually, from the discursive determinations of culture. Yet just as importantly, we need to take the work that is done in the disciplines seriously. At the very least, we must understand the choices we are making, and their significance, out of the field of possible theories and accounts, and across the debates of what constitutes important questions and relevant evidence. While I do not think we can eliminate the disciplines, we need to rethink their place and contributions.

Unfortunately, there is already a backlash in many disciplines and at many institutions, against interdisciplinarity, often implicitly justified by conditions of financial retrenchment, and carried on under the banner of being "interdisciplinary inside one's own discipline." This paradoxical claim enables scholars to appear to embody the virtues of interdisciplinary without actually having to do the work. We should not confuse the laudable movement of many critical scholars onto the edges or margins of their disciplines, or the existence of transdisciplinary bodies of theory, with the labor and risk of stepping beyond the disciplines. Simultaneously, more disciplines describe themselves as interdisciplinary even as they reinscribe the normative constraints of their disciplinary traditions. The results are, I am sorry to report, usually very thin

and while often imaginative, they do not significantly move the interdisciplinary and collaborative project of cultural studies forward. Against such tendencies, we need to re-animate and rethink the possibilities of collaborative interdisciplinary research, and the organization and meaning of expertise.

It strikes me that making knowledge production into a conversation will require that "long march through the institutions." We will have to join those movements around the world that are trying to change the university as centers of research and teaching, and even larger struggles to challenge the trajectories that locate and shape matters of culture, knowledge and education within contested social realities. After all, the kind of changes I have been describing are not things that we as individuals or even as a collective faculty can change by our own choices; they are the result of larger social and cultural struggles, of lines of force "that shape the becoming intellectual" and that "tend to produce individuals, calculations of success, survival strategies and modes of imagination and embodiment that tends (not without tensions and contradictions" the habits and structures of intellectual production (John Clarke, personal conversation, March 2009). Despite my rhetoric, we have to avoid the voluntarism that so easily produces accusatory configurations of guilt and victimage.

I am not proposing that we offer a new universal model for the university, knowledge production and dissemination. We need to abandon monological strategies and think about the possibilities of pluralization. We need to imagine multiple configurations, multiple organizations of both intellectual work and education, and of the relations between them. We might consider creating multiple pathways through undergraduate and graduate education, not all of which require departmentally defined majors. We might consider other ways of imagining research communities and academic belongings, including ways that allow flexibility and change. Perhaps

we should not talk about interdisciplinarity but about different possible relations to, among and between the disciplines. After all, cultural studies is not about teaching interdisciplinarity but rather, relational and contextual thinking. It is about learning how to ask questions (that are not defined by disciplinary matrices but in response to the world) and how to use—appropriate and articulate—theories, methodologies and knowledges from various discursive formations, including the disciplines, to forge the best possible answers one can, to tell better stories.

Finally, I have to admit that I do not know what this conversation will look like, and I do not know what the outcome will be. I do not know what a new university should be. I do not know what other modernities –as well as alternatives to modernity--are possible, but I do know that we have to begin imagining such possibilities. We have to imagine a world in which many worlds can exist together. And we have to figure out what is going on, and how it has, for so long, prevented us from moving toward more humane realities. I have always thought of cultural studies as an invitation into such conversations, into the experimentation of collaboration, into a self-reflective practice of translation and transformation, and into an uncertain effort to build new institutional spaces. As such, it is difficult and enlivening, depressing and full of hope, modest and arrogant. It is for me a promising way of being a political intellectual!

*A Note on Commensuration and the conjuncture (from ch. 3 on economics)[9]

The contemporary conjuncture, as a struggle over modernity, is constituted in part by a widely dispersed and somewhat disaggregated series of "crises of commensuration," with different temporalities, across virtually every vector and plateau. That is, one of the most powerful lines of struggle and change in the contemporary conjuncture is defined by a series of crises of values that point to the collapse at worst, the uncertainty at best, of many if not most of

our commensurating apparatuses. We seem to be living in the midst of, or at least facing the threat, of the impossibility of valuation and commensuration; across all dimensions of human activity, from religion and politics to knowledge and economics, there is an at least the appearance of a growing inability to find any logic upon which one can constitute, measure, compare and possibly adjudicate (or compromise) differences.

Sometimes these "micro-crises" mark the failure or collapse of, or the struggle against, some existing commensuration apparatuses (such as the withdrawal of the universal equivalent, or the critique of euro-centric value systems or hierarchies of privilege), or when we are confronted with equally valued but competing apparatuses. Sometimes, a crisis of commensuration appears where we are publicly called upon to meet demands of commensuration for which we have not even an imagined apparatus, such as when we confront the challenge of ontological pluralism and radical alterity. Mario Blaser (forthcoming) gives a wonderful example of such ontological commensuration; he tells of an event that took place in British Columbia: Greenpeace finds a whale stranded in a small inlet and wants to "save" it by leading it back out to the ocean. The local indigenous people see the spirit of their beloved tribal leader and chief, who has returned to watch over them. They are sure that if their chief is taken from them again (for example, in Greenpeace's misplaced effort to save what they mis-perceive to be a whale), they will surely suffer. How does one adjudicate such a difference? How does one commensurate these systems of value/realities? Notice that this is not a problem of translation; the problem is not simply that there are two worlds, two ontologies, but that they worlds overlap in ways such that they both cannot have their way. The problem lies in weighing or commensurating the claims.

We can see crises of commensuration in politics and in culture. In "politics," it is expressed in the extraordinary celebration and power of partisanship and extremism , and the

disappearance of moderation and compromise. It is visible in the increasingly common equation of moral and political calculation, which means that one can never accept defeat (even in electoral terms, there must always be a conspiracy or something external to blame). In "culture" (as euro-modernity constructs it), I can point to the widespread inability to escape the relativism that seems to have emerged form the critique of various foundationalisms, which in a circuitous way, and from a variety of positions, has helped to fuel the rejection of the value of education and knowledge. These are not crises of translation, for it is not a question of understanding but of comparison.

The multiple crises of commensuration are not the expressions of a single, real crisis, which has yet to be located and is fundamentally economic (in the territorialized euro-modern sense, thus returning us to economic reductionism). At the same time, I do not think that the multiple appearances of crises of commensuration are simply random. They are not all "the same" as it were (e.g., all "epistemological"). Instead, one has to look at how they are produced and articulated contextually. For such crises are always local, and so, across the conjuncture, the crisis (crises)—in this case of commensuration—is never complete or total. And yet they are linked, by a line that maps out an almost but not quote chaotic web of connections.

In euro-modernity, there are at least two broad dominant kinds of commensurating logics, each with a variety of local concretizations and apparatuses, each located within one of the two most disembedded domains—economics and culture—as competing loci of both value and commensuration; that is why these two realms have presented themselves, so often, in direct opposition with one another. They embody and express two fundamentally different sets of logics of commensuration, constituting themselves as competing modes of living and being-modern. For example, to oversimplify an already oversimplified example, consider the value produced in

the affective practices of domestic life. These values have been commensurated through different apparatuses, including socio-economic apparatuses (in which such value is "exchanged" for security, livelihood, etc.) and religious-cultural apparatuses. In the contemporary conjuncture, the calculations of such commensurations have been called into question, increasingly, by developments such as the growing visibility and condemnation of domestic violence, the increasing need for women to enter the workforce, the rise of domestic labor, etc.

The crises of commensuration constitute at least part of the context within which the economic crises of 2007-? has to be understood. Rather than beginning with the assumption that all values have been reduced to exchange or monetary value, or that this is another example of the failure of deregulated (free-market capitalism), or that markets have simply collapsed thereby destroying value, I want to propose another view of the crisis. It is not the only possible view, but it may be a useful view in our attempt to get a better understanding of the conjuncture. I suggest that this crisis is, at its heart, defined by the existence of an enormous set of financial ("toxic") assets that cannot be commensurated, i.e., their value cannot be calculated! How has this come about? The derivative, those complex financial instruments at the heart of the crisis, can themselves be seen as creative responses—commensurating machines in their own calculative existence-- to the crisis of commensuration brought about partly by Nixon's abrogation fo the Bretton Woods monetary agreement.

As the dominant commensurating apparatuses have come under attack, as they have collapsed, disappeared or become dysfunctional, there seems to be a tendency for them to increasingly become what Deleuze and Guattari (1977) describe as "paranoiac machines." Again, denying their position as mediating devices, such commensurating apparatuses act as if they were the only possible source of value. I think the name for such value practice is fundamentalism—

whether religious, political, economic. intellectual or financial.   The rise of fundamentalism is the other side of this dismantling of the possibility of commensuration; it is what I might call a negative economy of value as the production and appropriation of value without the possibility of commensuration. In fundamentalism, some particular set of relations/values appears not only absolute but also as the absolute negation of any other. This goes beyond the negativity of difference in euro-modernity because fundamentalism refuses to allow its negativity to be coded into a system of hierarchy. Fundamentalism is non-hierarchical, refusing the reality or possibility of the other, and thus demanding the extermination of the other. But the rise of fundamentalism, as a particular affective form of the refusal of calculation, as a particular absolute partisan investment, cannot be laid at the door of any single cause, group or political position. One of the great "mysteries" of the contemporary world is the extraordinary rise of everyday violence, even of the most horrific kinds. Even "genocide" itself seems to have become more ordinary, a reconstitutions of relations among neighbors, according to principles and intensities of fundamentalism.

The challenge then is to find or invent commensurating logics that are not only capable of adjudicating otherness via (and not in spite of) their difference, but that also refuse to universalize themselves. But it is also to find or invent spaces in which practices need not be articulated by or into relations of commensuration. It is to imagine other ways of being modern (and other than modern), ways that not only allow the possibility of other logics of commensurating value but their right to co-exist alongside others as well.

Notes Chapter 7

[1] This is drawn from Gail Herschatter's (unpublished) presentation of the work of the eminent Chinese intellectual historian Wang Hui. I am grateful to her for sharing her work with me.

[2] One might find non-phenomenological understandings of experience articulated by pragmatists such as John Dewey (1938) and William James, as well as A. N. Whitehead.

[3] This is related to the change Foucault sees as the development of discipline as distinct from sovereignty, but he fails to see the tension as productive, in fact as the space of the invention of the popular as a political space.

[4] I am extremely grateful to Mario Blaser (personal communication, April 2009) for helping me to avoid making a total fool of myself. In an earlier version, I suggested that non-modern societies only had institutional spaces. This obviously imagines non -modern societies as closed so that change can only come from the outside. Besides, it would be equally plausible to suggest that they only have everyday spaces. And it is certainly plausible to argue that non-modern societies have other forms of institutional spaces and everyday life spaces. Hence, the position offered here is my latest effort, in conversation, to think through my own position.

[5] This is the Euro-modern subject, the split subject of Lukacs' analysis (the social body of labor and the self-reflective phenomenological subject of consciousness and rights) of the bourgeois modernity. See Grossberg (1999).

[6] Mario Blaser (personal communication, April 2009) has raised a serious objection to my analysis: are the terms so under-specified as to no longer distinguish the modern form the non-modern? I think this is precisely where and why we need the sort of conversation I call for at the end of this chapter.

[7] I want to thank Elena Yehia for her insight on these matters.

[8] Yet I think his use of Latour, and the consequent reduction of modernity to the politics of negativity of European culture, closes off any possibility of other modernities.

[9] For an elaboration of this analysis, see my "Modernity and Commensuration" Cultural Studies 24-3 (2010): 295-332.